



COST ACTION E43

Harmonisation of National Inventories in Europe: Techniques for Common Reporting

Minutes of the 1st Management Committee Meeting

**COST Secretariat
Avenue Louise 149, Brussels, Belgium
28 June 2004 at 13:00 – 17:30 hrs
29 June 2004 at 09:00 - 13:00 hrs**

1 Welcome to participants

The participants of the inaugural meeting of COST Action E43 have been welcomed by Mr. Günter Siegel, Science Officer for the COST Domain on Forestry and Forestry Products.

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Siegel until the election of a chairperson for the Action which was carried out under agenda item 7.

2 Adoption of the agenda

The draft agenda was adopted without any amendment.

3 Presentation of the delegations

A total of 22 participants from the following 18 countries were attending the meeting: Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and United Kingdom. The COST Secretariat was represented by the Science Officer of the COST Domain on Forestry and Forestry Products, Mr. Siegel. The list of officially nominated

delegates and the participants of the meeting with their contact information is presented in [Annex 1](#).

4 General information on the COST mechanism and on the funding of co-ordination

At the beginning of this item Mr. Siegel gave a briefing on the COST Mechanism presenting the general framework for that programme created to promote the scientific and technical co-operation in Europe. Relevant information can be found on the COST-Website at <http://cost.cordis.lu/src/home.cfm>

Furthermore the participants have been informed about the current situation of the COST Actions in the field of Forestry and Forestry Products. There are 24 ongoing Actions in the domain area.

The Science Officer informed the delegates about the principles and procedures related to the COST Actions and about the possibilities of getting activities funded from the COST budget. The relevant documents have been distributed and can be found at the official Web-site of COST:

- Rules and procedures for implementing COST Actions ([Annex 2](#))
- Financing of COST activities ([Annex 3](#))
- The Standard Rules of Procedure for Management Committees for COST ([Annex 4](#))
- Guidelines for the implementation of Short-Term Scientific Missions ([Annex 5](#))
- Guidelines for evaluation and monitoring of COST Actions (DOC. 222/03) ([Annex 6](#))
- Memorandum of Understanding of COST E43 ([Annex 7](#))
- Annual Grant Scheme
- New COST/ESF Reimbursement rules

With reference to the COST guidelines Mr. Siegel called into mind that Signatory Countries are committed to making every effort to ensure that the necessary funds for participating in the Action are made available under their internal financing procedure. The document 'Rules and Procedure for Implementing COST Actions' provides various modes for the participation in a COST Action (see Chapter 4).

5 Status of the Action

COST Action E43 was approved by the Committee of Senior Officials on 16 February 2004. The Action entered into force on 10 June 2004 after five countries had signed the Memorandum of Understanding. The Action is to last until 27 June 2008.

At the time of the first Management Committee meeting, a total of 12 countries had signed the MoU according to the official records of the COST Council Secretariat. The signature countries were Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Sweden and United Kingdom.

6 Agreement on the internal rules of procedure for the Management Committee

Having discussed this matter, the Management Committee decided to adapt the Standard Rules of Procedure for Management Committees ([Annex 4](#)) with the specification that the working language of the MC will be mainly English (Article 13).

Additionally the representative of the COST Secretariat emphasised the text in *Article 12*, which states that: 'Meetings shall be held where the MC considers it advisable to meet at the invitation of an institution in a signatory State. The COST-Office shall, however, only undertake the organization of the meetings held in Brussels. The cost of organisation of meetings elsewhere shall be borne by the host country.'

Furthermore, the MC decided to change Article 8 defining the minimal number of participating Signatory Countries necessary to be present to consider a MC meeting as an official one. In the light of the large number of Signatory Countries it has been agreed to lower the relevant threshold from two-thirds to a half.

7 Election of Chair and Vice Chair

The Management Committee has elected Prof. Erkki Tomppo (FIN) to the Chair of COST Action E43. Dr. Klemens Schadauder (AT) was elected Vice-Chair.

The new Chair took over the chair of the meeting from this item onwards.

8 Working plan for implementing the Action

8.1 Objectives and working programme

The objectives of the Action E43 are outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as of 15 March 2004 ([Annex 7](#)). The newly elected Chair Prof. Tomppo presented a brief summary of the Action background, pointing out that the main objective of the Action is to improve and harmonise the existing national forest resource inventories in Europe.

The secondary objectives are to support new inventories in such a way that inventories will meet national, European and global level requirements in supplying up-to-date, harmonised and transparent forest resource information, and to promote the use of scientifically sound and validated methods in forest inventory designs, data collection and

data analysis. The Working Groups of the Action will collect and distribute information in currently applied definitions, measurement practices and methods to improve the dialogue between NFIs on one hand and between NFIs and NFI data users on the other, and to promote the use of harmonised definitions, measurement practices and scientifically sound methods.

