



EUFORGEN

EUROPEAN FOREST GENETIC
RESOURCES PROGRAMME

EUFORGEN STEERING COMMITTEE: REPORT OF THE TWENTY-FIRST MEETING

11-12 DECEMBER 2024, ONLINE MEETING



21st Meeting of the EUFORGEN Steering Committee 11-12 December 2024, online

Contents

1. Approval of the agenda and rapporteurs' appointment.....	2
2. Decisions SC20 checklist	2
3. Update on Phase VII membership	2
4. Presentation of key elements of the draft technical and financial reports 2024.....	2
5. Project heritage proposal from Secretariat.....	3
6. WG Static and dynamic <i>ex situ</i> conservation – draft proposed indicators and verifiers.....	4
7. Workplan – 2025 activities.....	5
8. Feedback on the Secretariat	5
9. Opening EUFGIS to neighbour countries	5
10. 21 st SC meeting – Decisions and final approval	7
11. Any other business.....	7
12. Closure of the meeting.....	7
Annex 1 – List of participants.....	8
Annex 2 – Agenda.....	10
Annex 3 – Concept note - "Forest Genetic Resources Project Heritage"	12

1. Approval of the agenda and rapporteurs' appointment

Michele Bozzano opened the meeting and welcomed the participants to the 21st Steering Committee meeting. The meeting was attended online by 24 National Coordinators from Phase VI member countries, two observers, and the members of the EUFORGEN Secretariat (full list of participants is available in Annex 1).

Tor Myking and Sanna Black-Samuelsson were nominated as rapporteurs. M. Bozzano introduced and updated the agenda (Annex 2), which was approved by the participants.

Decision 1: The agenda was approved without further changes content-wise. Tor Myking and Sanna Black-Samuelsson were appointed as rapporteurs.

2. Decisions SC20 checklist

Anna-Maria Farsakoglou presented the list of decisions taken during the 20th Steering Committee meeting and their status.

3. Update on Phase VII membership

The Steering Committee was informed about the Phase VII membership. As of 11 December 2024, a total of 12 countries signed the Letter of Agreement for Phase VII. All National Coordinators of the countries that were members during Phase VI will be invited to the next Steering Committee meeting that will take place online in spring 2025, while only the National Coordinators of the countries that are members of EUFORGEN Phase VII, will be invited to attend the in-person meeting in autumn 2025.

4. Presentation of key elements of the draft technical and financial reports 2024

M. Bozzano presented the key elements of the draft annual report for 2024. A webinar was given on 5 December 2024 presenting the draft report. The final report will be finalised in 2025 and approved by the Steering Committee during its next online meeting in spring 2025.

A total of 13 countries signed the Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) for EUFGIS. National Coordinators were kindly requested to follow up on the process on national level. In case minor changes are requested by the country, the National Coordinator is asked to contact the Secretariat as some flexibility is possible.

Discussion on species web pages

All information is still not scientifically verified. In case a country encounters some errors in the data presented on the web species pages, the National Coordinator is kindly requested to contact the EUFORGEN communications team by email.

The section on the webpages about the status of the species has been developed with dynamic data that is directly retrieved from EUFGIS.

The information in the content with the bibliographic review is static data to be updated manually. All members of the EUFORGEN community can suggest changes in this section.

The current list of species on the website are those of the Pan-European list of priority species for which conservation is monitored¹. A decision regarding the addition of species that are not yet included in the list and are not part of the indicator, will need to be made by the Steering Committee.

Part of the upgrade of EUFGIS involves the preparation of the possibility for individual countries to add new species, but this is still under development. Countries will be able to use these data as their own national repository to store information and data in the future, even if these species are not available for indicator 4.6.

It was proposed during the meeting to decide on the possibility of adding species that are important on national scale or broader context, but the Steering Committee agreed that information for taking a decision on this should be presented at the next meeting, as it had not been on the agenda and background information was not available. The Steering Committee will decide about the possibility of publishing data on species that are outside the list of species currently visible on the website at the next meeting. The Steering Committee should also decide on the procedure to follow and the curation process of the pages.

