

**Establishment of a European Information System on Forest Genetic Resources  
(EUFGIS) – AGRI RES GEN 2005/009**

**Minutes of the first meeting of the EUFGIS Expert Group,  
Magleås Center, Birkerød, Denmark, 25 October 2007**

**Present:**

**Expert Group Members:**

Leena Yrjänä (EUFORGEN Conifer Network representative)  
Paraskevi Alizoti (EUFORGEN Conifer Network representative)  
Sándor Bordács (EUFORGEN Stand-forming Broadleaves Network representative)  
Lorenzo Vietto (EUFORGEN Scattered Broadleaves Network representative)  
Oudara Souvannavong (FAO)

**Expert Group Members unable to attend:**

Tor Myking (EUFORGEN Stand-forming Broadleaves Network representative)  
Peter Rotach (EUFORGEN Scattered Broadleaves Network representative)  
Thröstur Eysteinnsson (EUFORGEN Forest Management Network representative)

**Project Partners**

Jason Hubert (Forest Research United Kingdom)  
Hojka Kraigher (Slovenian Forestry Institute, Slovenia)  
Roman Longauer (Forest Research Institute, Slovakia)  
Ditte Christina Olrik (Danish Forest and Nature Agency, Denmark)  
Jarkko Koskela (Bioversity International)  
Michele Bozzano (Bioversity International)  
Ewa Hermanowicz (Bioversity International)

**Opening of the meeting**

J. Koskela, the project coordinator, welcomed the participants on behalf of Bioversity International and introduced the agenda of the meeting.

EUFGIS is one of the actions supported by the European Commission under the Council Regulation (No 870/2004) on genetic resources in agriculture. It is coordinated by Bioversity International and has six other project partners (Federal Research and Training Centre for Forests, Natural Hazards and Landscape (BFW), Austria; State Forest Tree Improvement Station (SNS), Denmark; Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA), France; National Forest Centre (NLC), Slovakia; Slovenian Forestry Institute (SFI), Slovenia; Forest Research, United Kingdom). The project started on 1 April 2007 and it will run until 30 September 2010.

Prior to this meeting the project organised a workshop on documentation of *in situ* gene conservation of forest trees in Europe. The workshop was attended by the EUFGIS national focal points and representatives of the EUFORGEN Networks. The workshop analyzed the current state of FGR documentation in Europe and compared different national approaches in collecting and managing FGR information. Based on the workshop discussions, the participants agreed 12 recommendations for the development of the EUFGIS information system (see the minutes of the workshop).

The Expert Group revisited the workshop recommendations one by one before it started to discuss harmonization of minimum requirements for gene conservation units of forest trees and related data standards (descriptors).

### **Analysis of minimum requirements developed by the EUFORGEN Networks**

The Expert Group then analysed minimum requirements for groups of tree species earlier developed by the EUFORGEN Networks, in order to set the basis for the development of harmonized requirements at pan-European level. In particular, the Expert Group discussed the following requirements or issues addressed by most of the existing minimum requirements; 1) minimum size of a gene conservation unit, 2) emphasis to conserve autochthonous tree populations, 3) no unknown or alien material should occur in a buffer zone of a gene conservation unit, 4) whether *ex situ* units can also be included, 5) gene conservation of exotic tree species, 6) how the units are managed to ensure natural regeneration and to maintain their evolutionary potential, and 7) periodic monitoring. It was agreed that the harmonized minimum requirements to be developed by the Expert Group should include these elements. The purpose of the harmonized minimum requirements is also to serve as a first-level check for what kind of units can be included into the EUFGIS information system.

Regarding the minimum size, it was concluded that to be included into the EUFGIS information system, a gene conservation unit must have a minimum size of 500 mature trees (or 50 ha) in case of conifers, 50 mature trees in case of scattered broadleaves and 500 mature trees in case of stand-forming broadleaves species.

The units should be predominantly located in (presumably) autochthonous forests within the natural distribution range of a species. Additional *ex situ* units can also be included if they represent well adapted forests growing outside of the natural range of the target species. Subsequently, gene conservation units of exotic tree species can also be included, as already mentioned in the minimum requirements of the Conifers Network. The Conifers and Stand-forming Broadleaves Networks emphasize that particular attention should be paid to a buffer zone, which should not contain any unknown or alien material. The minimum requirements of all Networks stress that management of the units should aim at ensuring natural regeneration and maintaining evolutionary potential. Periodic (genetic) monitoring is also recommended by all Networks (every 10 years or so). Finally, following a workshop recommendation, the units must have a designated status as gene conservation units in a country. To meet this requirement, a unit does not have to have legal protection and it is enough if gene conservation is recognized as a primary goal in forest management plans, for example.

### **Harmonization of data standards (descriptors) for the gene conservation units of forest trees**

J. Koskela introduced the descriptors which have been developed earlier by the EUFORGEN Networks for inventories of in situ gene conservation stands of various tree species. These include 1) the standardized list of descriptors for inventories of *Populus nigra* stands, 2) the common minimum descriptors for noble hardwoods, and 3) the basic requirements for inventories of noble hardwoods genetic resources. He also highlighted the descriptors used more recently by the Scattered Broadleaves and Conifers Networks while collecting data on the gene conservation units as part of the development of common action plans. It was concluded that these existing descriptors provide a good basis for developing harmonized data standards for the gene conservation units of forest trees in Europe.

The Expert Group then started its analysis with the *Populus nigra* descriptors which are the most comprehensive ones. The descriptors were discussed in detail and the Expert Group

agreed that several species-specific descriptors should not be included as the list of harmonized data standards (e.g. clones collected, clone ID number, and information on a river system, to name a few). Furthermore, it was agreed that there is no need to collect information on individual institutes in a given country because the EUFGIS focal points will coordinate the data compilation at national level. It was also agreed that some of the descriptors need to be modified following the workshop recommendations (e.g. geographical coordinates, soil and climatic data).

Due to lack of time, the Expert Group did not manage to discuss in detail the other descriptors. The EUFORGEN Secretariat was therefore asked to review them after the meeting and develop a first draft of the harmonized data standards. The Expert Group would then continue its discussion by email before its second meeting.

J. Koskela informed the meeting that the second meeting of the Expert Group is scheduled to be held in France in April 2008 and the third meeting in Slovenia in summer/autumn 2008 to finalize the common minimum requirements and data standards. During the process, the EUFORGEN Networks and the national focal points will have an opportunity to comment on the draft requirements and standards.

With no other matters, J. Koskela thanked the participants for their inputs and closed the meeting.