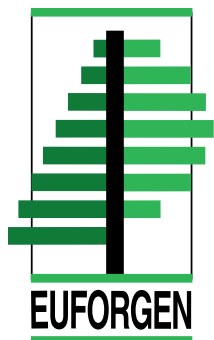




Steering Committee

Summary of the third meeting

Jönköping, Sweden, 30 June-1 July 2002



European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN)

**Third EUFORGEN Steering Committee meeting
Jönköping, Sweden, 30 June/ 1 July 2002**

Summary report of the meeting

Opening of the meeting

Ms. Astrid Bergquist, Deputy Director, Division for Energy and Primary Industries, Ministry for Industry, Employment and Communications opened the meeting. She welcomed all participants to Sweden and expressed her wish for a productive and successful meeting. She formally opened the meeting and introduced the agenda. The agenda was adopted.

Chairpersons for the four working sessions of the meeting were proposed and elected (Mr Lennart Ackzell, Mr Csaba Mátyás, Mr CJA Samuel and Mr Eric Teissier Du Cros). Also appointed were rapporteurs for each of the four sessions (Ms Mari Rusanen, Mr John Fennessy, Mr Hasan Özer and Mr Alfas Pliura).

Mr. Jozef Turok, EUFORGEN Coordinator welcomed the participants and informed the meeting about the participation of representatives from 33 countries, FAO and observers. Four members of the Steering Committee sent their apologies for not being able to attend.

Mr Jarkko Koskela the new EUFORGEN Coordinator was then introduced to the Steering Committee.

Mr Pierre Sigaud from FAO also welcomed the participants.

1. Mid-phase technical and financial progress report

The EUFORGEN Coordinator presented the report that covers the first part of Phase II. As of June 2002, a total of 32 countries are considered members of EUFORGEN. He provided information about the status and main outputs of current activities within the Programme: technical guidelines (developed by all five Networks), bibliographic database and other information outputs, distribution maps, public awareness. The establishment of the Inter-Network Group composed of Chairs and Vice-Chairs was also mentioned. He underlined some emerging and crosscutting themes for which seminars were held in conjunction with Network meetings. The main challenges and perspectives were outlined, including contributions in kind and the use of information technology. The contribution of Mr Simone Borelli to the Programme during the first part of this Phase was acknowledged.

Representatives of all countries present at the meeting took part in the discussion of the report. The role of EUFORGEN as a catalyst in new research projects was stressed by a high number of participants. The raising of awareness in the general public as well as that of policy makers was highlighted. The importance of linkages with the process of Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) was specifically mentioned.

Following the discussion, the progress report was approved with amendments. The Secretariat will incorporate the amendments in the final version of the report. The financial report, which was also circulated before the meeting, indicated positive closing balance for the first two years of the Phase.

2. International policy frameworks and developments with an impact on forest genetic resources (FGR)

Four presentations were made in order to update the participants with information on latest developments at international level. Mr. Pierre Sigaud presented the status and role of FGR within the different ongoing international processes (forestry, biodiversity and plant genetic resources). Mr. Csaba Mátyás introduced the outcomes of Conference of the Parties 6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, with particular

respect to the work plan on forest biodiversity. Mr Lennart Ackzell then made a presentation on the new EU Directive on forest reproductive material and its implications for genetic conservation. The MCPFE process was presented by Mr Jozef Turok, in addition to a brief update about the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

3. Evaluation of Networks

The objectives, activities, outputs, mode of operation, communication and recommendations for the second part of Phase II were discussed by separate working groups, each focussing on one of the five Networks. The results of the discussion were then presented in the plenary session.

For the Mediterranean Oaks Network, it was felt that participation was too limited and efforts should be made to encourage greater participation, covering the entire Mediterranean region. Raising public awareness was recommended as an important activity for the second part of Phase II.

For the Noble Hardwoods Network, the challenges associated with the high number of species and the high number of countries involved was highlighted. It was recommended to concentrate efforts on finalizing the existing technical guidelines (for 11 species) and promoting their application for additional species with common features.

For the Conifers Network, the fact that many outputs have not yet been accomplished, was acknowledged. The issue of country priorities overriding the responses and agreed tasks of the Network for individual Network members was highlighted. Inadequacies were also noted owing to lack of resources at the Secretariat to adequately support many of the tasks of the Network. Technical guidelines will be produced for five representative model species. The Network will finalize the sub-regional syntheses for the four eco-geographic sub-regions.

For the Social Broadleaves Network, based on the recommendation from the last Network meeting, the Committee decided to change the name of the Network to "Temperate Oaks and Beech". A list of potential species (and forms) was established and tasks were reviewed. Attention should be given to conservation strategies for populations at the margins of the distribution. Close cooperation is needed between the two Networks dealing with oaks (Mediterranean Oaks Network and Temperate Oaks and Beech Network), especially in relation to conservation strategies.

For the *Populus nigra* Network, it was recommended that priority be given to broadening the range and collection of the clones for *ex situ* conservation. With regard to *in situ* conservation strategy, provision of artificial measures for river flow management was considered to be an important element.

In general, it was agreed that the activities developed within all Networks reflected the common needs. The Networks expressed their interest in extension of cooperation to countries outside of geographic Europe. All Networks acknowledged the fact that a number of EU-funded research projects provided input to the development of the conservation strategies. The Networks were encouraged to develop or continue cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

4. Collaboration with non-participating countries and international organizations and initiatives

A background document was presented outlining the current practice of collaboration with non-member countries and organizations. The Steering Committee endorsed the approaches taken by the Secretariat.