Decision: The Species Pages subject will be added as an item in the agenda of the next online SC Meeting (Q2 2025) so that the SC can decide on whether new species can be added as species pages on the EUFORGEN website. The Secretariat will prepare a background document for the SC meeting, explaining the information needed for new species pages, such as who prepares and who verifies the information. A document will be circulated to the SC at the beginning of Phase VII to collect contributions for a list of additional species to be added in EUFGIS.

5. Project heritage proposal from Secretariat

M. Bozzano presented the proposal for the project heritage (See Annex 3). A website section is intended to contain data of former Forest Genetic Resources (FGR) projects aiming to have an overview of key information and to establish a centralised repository. The “project heritage” section on the website will include scientific key-questions, summaries of primary questions addressed by the projects, as well as the project outcomes (scientific publications, tools and resources, policy briefs and recommendations, and training and outreach materials). The information will be uploaded and managed by the Secretariat and promoted within the EUFORGEN community.

Discussion on project heritage proposal

A decision should be made on the selection of the projects and how to present the outputs. A web interface allowing countries to add info would be helpful.

The objective of this project should be better clarified; whether it will be related to background elements on which EUFORGEN activities are built or offer a space that EUFORGEN offers for promotion of projects and that hosts the outcomes of all FGR projects. In addition to this it should also be decided whether this tool will be an access point or a repository.

A question was raised about the tasks to be carried out by the Secretariat and the related costs, as well as what will be expected from the countries to contribute.

¹ as described in Lefèvre, F., Alia, R., Bakkebo Fjellstad, K., Graudal, L., Oggioni, S.D., Rusanen, M., Vendramin, G.G., Bozzano, M. 2020. Dynamic conservation and utilization of forest tree genetic resources: indicators for in situ and ex situ genetic conservation and forest reproductive material. European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN), European Forest Institute. 33 p.
www.euforgen.org/fileadmin/templates/euforgen.org/upload/Publications/Thematic_publications/EUFORGEN_IG_R_4.6.pdf

Possible steps to implement the tool could be to start with major European projects, using Cordis as existing information, and discuss at the Steering Committee meeting the resources to be allocated. Then develop an interface and a tool to search for the information. All should be tagged and available in different languages. For the in-person meeting of the Steering Committee in November 2025, it was suggested to prepare a test of a tool that will be available online, to see what kind of information could be contained, showing the options and implications, and the time and costs associated to this platform.

To have an example of the outcomes of a project, Slovenia offered to host a webinar of the n**LIFE SySTEMiC**: Close-to-nature fore**St** Sus**Tainable** **M**anagement practices under **C**limate Changes project towards the end of January 2025.

Decision: The project heritage subject will be added as an item in the agenda of the next in-person SC Meeting (Q4 2025). The Secretariat will prepare a background document with an initial list of projects and an example of one project in the interface, along with the time and costs associated.

6. WG Static and dynamic *ex situ* conservation – draft proposed indicators and verifiers

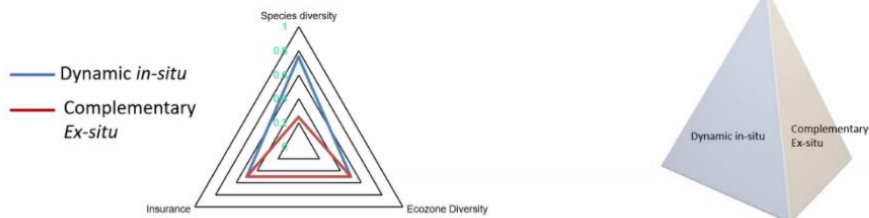
A presentation was given by Jan Peter George (Luke, Finland) on the progress of the Working Group on static and dynamic *ex situ* conservation, for a further discussion about the proposed indicators and verifiers.



