EUFGIS Portal is launched

www.eufgis.org

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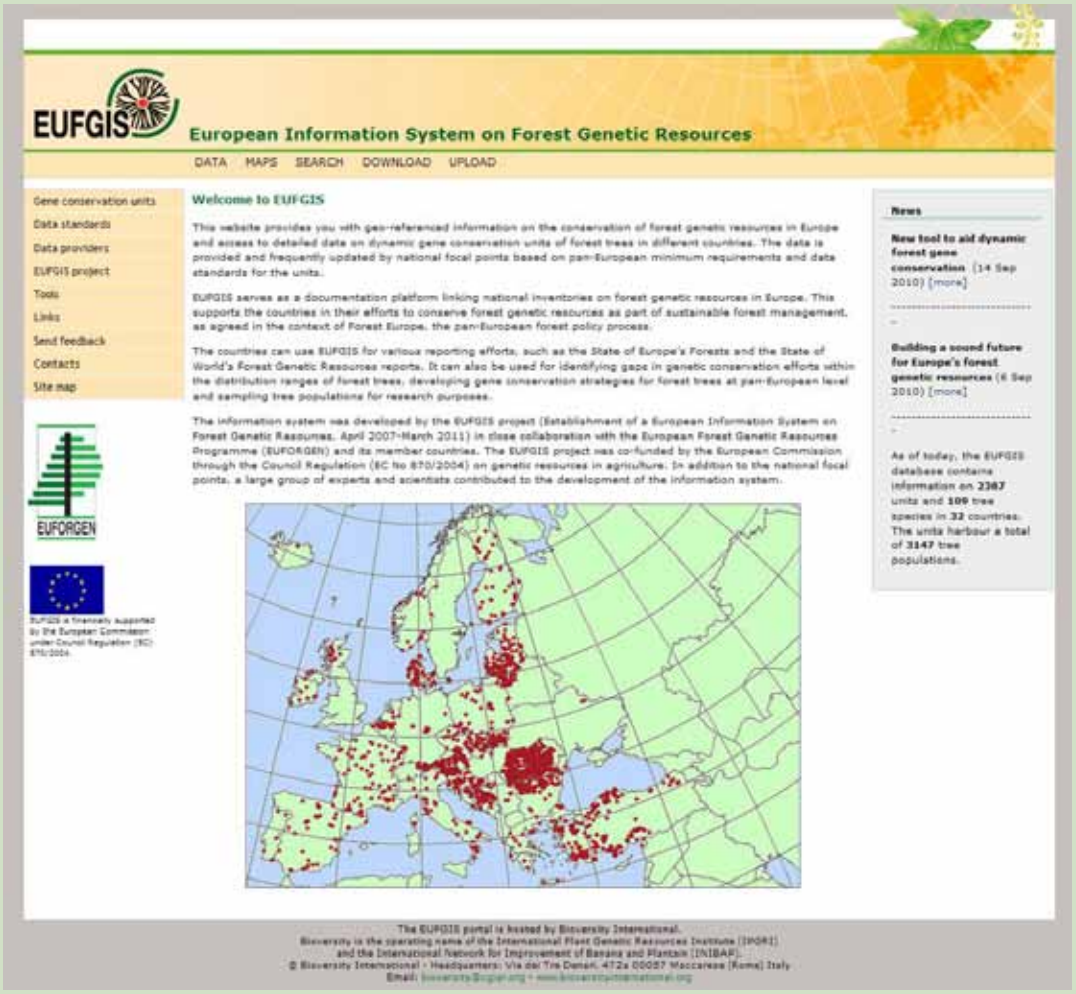

Image: EUFGIS Portal entrypage: http://portal.eufgis.org

The EUFGIS Portal, a new tool for conservation of forest genetic resources, was unveiled on 15 September 2010 in Vienna, Austria. The Portal makes available, for the first time, geo-referenced and standardized data on gene conservation units across the entire distribution range of Europe's forest trees. Currently the Portal includes data on some 2300 gene conservation units and more than 100 tree species.

The Portal is a key product of the EUFGIS project (Establishment of a European Information System on Forest Genetic Resources) coordinated by Bioversity International and supported by the European Commission under Council Regulation (No 870/2004) on genetic resources in agriculture. The Portal was launched at the final project meeting, hosted by the Austrian Federal Research and Training Centre for Forests, Natural Hazards and Landscape (BFW). The meeting gathered together national focal points and other experts to share their experiences in compiling data for the Portal and to discuss how to further develop it.

The future of Europe's forests and forestry will depend on the long-term ability of trees to adapt to a changing climate. This cannot be achieved without active human intervention to maintain evolutionary processes and genetic diversity within tree populations. This approach is termed "dynamic gene conservation" and it is based on managing tree populations at their natural sites, within the environment to which they are adapted (*in situ*), or artificial but dynamically evolving tree populations elsewhere (*ex situ*). Based on this approach, pan-European minimum requirements for dynamic gene conservation units of forest trees were developed as part of the project.

The data available in the EUFGIS Portal meets the pan-European minimum requirements and is uploaded by the national focal points following common data standards. This makes the Portal a valuable source of information for improving the conservation of forest genetic resources both at national and regional levels. The minimum requirements also explain how the units should be managed so that they contribute to dynamic gene conservation.

Case studies presented during the meeting demonstrated how the data can be used for comprehensive assessments of genetic conservation efforts and for developing truly pan-European gene conservation strategies for forest trees. Furthermore, European countries can use the Portal for international reporting efforts, such as the development of the State of Europe's Forest 2011 report, to be released at the next Ministerial Conference in Oslo, and the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources report, prepared by FAO for 2013.

The data screening process has continued after the launch and the national focal points have been notified for possible errors occurring during the uploading process. In several countries, data continues to be uploaded into the Portal. End-users will be able to download data for further analyses once the data providers have signed a data sharing agreement which was adopted by the EUFORGEN Steering Committee on 17 September 2010. The project partners are now finalizing the case studies and they will also prepare guidelines for countries to carry out the documentation work. The project will end on 31 March 2011, after which the Portal will be maintained as part of the EUFORGEN activities.

Further information is available on the EUFGIS Portal (portal.eufgis.org) and the project website (www.eufgis.org).