Participation from non-member countries in Network activities was encouraged, on a task-oriented invitation, provided that specific funds are available to cover associated costs.

5. National plans and programmes on forest genetic resources

The results of the survey conducted prior to the meeting were presented. These were compared with data from the baseline survey from 1998. Substantial developments have taken place with regard to national policy and legal frameworks for FGR. As a result national coordination structures were established in a number of countries. Many of these efforts were linked to conservation of genetic resources in agriculture. This development, however, in itself is not sufficient for ensuring the implementation of national plans, especially in countries where adequate financial resources are not available. *In situ* conservation networks are in place in many countries, and the inventory of these resources was completed in several countries. The potential conflict between nature conservation and forestry practice was highlighted. It was also shown that *ex situ* conservation takes place as part of broader tree improvement programmes. While several countries reported activities in the area of raising awareness among forestry professionals, many countries still express the need for further work in this area, especially with respect to policy makers and the general public. Azerbaijan presented a short introductory report on country activities and invited members of the Steering Committee to visit the country.

6. The wider influences of EUFORGEN

The influence of the Networks on new research projects, capacity building and networking programmes in other regions was demonstrated and discussed. While the catalytic role of the Networks has been widely acknowledged, it was also recommended that the Programme should complete the agreed activities within the present timeframe, with particular reference to the technical guidelines.

In order to facilitate the broader linkages of EUFORGEN, it was also agreed that focal persons from North America should be identified and invited to present relevant information at the next Steering Committee meeting.

7. Practical implementation of gene conservation strategies and guidelines: EUFORGEN beyond Phase II. Looking ahead.

This discussion was based on a proposal prepared by Network Chairs for the Steering Committee meeting. Steering Committee members expressed their support, in principle, for this proposal. Suggestions were made for improvement of the proposal (e.g. "conservation through management", forest genetic resources as part of sustainable forest management, climate instability, land use changes, restoration of declining populations, and other related developments). The proposal, to be based on voluntary participation, recognizes the sovereignty and the responsibility of countries over their genetic resources. Concern was, however, expressed by some countries with respect to financing such measures. It was suggested that a full participation of all European countries in the Programme would be important for any future strategy.

In order to review the present proposal, the Steering Committee decided to create a task force comprising L. Ackzell (focal person), M. Rusanen, E. Calleja, Cs. Mátyás, E. Teissier Du Cros, B. Heinze, L. Paule, S.M.G. de Vries and L. Gil. All Steering Committee members are kindly requested to provide any additional comments to the focal person of the task force by **31 July 2002**. The membership in this task force is open and additional members of the Steering Committee are welcome to join it. The task force will complete its objective by producing a short, reviewed version of the strategy by **30 September 2002**. This will be considered as the common strategy for future collaborative activities on FGR in Europe.

Recognizing the developments that have taken place in the MCPFE process, the Steering Committee encouraged all members to keep policy makers at national level informed and involved in forest genetic resources issues. In order to facilitate this political awareness raising process, it was suggested that each National Coordinator should prepare a short progress report outlining the contribution and the

perspectives of the ongoing collaboration in the area of FGR. The suggested deadline is **30 September 2002**, in order to provide input for the expert level meeting to be held in Vienna in mid October 2002.

The Steering Committee recommended that the Secretariat prepare a short report on the achievements and future perspectives of collaborative FGR work in Europe for presentation at the next MCPFE in Vienna before **31 July 2002**. The Secretariat will also contact the Liaison Unit and inform them about the relevant outcomes of this Steering Committee meeting. This report will incorporate the main proposals for future collaborative activities on FGR in Europe.

8. Mode of operation

Concern was expressed regarding the contribution of the Secretariat in facilitating the tasks of individual Networks. J. Turok on behalf of the Secretariat provided additional clarification on the human resources available for Programme coordination. During the past two years, coordination responsibilities were shared on a half-time basis by S. Borelli and J. Turok. As a consequence of the decision to appoint a full-time Coordinator, the position held previously by S. Borelli (as assistant coordinator) will not be continued. Temporary scientific assistance to the EUFORGEN Programme is presently being provided by Mr M. Bozzano, concentrating on specific tasks to support of all Networks (bibliography, distribution maps, web page resources). The new Coordinator, J. Koskela, will take up duties as of 1 January 2003. Ms. L. Koop will continue as programme assistant to EUFORGEN Coordinator.

The next Steering Committee meeting will be held in May or June 2004. The Czech Republic extended an invitation to hold the meeting in that country. This offer was appreciated by the Steering Committee. The National Coordinator together with the Secretariat will announce the meeting by the **end of the year 2002**.

The involvement of the EUFORGEN Programme in the World Forestry Congress (to be held in September 2003) was discussed. It was agreed to submit a voluntary presentation and suggested a stand with publications, in collaboration with IUFRO. The Secretariat will develop this proposal and will inform the Steering Committee in due course.

9. Conclusions and closure

The host of the meeting, the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications and the local organizers from the National Board of Forestry were thanked for their kind hospitality and arrangements.

The session chair thanked the Secretariat for its coordination of EUFORGEN and particularly in the preparation and facilitation of this meeting.

J. Koskela, the new EUFORGEN Coordinator thanked the meeting for the opportunity to participate as observer and expressed his expectations for future collaboration.

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