Discussion of the SC

- Under which condition is *ex-situ* equivalent/complementary?
Note: Indicators shall unravel conservation gaps and be able to monitor changes, they should not be understood as a reward or award system....

- How to implement numerical indicators for those which are complementary?



The final aim of the Working Group is to complement the indicators currently used for reporting as part of the Forest Europe Pan-European indicators for sustainable forest management. The Steering Committee should set up a process on how these data can be handled and collected. The Steering Committee was asked to decide on the timing and modalities for this discussion.

The draft document will be available until 31 January 2025 for comments. The feedback will then be sent to the Working Group to finalise the document. The decision on the report will be taken at the online meeting in spring 2025.

The objective to integrate *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation will be included in a next document. A Task Force will be established for inclusion and further development of these elements.

During the next phase of EUFORGEN it should be discussed if a data repository in EUFGIS could be needed. The dynamic *ex situ* data is already available in EUFGIS, but minimum requirements should be agreed to maintain these data during the next phase.

The presentation given by J.P. George will be uploaded on the Teams workspace and made accessible to all National Coordinators.

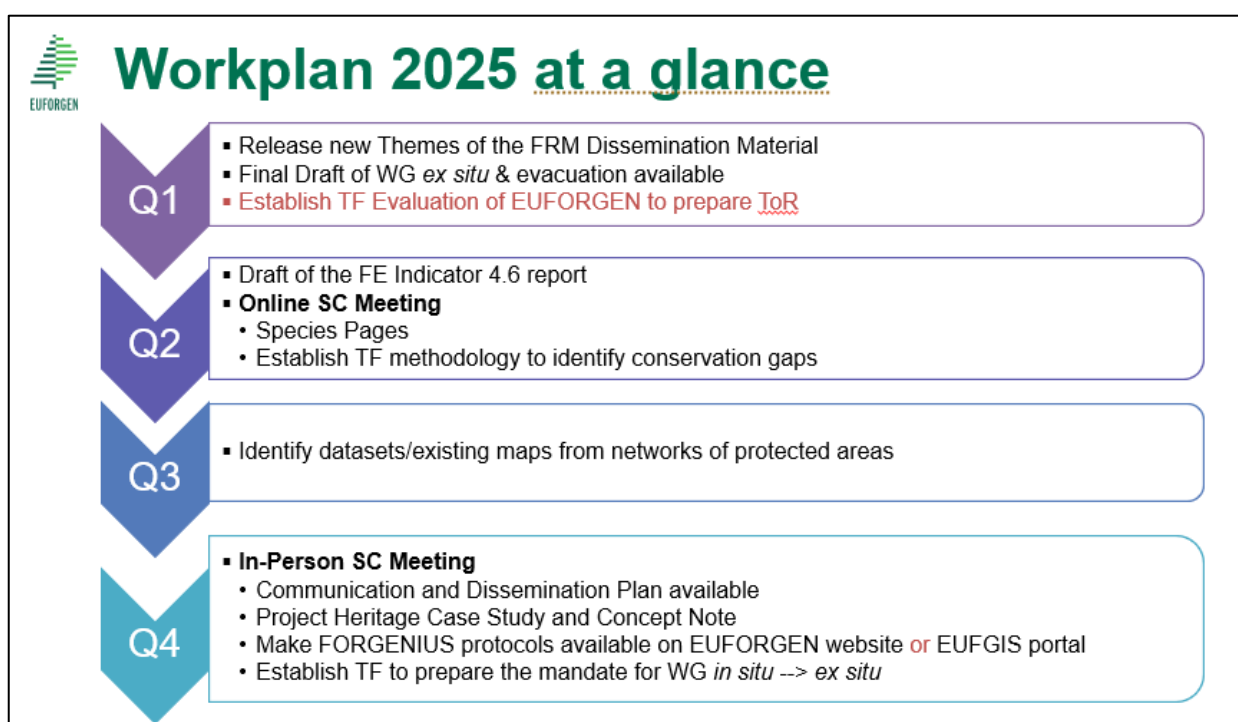
Decision: The report will be made available to the National Coordinators for comments until **31 January 2025**. The decision for the release of the document will be taken during the online SC Meeting in Q2 2025.

