

Surveying Expectations and Evaluations of Stakeholders in the Forest Sector of the Alpine Space

Reinhard Lässig (corresponding author)¹, Tobias Buser² and Luuk Dorren³

¹ Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research, Birmensdorf, Switzerland, reinhard.laessig@wsl.ch

² Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research, Birmensdorf, Switzerland, tobias.buser@wsl.ch

³ Cemagref Grenoble, St. Martin d'Hères cedex, France, luuk.dorren@cemagref.fr

Within the project “KnowForAlp - Knowledge Network Forestry in the Alpine Space” 19 partner institutions from 7 countries form a network unique in terms of size, diversity and transnational orientation. KnowForAlp aims to facilitate and improve the knowledge transfer between research, practice and politics in order to enhance the dialogue among the interest groups. To reach this goal it is crucial to know the needs of the stakeholders and their information behaviour. A survey was carried out covering the entire alpine region. Its main target groups were decision makers on the operational and the strategic level, including public forest services, environmental departments, the private forestry sector, research institutes, and NGOs. These actors were addressed by a questionnaire distributed both electronically and as a hard copy.

The central issues of this questionnaire were the user demands regarding their topics of interest and their use and evaluation of different communication channels such as personal contacts, professional journals, internet or newspapers and if there are obstacles in getting or exchanging information on forestry related topics. Additionally, the participants in the survey had the opportunity to express their willingness to provide information about their own knowledge and experiences. Almost 1200 filled completed questionnaires were returned. The results are a powerful expression of interest of different stakeholder groups. Concerning the user demands, the results clearly show the wide range of topics requested. Interests differ considerably, for example, between different sectors of work, job positions and forest ownership. Regarding the use and evaluation of communication channels clear favourites appear with only small differences between the different groups. The overall results reveal that there is great potential for more participative approaches to knowledge production, knowledge transfer and active involvement of the stakeholders.