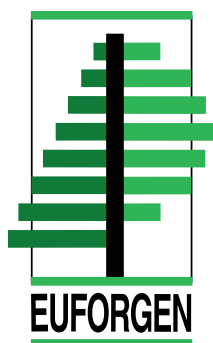




Steering Committee

Summary of the first meeting

Sopron, Hungary, 19-20 November 1995



European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN)

Introduction

Opening remarks

The first meeting of the Steering Committee of the European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN) was opened by Professor Csaba Mátyás from the Department of Plant Sciences of the University of Sopron. He welcomed the participants and remarked that this meeting is taking place in a city with truly international character. The host University was founded upon one of the oldest forestry technical schools in Europe. Hungarian forestry is increasingly committed to the conservation and sustainable use of indigenous and introduced genetic resources. Csaba Mátyás expressed his wish to see a successful meeting.

Dr Emile Frison welcomed the participants on behalf of IPGRI. He stressed the world's growing concern about plant genetic diversity, including forest trees, and referred specifically to the process initiated by the Strasbourg and Helsinki ministerial conferences. As a result of the work of the follow-up committee of Strasbourg Resolution 2, a survey on the needs and priorities was conducted and the species networks concept was conceived. In this respect, EUFORGEN appeared to be a very timely effort. Now, with 24 participating countries and more countries having stated their intention to join, EUFORGEN has already succeeded in being a true pan-European programme on forest genetic resources.

The Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources organized by FAO in Leipzig in 1996, is part of the effort to strengthen the overall collaboration in the field of agrobiodiversity. Emile Frison also stressed the importance of the Conference to future activities and commitments to be made by EUFORGEN and European forestry expertise. He said there were new opportunities to be taken in deciding on future guidelines of the Programme. Emile Frison praised the good collaborative spirit of EUFORGEN networks, and reaffirmed the strong commitment of IPGRI in providing guidance and assisting in the development of this country driven Programme.

Ms Christel Palmberg-Lerche addressed the meeting on behalf of FAO. She reminded the participants FAO had recently celebrated its 50th anniversary and gave a brief explanation on the role FAO takes to implement scientific and technical recommendations. Christel Palmberg-Lerche underlined the links between FAO, IPGRI and other international organizations and how they complement each other. Both FAO and IPGRI assist in the execution of country driven programmes and priorities as determined by institutions in the countries.

The FAO Forestry Department, which is closely involved in the management of the Programme, provided advice and assistance during the establishment period of EUFORGEN. Christel Palmberg-Lerche welcomed the support of EUFORGEN in activities of mutual concern, and expressed the expectation that this support would lead to concrete results and increased collaboration between European countries in the conservation and better use of forest genetic resources, a big challenge for this new Programme.

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Prof. Csaba Mátyás from Hungary was elected to chair the meeting and Dr Michel Arbez from France was elected Vice-Chair.

Adoption of the Agenda

The proposed Agenda of the meeting (see Annex) was adopted with one modification regarding discussion of an action plan. The Steering Committee considered it relevant to make recommendations, but not to adopt an action plan arising from the meeting.

EUFORGEN reports

The EUFORGEN coordinator, Dr Jozef Turok presented a progress report on activities carried out during the first year of the Programme. He stressed the importance of this meeting as an opportunity to develop strong collaboration among national coordinators with a firm connection to the coordinating secretariat.

In his report (see Annex), Jozef Turok briefly described the history of EUFORGEN, and mentioned that 24 countries were participating in the Programme. Further countries are expected to join in the near future. Observers from several interested countries also participated in this first Steering Committee meeting (see Annex).

The main activities of EUFORGEN have concentrated on three 'pilot' species networks. Jozef Turok presented objectives and workplans developed at first network meetings, listed countries participating in the different networks, and described task achievements. Three reports of the network meetings have been published. No meeting has yet been held on the fourth 'pilot' network on noble hardwoods, but attending members and common concerns were identified.¹

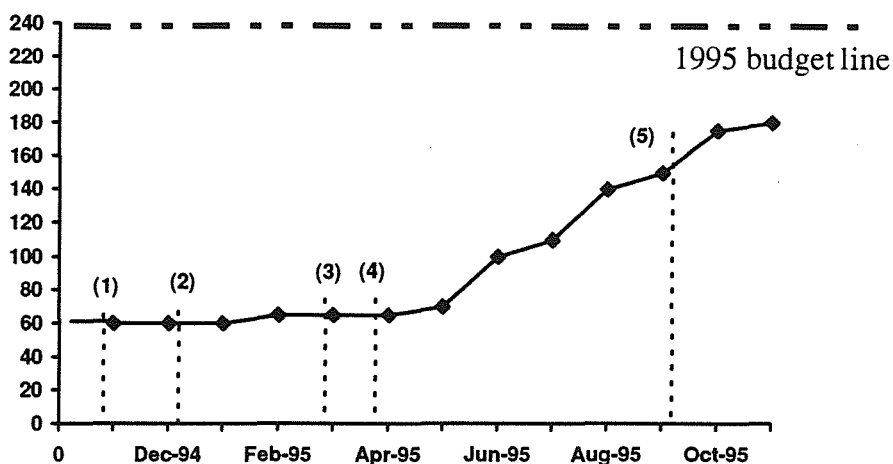
The coordinator's report emphasized close collaboration of IPGRI and FAO, particularly within the EUFORGEN Management Committee. EUFORGEN has been actively involved in the preparatory process of the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources.