7. Workplan – 2025 activities

A.M. Farsakoglou presented the activities planned for 2025, based on the Strategic Objectives, 1, 2 and 3 (1: Facilitate knowledge sharing and communicate with key stakeholders, 2: Coordinate the implementation of conservation of Forest Genetic Resources in Europe and 3: Promote the sustainable use of forest genetic resources), and following the implementation plan.

The activities funded by external projects and core funded activities are secured and will run throughout the phase.

The kick-off activities for the first year of Phase VII (2025) were presented (see slide below). Other activities are ongoing with fundings from other projects.



Decision: The Task Force for the evaluation of EUFORGEN to enable the evolution of the programme, will be established during **Q1 2025** to prepare the **Terms of Reference** which will be presented during the next online SC meeting in Q2 2025.

8. Feedback on the Secretariat

Robert Mavsar, Director of EFI, had an online closed session with the Steering Committee, in the absence of the Secretariat. The scope of this session was to receive feedback on the Secretariat's activities and areas for improvements.

9. Opening EUFGIS to neighbour countries

M. Bozzano presented the plan for expanding EUFGIS to a broader geographic area.

The Key Commitment 21² in the Forest Genetic Resources Strategy for Europe, encourages European countries to mobilise resources and to develop partnerships to support non-European countries, especially those of the Caucasus, Near East and North Africa, to conserve and sustainably manage forest genetic resources.

The EUFORGEN Secretariat has established contacts with the European Commission (EC), Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR)³. The European Commission is launching soon the Climate Action package for the Southern Neighbourhood (CAP-Med), with main objectives to enhance capacity of Southern neighbourhood territories and to promote climate-smart conservation of Forest Genetic Resources. Beneficiaries are Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia. For the moment Libya and Syria are not benefiting from the project.

The EC via DG NEAR has indicated support for EFI to coordinate the development of this CAP-Med package, (yet to be signed).

The EUFORGEN Steering Committee was asked to consider the possibility of opening EUFGIS to the wider geographic distribution ranges of the European forest species to allow data from the neighbour countries to be entered in EUFGIS. EUFGIS is already designed to be geographically expanded and to include more forest tree species. All existing services can also be extended to target countries.

Benefits of the proposal include having a full picture of the status of common tree species in EUFGIS, uniform and comparable characterisation, and support for the conservation of Forest Genetic Resources that are relevant for Europe but are located outside its geographical borders.

A concern was raised about the principles on how to make visible species not currently in EUFGIS. The Steering Committee will need to define the principles on how additional species can be visualised.

Another concern was raised about the already signed Data Sharing Agreements (DSA) as the recital defines EUFGIS consisting of “a Web-based information system to make available data on forest genetic resources in European countries” and there might be implications with broadening the scope to the new target countries in the CAP-Med project. The Secretariat and the concerned countries will investigate the implication with their legal counsels at European Forest Institute (EFI) and countries, as needed.

Training the National Focal Points of these new target countries would be funded by the CAP-Med project. Future training could take place online or with other funds which would be sought for that purpose.

A point was raised about the information system on global FGR that the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) is planning to develop. It could be possible to integrate and collaborate with this system and this could be part of a longer-term strategy,

At the end of the discussions, the EUFORGEN Steering Committee agreed to allow entering data on GCUs following EUFGIS minimum requirements and data standards from the below-mentioned countries in EUFGIS. This can include all GUCs of tree species occurring in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, in the framework of the 2024-2026 EC-DG NEAR Climate Action Package for the Southern Neighbourhood (CAP-Med).