The ultimate goal is to build up the forestry information services on the national level inventories in order to get maximised benefits from inventories and maximised advantage of local knowledge and requirements together with international requirements. The goal is also to maximise the synergy between NFIs and European and global level processes and policies that require forestry information.

The Action will cooperate closely with the international organizations involved in the monitoring of forests such as UNECE, Forest Focus and MCPFE at the regional level and FAO/FRA and UNFCCC at the global level. Furthermore, the Action aims to provide information for the Pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management elaborated in the frame of the MCPFE.

8.2 Working method - organisation and management

It was decided that the Action will be carried out mainly through 3 Working Groups and through Short Term Scientific Missions (STMS). After a comprehensive discussion the following structures and responsibilities were agreed upon:

8.2.1 Working Group 1: Harmonised definitions and measuring practices

Co-ordinator: Dr. Claude Vidal (F)
Deputy: Dr. Adrian Lanz (CH)

The main task of WG1 will be to give operative guidelines for interpretation of existing definitions and find recommendations on new definitions and measuring practices to be applied in NFIs, which will form the crucial part of NFI methodology.

The first step will be a review of the current practices and definitions applied in NFIs in participating countries and their differences from international recommendations. As a second step, a core set of variables requiring harmonised definitions and measuring practices will be identified. Information needs of international agreements and processes, such as FAO/FRA, UNFCCC, Biodiversity agreement and MCPFE will be taken into account in selecting the core variables. WG1 intends to produce recommendations on measurement practices and definitions to be applied in NFI's.

The recommendations will be processed in the Management Committee (MC) meetings of the Action and, if agreed, adopted to NFIs. Within this WG, inventory designs, e.g. sampling based inventory vs. stand level inventory and inventory frequencies will be considered.

One output of the WG will be a report showing the differences in the current practices, and also their impact on some core forest resource parameters when compared to the harmonised case, i.e., a kind of sensitivity analysis. The report will be presented in a conference targeted to NFI data users. Tools to get harmonised and comparable forest resource estimates will be presented

The Management Committee identified the following tasks in preparation of the first Working Group meeting:

- Review of current practices
- Elaboration of a questionnaire to collect information on variables used in the national inventories (a first draft will be circulated before the first Joint WGs Meeting)
- Identification of the need for harmonisation.

Trainings Courses might be organised in the course of the Action for the following topics:

- Remote Sensing
- Field technologies
- Data Processing.

8.2.2 Working Group 2: Harmonised estimation procedures for carbon pools and carbon pool changes

Co-ordinator: Prof. Göran Stahl (Sweden)
Deputy Dr. Emil Cienciala (Czech Republic)

WG2 will focus on the definitions and measurements of those inventory variables that are related to the estimation of forest carbon pools and changes in carbon pools. The Action will interact with IPCC work. All the five pools, above-ground biomass, below-ground biomass, litter, dead wood and soil organic carbon are considered. Examples of key variables are those related to estimating tree stem volume, whole tree biomass, soil carbon, dead wood volume and their changes. One goal is to exchange experiences and information in finding cost efficient methods and solutions when estimating the variables in question. The goal is also to find methods to assess the reliability of estimates.

The output of WG2 will be a description of the current methods in different countries, the differences in definitions and measurements in carbon pools related variables and in reporting practices. Methods to get comparable estimates will be elaborated and presented.

The Management Committee recommended that in the first phase the Working Group should focus on the following issues:

- Assessment of the State-of-the-Art

- Elaboration of a questionnaire focusing among others at the requirements of the Kyoto-Protocol

Furthermore, the Management Committee expressed interest in a Trainings Course on Data Collection.

8.2.3 Working Group 3: Harmonised indicators and estimation procedures for assessing components of biodiversity with NFI data

Co-ordinator: Dr. Annemarie Bastrup-Birk (DK)
Deputy Prof. Marco Machetti (IT)

The main task of WG3 will be to identify possibilities of measuring components of biodiversity in the context of large area forest inventories in such a way that the results are comparable over vegetation zones. Biodiversity is commonly divided into genetic, species and ecosystem diversity as well as functional diversity. It is obvious that only part of the characteristics describing these concepts can be measured in the context of large area forest inventories. Indicators and surrogates must be applied. The existing forest inventories have, however, an advantage in that they already provide information from the key components of forest ecosystems, such as the growing stock of trees, soil, ground vegetation, and, in some cases, spatial arrangements of the ecosystems, e.g., when utilising remote sensing data. It is also commonly agreed that components of the biodiversity can be measured in the most efficient way in the context of large area forest inventories.

