

UNECE/FAO Teams of Specialists Reporting 2012 – FOREST COMMUNICATORS NETWORK

Items for regular reporting to the WPFES (length max two pages)	
1. Name:	FOREST COMMUNICATORS NETWORK (FCN)
2. Period covered	February 2012 to March 2013
3. Leader/Deputies and Secretary	<p>Leader: Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtl (Austria)</p> <p>Deputy Leaders: Mr. Colin Morton (United Kingdom), Mr. Kai Lintunen (Finland), Mr. Tomass Kotovics (Latvia); Ms. Pille Roivas (Estonia)</p> <p>Secretary: Ms. Eve Charles</p>
4. Members	<p>General membership policy: <i>‘Participation is open to all sharing the FCN objectives and willing to contribute to fulfilling its tasks. Therefore Members may be nominated by TC/EFC member countries or participate on invitation by the FCN Leaders.’</i></p> <p>Therefore the FCN is partly comprised of members officially nominated by countries (at present 21% of the total membership of 131) and of experts from various organisations and institutions, who showed interest in working with the FCN and do so on invitation by the FCN Leaders.</p> <p>The membership list is published at http://www.unece.org/forests/information/fcn.html</p>
5. Meetings held	<p>Annual meetings: May 2008 – Bilbao/Spain; July 2008 Rambouillet/France; October 2008 – Rome/Italy; September 2009 – Lyss/Switzerland; May 2010 – Hjortviken/Sweden; April 2011 – Budapest/Hungary; June 2012 – Antalya/Turkey. Up-coming: 21 – 23 May 2013, Tallin/Estonia.</p> <p>The FCN Task Force for the European Forest Week 2013 held a meeting in Rovaniemi/Finland from 3 to 4 December 2012.</p> <p>The FCN ad-hoc Team on Communication Advice for the INC-Forests Bureau held meetings on 4 December 2012 in Rovaniemi/Finland and on 25 January 2013 in Antalya/Turkey.</p> <p>The FCN Sub-Group on Forest Pedagogics held several meetings.</p>
6. Outputs during period by mandate item and impact achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European forest communication strategy <p>The <i>Strategic Framework for Forest Communication in Europe</i> was finalised in September 2011 and launched at the Joint TC/EFC Session ‘Orman 2011’ in October 2011 in Antalya/Turkey.</p> <p>The Framework is a milestone output of FCN work. It aims to help achieving better informed decision making on matters relevant to forests and forestry by closing the gap between perception and facts on forests and forestry in the wider European region.</p> <p>The framework offers communication objectives, common key messages and approaches, designed to be used by governments, public and private sector institutions and organisations and stakeholders at all levels, when formulating individual forest communication programs and strategies. Geographically the framework addresses the EFC region or the European part of the UNECE region respectively.</p>

In terms of its implementation several achievements can be recognised:

- ✓ The Strategic Framework for Forest Communication in Europe provided the background for formulating the communication objectives and key messages of the European Forest Week 2013.
- ✓ The European Forest Week 2013 as such is actually a follow up to the recommendation given by the Framework to '*consider establishing a regular collaborative communication campaign throughout Europe with time wise and message wise concerted actions at all levels*'.
- ✓ The framework also recommends to '*capitalise on existing international days related to forests and support efforts to formally recognise a UN International Day of Forests*'. The FCN had its share in the process that made the General Assembly of the United Nations declare the 31st of March to the *International Day of Forests*.
- **Gap analyses of existing opinion research and proposal for improving monitoring and regular analyses on public perception concerning forests, their management and related products**

The FCN helped preparing and conducting the survey '*Shaping forest communication in the European Union: public perceptions of forests and forestry*', commissioned by the European Commission and published in September 2009. Together with more recent public perception surveys carried out e. g. in Austria, Switzerland and Finland this provides highly relevant background for identifying main components of strategic communication on forests and forest based products. So far further work by the FCN on updating this knowledge base has not been possible due to lack of personal and financial resources.