The financial report (see Annex), summary table of funds balance and a table listing paid contributions (funds received) was presented. Figure 1 was shown to illustrate development of cumulative member contributions, as compared to the

¹ The first noble hardwoods network meeting will be organized in Escherode, Germany, in March 1996. To help identify the noble hardwood species of prior interest to the majority of countries, an informal workshop will be held immediately before the network meeting.

targeted 1995 budget line, and the organization of the five network meetings (1-5) in the first year of the Programme.

Figure 1.



The progress report and the financial report were adopted by the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee commended IPGRI and FAO for the work being done in the preparation, coordination and management of the Programme.

EUFORGEN Document

The Steering Committee reviewed the objectives of EUFORGEN, its organizational structure, and the role of the different bodies. An updated version of EUFORGEN Document (IPGRI/FAO, Rome, September 1993) was introduced at the meeting by the EUFORGEN coordinator and different aspects were discussed.

In the discussion on principal objectives, EUFORGEN was supported as a mechanism of the Starsbourg Resolution 2 for implementing international cooperation, but it was recognized that decisions on forest genetic resources, their management and financing, are the responsibility of national programmes.

During the discussion, effective liaison between the coordinating secretariat and sponsoring ministries, and the maintenance of regular contacts with network members in each country were emphasized as being important duties of the national coordinators. The international coordinating secretariat should, among others, be maintaining close links with the national coordinators.

The role of the Steering Committee to carry the overall responsibility for the Programme was confirmed. It was agreed that the Steering Committee would meet every three years and that additional *ad hoc* meetings would be organized if there is a strong need to convene within a shorter time period. The Steering Committee requested a financial report from the coordinating secretariat at the

end of each year. A detailed financial report should be sent to all members of the Steering Committee one month in advance of each regular Steering Committee meeting. Voting procedure at Steering Committee meetings was discussed and the secretariat was **requested** to communicate the convention used in IPGRI and the CGIAR system in general.

The reviewed version of the EUFORGEN Document was adopted by the Steering Committee (see Annex). It replaces the original version and serves as a basic general reference document.

Input of EUFORGEN to the preparatory process of the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources

The Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources will be organized by FAO in Leipzig, Germany, 17-23 June 1996. The Conference will review world status and priorities in the conservation of plant genetic resources, including the genetic diversity of forest trees. EUFORGEN has contributed as an information manager to the country-driven preparatory process in the field of forest genetic resources in Europe.

European countries provided information through a Questionnaire on forest genetic resources, sent in March 1993 by FAO's Forestry Department to Heads of Forest Services in all FAO member countries. At the request of FAO, countries have also prepared national reports on plant genetic resources, according to guidelines elaborated by FAO in close consultation with IPGRI. The staff of IPGRI's Europe Office was closely involved in drafting the resulting regional synthesis report on plant genetic resources in Europe, and the EUFORGEN coordinator contributed to the parts dealing with forest genetic resources. Unfortunately, in some of the country reports received, forestry issues were missing, or were not adequately addressed, presumably due to the fact that Conference focal points, nominated by the countries, were generally located in the agricultural sector, not in forestry and were therefore often institutionally separated. This gap in country coordination had contributed to an increased general bias towards crop genetic resources in the country reports.

The Regional Meeting on Plant Genetic Resources in Nitra, Slovakia, in September 1995 was the most important event in the preparatory process in Europe. Delegates from 35 countries, as well as observers from several international NGOs, the European Commission, FAO and IPGRI participated in that meeting. An advanced draft version of the report on the regional preparatory meeting was distributed and briefly discussed at the Steering Committee meeting. The recommendations for the Global Plan of Action, to be presented at the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources, concerned in particular national programmes, collaboration in the field of plant genetic resources at a national, regional and subregional level, privatization of public collections, complementarity between *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation,

underutilized species, inventories of plant genetic resources, research and training, and international collaboration.

Further to the outcomes of the Regional Meeting, and recognizing that EUFORGEN was set up as a pan-European programme to implement Resolution 2 of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, held in Strasbourg in 1990, and that this role was endorsed by the second Ministerial Conference in Helsinki in 1993, the Steering Committee **recommended** that EUFORGEN, in close collaboration with FAO, IUFRO and other relevant organizations, be considered as the platform for the implementation of the forest genetic resources components of the Global Plan of Action in Europe.

It was also recognized that strategies and methodologies applicable to the conservation and sustainable use of forest genetic resources differed decisively from those applicable to crop genetic resources. The Steering Committee stressed the importance of ensuring that national delegations to the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources include forestry expertise. The Steering Committee **requested** that national coordinators draw the attention of authorities in their respective countries to this need; and **recommended** that FAO include specific mention of forest genetic resources in invitation letters and background materials submitted to each country. In this regard, the Steering Committee noted that involvement of both crop and forest genetic resources experts in the Conference would be of mutual benefit in elaborating overall strategies.

FAO undertook sending a copy of the Questionnaire from the year 1993 "National Plant Genetic Resources Activities for Forestry Species" to the country representatives who were present, either for review, or in the case of countries which had not responded, for provision of the information requested. An information system, based on replies to this Questionnaire from FAO member countries, has been created in the Forestry Department of FAO, for use *i.a.* in the preparations for, and follow-up to, the Leipzig Conference.

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