² <https://www.euforgen.org/publications/publication/forest-genetic-resources-strategy-for-europe>

³ https://commission.europa.eu/about/departments-and-executive-agencies/european-neighbourhood-and-enlargement-negotiations_en

Decision: The EUFORGEN SC agrees to allow entering data in EUFGIS following minimum requirements⁴ and data standards⁵ for GCUs from Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia. This can include all GCUs of species occurring in the above-mentioned territories in the framework of the 2024-26 EC-DG NEAR Climate Action Package for the Southern Neighbourhood (CAP-Med).

10. 21st SC meeting – Decisions and final approval

Decision: The SC approved the decisions of the 21st EUFORGEN Steering Committee Meeting.

11. Any other business

A survey for the appraisal of the meeting will be sent to the attendees.

12. Closure of the meeting

M. Bozzano closed the meeting and thanked the participants for attending.

4

https://www.euforgen.org/fileadmin/templates/euforgen.org/upload/Publications/Other_PDFs/EUFGIS_Minimum_requirements.pdf

⁵ http://portal.eufgis.org/fileadmin/templates/eufgis.org/documents/EUFGIS_DataStandards.pdf

Annex 1 – List of participants



**21st meeting of the EUFORGEN Steering Committee
11-12 December 2024, online**

List of participants

EUFORGEN National Coordinators

Heino Konrad
Federal Research and Training Centre for Forests,
Natural Hazards and Landscape
Austria

Alain Servais / An Vandebroeck
Service Public of Wallonia
Forest Tree Seed Center of Marche-en-Famenne
Belgium

Christina Kjærby
Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark,
Nature Agency
Denmark

Tiit Maaten
Institute of Forestry and Rural Engineering
Estonian University of Life Sciences
Estonia

Mari Rusanen
Natural Resources Institute Finland (LUKE)
Finland

François Lefèvre
INRAE - Ecologie des Forêts Méditerranéennes
France

Bernd Degen
Johann Heinrich von Thünen Institute
Germany

László Nagy
Forest Research Institute, University of Sopron
Hungary

Adalsteinn Sigurgeirsson
Land and Forest Iceland
Iceland

Brian Clifford
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
(DAFM)
Ireland

Maurizio Sabatti
University of Tuscia - Innovation in biological
systems, food and forestry (DIBAF)
Italy

Darius Kavaliauskas
Vytautas Magnus University Agriculture Academy -
Lithuanian Forest Research Institute
Lithuania

Martine Neuberg
(representing Thierry Diedenhofen)
Administration de la nature et des forêts
Luxembourg

Duca Ethelbert Erasmus
(Representing Darrin T. Stevens)
Environment and Resources Authority
Malta

Joukje Buiteveld
Centre for Genetic Resources Netherlands
Netherlands

Tor Myking
Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research
Norway

Czeslaw Koziol
The Kostrzyca Forest Gene Bank
Poland

Isabel Carrasquinho
Instituto Nacional de Investigação Agrária e
Veterinária (INIAV)
Portugal

Roman Longauer
National Forest Centre
Slovakia

Hojka Kraigher
Slovenian Forestry Institute
Slovenia

Felipe Pérez Martín
Ministry of Ecological Transition and the
Demographic Challenge (MITECO)
Spain

Sanna Black-Samuelsson
Swedish Forest Agency
Sweden

Andreas Rudow
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH)
Institute of Terrestrial Ecosystems
Switzerland

Jonathan Burton
(Representing David White)
Forestry Commission
United Kingdom

Observers

Jan-Peter George
Natural Resources Institute Finland (LUKE)
Finland

Robert Mavsar
Director
European Forest Institute

EUFORGEN Secretariat
European Forest Institute (EFI), Barcelona Office

Sarah Adams
Michele Bozzano
Anna-Maria Farsakoglou
Lidwina Koop

Unable to attend

Mladen Ivanković
Croatian Forest Research Institute
Croatia

Josef Frýdl
Forestry and Game Management Research Institute
(FGMRI)
Czech Republic