- **European Forest Pedagogics Concept based on best practice examples, common principles and quality standards for forest related environmental education**

The FCN Sub-Group on Forest Pedagogics led by Mr. Thomas Baschny from Austria carried out a survey and conducted several meetings in order to improve the common understanding of the concept. Further information is to be gained at www.forestpedagogics.eu

- **Follow up to the European Forest Week 2008 (follow up media work; evaluation of achievements and lessons learned; improved concept for future activities)**

Building on experiences made and lessons learned with the EFW 2008 the FCN evaluated the communication potential of a second EFW in 2013. Upon request by the TC and EFC Bureaus the FCN provides communication advice to the organisers of the EFW2013. The FCN established a Task Force for the European Forest Week 2013 to this end, which helped to identify communication objectives and to formulate key messages for the EFW2013, and also generated ideas for related events and other activities.

- **Preparations for the International Year of Forests 2011 (raising awareness in the region; developing a strategic outline for concerted activities of local, regional and global relevance)**

Noting the useful contribution national, regional and international actions made during the International Year of Forests 2011 to raising awareness about the importance of sustainable forest management, in December 2012 the General Assembly of the United Nations decided to proclaim 21 March of each year the International Day of Forests. All Member States are encouraged to organize activities, in order to celebrate and raise awareness of the importance of forests and of

trees outside forests. The Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests is requested, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, to facilitate the implementation of the International Day, in collaboration with Governments, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and international, regional and subregional organizations and processes as well as relevant major groups.

The FCN had promoted this idea over years, finally with success, and sees in it an excellent hook for concerted communication efforts in the region and beyond.

- **Contributions to the EU Forest Action Plan, in particular on forest related environmental education and on a European forest communication strategy**

The FCN provided inputs to the EU Standing Forestry Committee's ad-hoc Working Group on the future EU Forest Strategy.

- **PR advice to TC/EFC bureaux and joint secretariat and to other UNECE/FAO Teams of Specialists, including the Team of Specialists on Forest Products Markets and Marketing**

The Strategic Framework for Forest Communication in Europe serves as a source book for all seeking support in forest related communication.

The FCN provides specific communication advice for the EFW2013.

FCN experts advised FAO on how to set up networks for promoting forest communication in other world regions. Workshops were held to this end in Peru for Latin America, in Tanzania for South and East Africa, and in Costa Rica for Central America.

The FCN also provides communication advice to the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe (INC-Forests).

Since requests for communication advice have been increasing in the last years, coming in from different relevant organisations, the FCN at its meeting in June 2012 in Antalya took the decision, to *'provide communication expertise and advice upon request by relevant organisations and institutions, also beyond the ECE region, as far as expert time allows and necessary resources are available.'*

- **PR advice to the Forest Europe Liaison Unit Oslo upon request**

The FOREST EUROPE Liaison Unit as FCN member actively participates in sharing experiences and relevant information.

- **Building PR capacity in TC/EFC member countries through conducting workshops, sharing examples of best practice and holding topical meetings**

The annual FCN meeting 2012 was set up for broad participation and vivid information exchange. A collection on Best Practices in Forest Communication is posted on the FCN web site.

7. Expected outputs over next period by mandate item

- **European forest communication strategy**

The FCN will continue to raise awareness about the useful content of the Strategic Framework for Forest Communication in Europe and will encourage its further implementation.

- **Gap analyses of existing opinion research and proposal for improving monitoring and regular analyses on public perception concerning forests, their management and related products**

At present the FCN as such lacks the resources for carrying out substantive work in this regard. However, the survey '*Shaping forest communication in the European Union: public perceptions of forests and forestry*' stimulated by the FCN and commissioned by the European Commission provides an excellent baseline on public perception as of 2009, at least for the EU region. It would be extremely useful, to update this rich source of information. Upon recommendation by the FCN the *EU Forest Communication Strategy* suggests undertaking a regular analyses of perceptions on forests, their management and related products, e. g. by integrating a set of respective questions into regular polls, such as the 'Eurobarometer'. FCN members will continue to recommend the respective follow up.

- **European Forest Pedagogics Concept based on best practice examples, common principles and quality standards for forest related environmental education**

The Sub-Group on Forest Pedagogics will present an up-date report on its activities and achievements at the next FCN meeting in Antalya, including a *European Strategy on Forest Pedagogics*.

