

Recreation Planning and Management in European Forests

Selected results of COST Action E 33, WG 3

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Some of the main findings of working group 3 ‘recreation planning and management’ within the framework of the COST Action E33 ‘Forest Recreation and Nature Tourism’ (FORREC) are presented. The aim of the presentation is to give an overview on the state of the art, traditions, differences and similarities in European forests. Furthermore the focus is on new tasks, goals and strategies as well as future trends regarding forest recreation and nature based tourism.

New directions and the need for reform – these two catch phrases dominate the political discussions around forests, forestry, and forest research in many European countries. In the past the forest functions shifted. Social functions are becoming increasingly recognised as being very important and include not only recreation but also health and well being and wider quality of life. In some countries recreational activities such as seasonal collections of berries and mushrooms have always been an integral part of rural life. Visits by urban-based people to forests for walking and picnicking also have a long tradition. Tourists visiting other countries frequently visit forests and may camp or stay in cottages or other accommodation in the forest. However, the demands for forest recreation have been increasing in volume and have become more diverse.

Due to its increased importance and complexity, as well as the potential conflicts with other functions, the social function of forests has to be dealt with much more explicitly than in the past. This increased attention and awareness is required at different levels, from policy-making, spatial planning, and designing to the management of a specific area.

Recreational aspects of forests have been studied mostly on a national level. Therefore the literature is fragmented and dispersed. This presentation therefore provides a first Europe-wide overview on research, education and management in the field of forest and recreation.