Thierry Diedenhofen
(represented by Martine Neuberg)
Administration de la nature et des forêts
Luxembourg

Darrin T. Stevens
(represented by Duca Ethelbert Erasmus)
Environment and Resources Authority
Malta

Ecaterina Nicoleta Apostol
National Institute for Research and development in
Forestry "Marin Dracea"
Romania

Mirjana Šijačić-Nikolić
Faculty of Forestry, Belgrade
Serbia

Svitlana Los
Ukrainian Research Institute of Forestry & Forest
Melioration
Ukraine

David White
Represented by Jonathan Burton
Forestry Commission
United Kingdom

Annex 2 – Agenda

21st EUFORGEN Steering Committee (SC) Meeting of the European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN)
 11-12 December 2024 (10-13 CET) – Online meeting
DRAFT AGENDA



Preparatory webinar Thursday 5 December 10:00-12:00 CET
(for information)

- Draft report 2024
- Update on ongoing activities
- Relevant Updates from FORGENIUS and OptFORESTS

[Link to the recording](#)

Wednesday 11 December 10:00-13:00 CET – online – (Moderation: Sarah Adams)

Time	Session	Purpose Outcome	Background documents
10:00 – 10:15	Opening of the meeting Round table – introduction and approval of the agenda. Nomination of rapporteurs	For discussion and decision Approval of the agenda	List of participants Agenda of the meeting
10:15 – 10:25	Checklist of SC 20 decisions (<i>Anna-Maria Farsakoglou</i>)	For information	Checklist of SC 20 decisions
10:25 – 10:35	Update on Phase VII membership (from Secretariat and NC)		
10:35 – 10:50	Presentation of key elements of the draft technical and financial reports 2024 (<i>Michele Bozzano</i>)	For information and discussion The SC received the drafts of the technical and financial reports 2024	Draft technical Report 2024 and estimate of financial situation at the end of 2024
10:50 – 11:20	Project heritage proposal from Secretariat (<i>Michele Bozzano</i>)	For discussion and decision The SC is informed on the proposal for the development of a devoted section on the EUFORGEN website	Project Heritage concept note

21th EUFORGEN Steering Committee Meeting 11-12 December 2024 - online

11:20 – 11:40	Break		
11:40 – 12:10	WG Static and dynamic <i>ex situ</i> conservation – draft proposed indicators and verifiers - (Jan-Peter George, Luke)	<i>For discussion</i> The SC is informed on the progress of the WG on static and dynamic <i>ex situ</i> conservation and discusses the proposed indicators and verifiers	Draft report on dynamic and static <i>ex situ</i> conservation
12:05 – 12:45	WG Static and dynamic <i>ex situ</i> conservation – draft proposed indicators and verifiers (Anna-Maria Farsakoglou)	<i>For discussion and decision</i> The SC decides on the process for the finalisation of the report	Draft report on dynamic and static <i>ex situ</i> conservation (same as above)
12:45 – 13:00	Wrap-up of first day (Sarah Adams)		

Thursday 12 December 10:00-13:00 CET – online - (Moderation: Sarah Adams)

Time	Session	Purpose Outcome	Background documents
10:00 – 11:15	2025 workplan – 2025 activities (AM Farsakoglou)	The Steering Committee defines the activities for the first year of Phase VII, based on the Implementation plan	Phase VII implementation Plan
11:15 – 11:30	Break		
11:30 – 12:00	Opening EUFGIS to neighbour countries (M. Bozzano)	<i>For discussion and decision</i>	Concept note: Proposal to open EUFGIS to Neighbouring Countries
12:00 – 12:30	Feedback on the Secretariat (Robert Mavsar – in absence of the Secretariat)	<i>For discussion</i>	
12:30 – 12:45	21st EUFORGEN SC Meeting: Decisions final approval	<i>For discussion and approval</i> The SC discusses on the outcomes of the meeting and approve the decisions of each session	To be developed during the meeting
12:45 – 12:55	Wrap up – Meeting Feedback	<i>For discussion and decision</i>	
12:55 – 13:00	Closure of the meeting		

