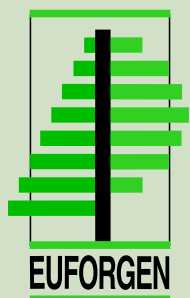


New Phase of EUFORGEN ready for launch



During the past 15 years, European countries have made good progress in conserving their forest genetic resources. According to a report released in 2007 at the fifth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), areas managed for *in situ* and *ex situ* gene conservation of forest trees show an increasing trend since 1990. However, the gene conservation efforts have largely focused on relatively few, widely occurring tree species while fewer gene conservation areas have been established for scattered tree species, many of which are also rare or endangered ones.

At regional level, the countries have been collaborating through the European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN) since 1994. This collaboration has enabled the countries to exchange ideas and learn from each others' experiences in carrying out the gene conservation efforts. As a result, national programmes and strategies for the conservation of forest genetic resources are now in place in most European countries. EUFORGEN has also developed technical guidelines for gene conservation of various tree species and carried out assessments of the status of the gene conservation efforts from the pan-European point of view. Furthermore, EUFORGEN has served as a platform for developing other collaborative initiatives on forest genetic resources and for disseminating relevant information and results of



Forests on the Mount Olympus National Park, Greece. Photo: J. Koskela, Biodiversity International

various research projects.

As we reported in the previous issue of this Newsletter (NL38, July 2009), the EUFORGEN Steering Committee endorsed the continuation of the Programme into Phase IV (2010-2014) at its sixth meeting held in Thessaloniki, Greece in June 2009. This decision was based on the need to further strengthen the gene conservation efforts for many tree species and the fact that climate change is raising additional challenges to the forest sector throughout Europe. Climate change scenarios and predicted impacts are still being debated but climate change has already increased the uncertainty faced by policy-makers and managers responsible for promoting and implementing sustainable forest management. In this regard, the appropriate use of forest genetic resources offers opportunities to maintain the

resilience of forests, mitigate the risks, and facilitate the adaptation of forests to climate change.

However, these opportunities are not yet fully acknowledged in relevant policies, such as national forest programmes (NFPs) and national adaptation strategies to climate change (NAS), or deployed in practical forest management. Furthermore, forest managers often do not pay enough attention or are not aware of genetic consequences of forest management practices and the importance of using high-quality forest reproductive material. NFPs are an important policy tool to support implementation of sustainable forest management and to provide cross-sectoral coordination on forest-related issues. Thus NFPs also have a key role in integrating conservation and use of forest genetic resources into implementation of sustainable

forest management.

In many countries, NFPs include recommendations on the conservation and use of forest genetic resources but they are not always translated into actions at practical forest management level. It is equally important that the conservation and use of forest genetic resources is incorporated into national adaptation strategies to climate change and national biodiversity action plans (NBAPs). Many NAS emphasize changes needed in man-made systems to reduce the impacts of climate change but, in the forest sector, they often ignore what is needed to ensure genetic adaptation of forests. Similarly, NBAPs focus mainly on conservation of biological diversity at landscape and species levels only. During Phase IV, EUFORGEN will continue promoting integration of conservation and use of forest genetic resources into these policies and strategies.

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The EUFGIS project moves into its final year



In 2010, the EUFGIS project (Establishment of a European Information System on Forest Genetic Resources) will carry out its last activities to produce the planned outputs. The national focal points are now finalizing uploading of data on the dynamic gene conservation units of forest trees into the information system.

A documentation manual is also under development based on the pan-European minimum requirements and data standards for the dynamic gene conservation units. The manual is targeted to the national focal points and other professionals who are responsible for documentation of the gene conservation efforts. It will also provide them with guidelines for various reporting purposes.

In early 2010, the project will carry out two case studies, which will analyze the current status of the gene conservation efforts in Europe and the needs for further development of gene conservation strategies for forest trees at pan-European level. This supports the earlier EUFORGEN efforts to identify the most valuable gene conservation units at pan-European level.

Bioversity International is continuing the development of the EUFGIS Portal, including further improvement of the intranet and the uploading mechanism. Once the Portal has been finalized, end-users will be able to view maps of the gene conservation units for different tree species and countries, and they can also

download data for further analyzes. The Portal will be launched at the final meeting of the project, to be held on 14-16 September 2010 in Vienna, Austria. The results of the case studies and the documentation manual will be also presented at the final meeting, which will be hosted by the Federal Research and Training Centre for Forests, Natural Hazards and Landscape (BFW).

The EUFGIS project is co-funded by the European Commission (Council Regulation No 870/2004 on genetic resources in agriculture) and coordinated by Bioversity International. Further information on the final meeting and other activities is available on the project website (www.eufgis.org).

New EUFORGEN website launched: www.euforgen.org



New Phase of EUFORGEN continued...

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On a more practical level, there are two issues for which recommendations are highly needed across Europe. Firstly, as climate change is expected to alter the existing provenance regions, there is a need to develop guidelines for knowledge-based use and transfer of forest reproductive material. Secondly, there is a need to better understand how existing forests should be managed to ensure that they are able to cope with the impacts of climate change. There are several ongoing European research projects which are already addressing the two issues and which are expected to make available new information and results. EUFORGEN will collaborate with these projects in synthesizing the latest research findings into recommendations for policy-makers and managers. This will also enable the research projects to leverage their dissemination efforts through EUFORGEN.

Finally, EUFORGEN will continue development of pan-European gene conservation strategies for forest trees by carrying out more comprehensive analyses on the status of existing dynamic gene conservation efforts across Europe. This work will be facilitated by the new European Information System on Forest Genetic Resources (EUFGIS), which will be launched in September 2010. The information system will be maintained and further developed as part of EUFORGEN activities after the EUFGIS project has ended. EUFORGEN will also collaborate with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in the development of the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources report (to be released by FAO in 2013).

More information on Phase IV can be found on the new EUFORGEN website (www.euforgen.org).



Four new EUFORGEN Technical Guidelines for *Alnus cordata*, *Fagus orientalis*, *Populus tremula* and *Betula pendula* are available soon. To download please visit: www.euforgen.org. They can also be requested from: euforgen@cgiar.org.