The key components by ecosystems and vegetation zones will be identified. Harmonised definitions and measurement practices will be sought.

The output of the WG will be a list of practical variables, indicators and surrogates describing forest biodiversity (linked to MCPFE Criteria & Indicators of sustainable forestry), together with the current status in assessments in participating countries.

Discussing the main tasks of the first year the MC recommended that the Working Group should attach priorities to the following issue:

- Preparation a State-of-the-Art Report on the assessment of biodiversity
- Clarification of definitions used in the MoU
- Selection of core variables
- Review of other regional and global initiatives.

8.2.4 Short term Scientific Mission Scheme

In the accordance with the existing COST rules the MC has set up a Steering Committee consisting of the Chair, the Vice-Chair and the three Working Group Co-ordinators, which is mandated to judge and approve applications for STSMs and has to report back to the MC (fast track approach).

All MC members have been invited to encourage young scientists to participate in that scheme.

Application forms for STSMs are available on the WEB-Site <http://www.cordis.lu/cost> where one should look for 'Documents'.

8.2.5 INTERNET/WEB site

To facilitate the communication between the members of the Action and to promote the distribution of information on the research activities going on in the field of COST Action E43 Action Chair Prof. Tomppo will examine possibilities of his institution to establish and maintain a Web-site as well as provide the necessary resources to host that site. Furthermore, the Austrian delegation offered its services concerning the establishment of an Action Web-site.

8.2.6 TC Rapporteur of the Action

At its next meeting scheduled to be held at the middle of September 2004 in Brussels, the Technical Committee on Forests and Forestry Products (TC FFP) will be asked to nominate a Rapporteur for COST Action E43, whose task will be to report about the activities of this COST Action to the TC FFP.

8.2.7 Meeting Secretary

Dr. Niall Farrelly expressed his readiness to serve as a Meeting Secretary, responsible for taking note of the meetings of the Management Committee at which the Science Officer will not be present.

8.3 Distribution of tasks

It has been agreed that all MC members will nominate their national WG members not later than by 31 July 2004 and send their names to Action Chair as well as to the COST Secretariat.

In preparation of the first Joint WGs Meeting scheduled to be held on 9 – 10 September 2004 the Working Group Coordinators agreed to prepare a draft questionnaire.

A Task Group charged to prepare a background document for the planned questionnaire, has been set up.

9 Place and date of future meetings

The timing and location of the future meetings was agreed tentatively as follows:

Helsinki	15 – 16 July 2004	Steering Committee Meeting
Venue tbd	9 – 10 September 2004	Joint WGs Meeting
Belgium	11 – 12 October 2004	Joint MC/WGs Meeting
(alternative	14 – 15 October 2004)	

Venue tbd	2 – 5 November 2004	Trainings Course
Venue tbd	2 – 3 December 2004	Joint MC/WGs Meeting
(alternative	(29 – 30 November 2004)	
Venue tbd	date tbd	Meeting of the Task Group on Questionnaires

(tbd ... to be defined)

The Steering Committee meeting on 15 – 16 July in Helsinki has been asked to review and, if necessary, to adjust the above listed time table.

(Please note that in the meanwhile the Steering Committee has revised the above mentioned meeting schedule. The Action Chair will inform all MC members adequately.)

The request of the organiser of the Trainings Course Prof. Pelz for a subvention has been approved.

10 Any Other Business

The members of the Management Committee have been invited to support the Action Chair by encouraging those countries whose interest in the Action has been stated in the MoU to join the Action. In addition, efforts should be made to attract further membership from the countries in the Mediterranean as well as Eastern European Countries.

11 Closing of the meeting

In closing the meeting on 29 June 2004 at 13:00 hrs Action Chair Prof. Tomppo expressed his gratitude to all members of the Management Committee for their active participation in the meeting.

Günter Siegel
 Scientific Officer for the
 COST Domain on Forests and Forestry Products

ANNEX:

1. Agenda of the Meeting with the list of participants
2. Rules and procedures for implementing COST Actions
(see COST-Website www.cordis.lu/cost)
3. Financing of COST activities (see COST-Website www.cordis.lu/cost)
4. The Standard Rules of Procedure for Management Committees for COST
(see COST-Website www.cordis.lu/cost)
5. Guideline for the implementation of Short-Term Scientific Missions (see
COST-Website www.cordis.lu/cost)
6. Guidelines for evaluation and monitoring of COST Actions (DOC. 222/03)
(see COST-Website www.cordis.lu/cost)
7. Memorandum of Understanding of COST E35 (see COST-Website
www.cordis.lu/cost)