Annex 3 – Concept note - "Forest Genetic Resources Project Heritage"



Concept Note:

"Forest Genetic Resources Project Heritage"

Proposal for a section for EUFORGEN Website

Introduction

The European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN) has a longstanding history of supporting and promoting the conservation and sustainable use of forest genetic resources (FGR) across Europe. Throughout the past two decades, numerous research projects have contributed invaluable scientific knowledge, tools, and policy recommendations to advance FGR understanding and management in Europe. However, when these projects conclude, their findings, methodologies, and outputs often become fragmented, difficult to access, or even lost over time. To address this challenge, we propose the creation of a dedicated "Project Heritage" section on the EUFORGEN website.

Objective

The primary objective of the "Project Heritage" section is to establish a centralized, accessible repository that preserves and disseminates key information from completed projects focused on FGR. This section will ensure the long-term visibility and availability of these projects' legacies, promoting the continuity of scientific inquiry, facilitating evidence-based policymaking, and fostering further research and collaboration in the FGR field.

Scope

The "Project Heritage" section will serve as an archival hub where users can find information on a wide range of past projects related to FGR. The section will focus on the following key elements for each archived project (for ongoing and recently ended projects, while for old projects depending on available information):

1. **Scientific Questions:** A summary of the primary scientific questions each project aimed to address. This will provide insight into the research priorities and gaps tackled over time and will help guide future research by identifying areas that require further investigation.
2. **Project Outcomes:** Access to **relevant** outcomes produced by each project, which may include:
 - **Scientific Publications:** Links to research articles, conference proceedings, and reports.
 - **Tools and Resources:** Public deliverables, links to public databases, models, software, and methodologies developed as part of the projects.

- **Policy Briefs and Recommendations:** Summaries and guidance designed to inform policy and decision-makers, fostering evidence-based policies in FGR management.
- **Training and Outreach Materials:** Manuals, guidelines, and other resources developed to build capacity and raise awareness in the FGR field.

Implementation Plan

To develop the "Project Heritage" section, the following steps are proposed:

1. **Inventory of Past Projects:** A review and collection of relevant past projects relevant to FGR will be conducted. This step will involve identifying the scientific questions, outcomes, and key findings of each project.
2. **Development of a Web Portal:** A user-friendly and searchable portal will be created within the EUFORGEN website. This portal will allow users to browse projects by category.
3. **Project information and Structuring:** Information on each project will be compiled in a standardized format to ensure consistency and accessibility. Key metadata, such as project duration, funding sources, and participating institutions, will also be included.
4. **Content Upload and Management:** The information gathered will be uploaded to the portal. This includes adding links to external publications, tools, and databases when possible. Regular maintenance and updates will be performed to keep the section relevant and accessible.
5. **Promotion and Outreach:** To maximize impact, the "Project Heritage" section will be promoted within the EUFORGEN community.

Benefits

The "Project Heritage" section is expected to deliver the following benefits:

- **Enhanced Knowledge Retention:** By preserving data, publications, and outcomes from past projects, EUFORGEN will create a lasting legacy that supports continued research and development in FGR.
- **Research Synergy and Avoidance of Duplication:** Future researchers will benefit from access to past project information, enabling more effective project planning and reducing redundancy in research efforts.
- **Capacity Building and Awareness:** Educational and outreach materials from previous projects will serve as valuable resources for capacity building and knowledge dissemination within the FGR community.

Conclusion

The "Project Heritage" section will be a significant step toward safeguarding the legacies of past projects on European FGR. By providing a dedicated platform on the EUFORGEN website, this initiative will enhance the availability and usability of FGR project outcomes, supporting continued scientific, policy, and practical advancements in the field.

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