- **Follow up to the European Forest Week 2008 (follow up media work; evaluation of achievements and lessons learned; improved concept for future activities)**

The next FCN meeting in May 2013 in Tallin will elaborate further on the EFW2013. The FCN will promote the initiative in the countries and encourage respective activities.

- **Preparations for the International Year of Forests 2011 (raising awareness in the region; developing a strategic outline for concerted activities of local, regional and global relevance)**

The next FCN meeting in May 2013 in Tallin will discuss on how to best capitalise on the International Days of Forests, to come regularly now each 21st March.

- **Contributions to the EU Forest Action Plan, in particular on forest related environmental education and on a European forest communication strategy**

In the context of the revision of the EU Forestry Strategy the FCN members will continue to promote the issue of forest communication as far as requested and appropriate.

- **PR advice to TC/EFC bureaux and joint secretariat and to other UNECE/FAO Teams of Specialists, including the Team of Specialists on Forest Products Markets and Marketing**

The FCN stays ready to further assist the joint secretariat and other ToS in this regard, within resources available.

The FCN intends to continue working with FAO in building up forest communicators networks in other world regions. A next workshop is envisaged for 2013 in Asia. A joint workshop with other regional FCNs is considered for 2013, possibly back to back with the Tallin meeting.

- **PR advice to the Forest Europe Liaison Unit Oslo upon request**

Work with the FOREST EUROPE Liaison Unit will continue.

- **Building PR capacity in TC/EFC member countries through conducting workshops, sharing examples of best practice and holding topical meetings**

The FCN meetings will continue to be designed for broad participation and vivid information exchange. Topical workshops should provide additional opportunities for deepening understanding on crucial issues and for sharing experiences and examples of best practice. All activities depend on the possibilities for holding meetings as well as on the possibility of experts to participate.

8. Issues for the attention of the Secretariat and the Working Party

The FCN has a different nature than other ToSs.
 The FCN should actually have a permanent status. Otherwise the duration of a possible future FCN mandate should be 4 years as a minimum.
 FCN membership policy must be kept open.

9. Comments, lessons learned

The FCN was established by the TC and the EFC already in 1994, as a ToS in public relations and for a two years period only. Very soon it became clear, that the communication group has a different nature to all the other expert groups under the TC/EFC. Effective communication was soon understood as a long term requirement and not something to be fixed for once with some report from a group that had worked for two years.

The duration of only two years for the mandate proved completely inadequate and was extended very soon to four year mandates, in synchronicity with the duration of the JPsoW. In reality, the FCN has been operating on a quasi permanent mode of work, however, in the absence of another formula it remained formally a ToS. The question is, if this should/could be adapted now to some permanent status, and if not, shortening the duration of the mandate to 2 years will certainly not be an option, many experts would wish to follow.

Limiting the membership to experts nominated by countries only, as done for other ToSs, proved inadequate for the task of improving forest related communication, in particular for broad involvement of stakeholders and for outreach to relevant sectors. Since long the communicators group has evolved from a group of experts with short term task setting to an interactive network dealing with long term activities, and a membership open to all sharing the objectives and willing to contribute to the tasks set out in the mandate.

At present out of the 131 persons listed as members of the FCN only 28 were nominated by countries. The rest are experts who showed interest in the work of FCN at some point, joined in and were put on the list 'on invitation by the FCN leaders' (to have some formality behind). Many of them stayed with the group and out of the ca. 40 most active members, 35 joined the group on basis of the open membership policy, only 5 had been 'nominated by countries'. In fact, without open membership policy the FCN would be dead.

And finally, what makes the FCN attractive and successful are the benefits it generates in terms of information and knowledge gain for experts from various institutions and organisations throughout the region. And this is at the end what helps to improve forest communication in the region.

In the absence of a regular budget the existence and activities of the network depend entirely on the willingness of organisations to allow the participation of their experts, and on their interest to host meetings and to provide resources for supporting publishing of results or other activities. If the FCN was only meant to support the UN bodies and their programs, it would be difficult to get

people on board. The bosses of the people working with the FCN have to see added value for their respective entities. But if done smart, at the end all benefit, including the UN institutions and their programmes.

And finally, there are certainly not many sectors having communication advice practically for free.