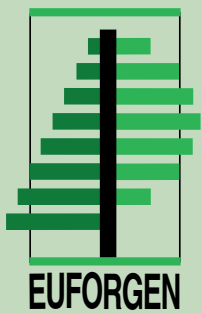


EUFGIS project organizes workshop on FGR documentation



The EUFGIS (Establishment of a European Information System on Forest Genetic Resources) project, coordinated by Biodiversity International and co-funded by the European Commission under the Council Regulation (No 870/2004) on genetic resources in agriculture has initiated the development of an information system for dynamic gene conservation units of forest trees in Europe. The concept of dynamic gene conservation emphasizes maintenance of evolutionary processes within tree populations to safeguard their potential for continuous adaptation. In most cases this means managing tree populations at their natural

sites, within the environment to which they are adapted to (*in situ*). In some cases, artificial but dynamically evolving tree populations outside their place of origin (*ex situ*) also contribute to dynamic gene conservation.

A total of 34 European countries have nominated a national focal point for the EUFGIS project. The national focal points are expected to compile national data sets on the dynamic gene conservation units, following data standards which will be developed as part of the project in collaboration with the EUFORGEN Networks.

On 23-24 October 2007, the focal points met representatives of the EUFORGEN Networks, invited speakers and the project partners at a workshop held in Birkerød, Denmark. The workshop discussed the present documentation efforts of the gene conservation units in Europe, identified future needs in this regard and made recommendations for the development of the EUFGIS information system.

Prior to the workshop, a survey was carried out among the national focal points to obtain detailed information on the gene conservation of forest trees and related documentation efforts at national level. The survey revealed that a typical size of the gene conservation units is 1-10 hectares while some units can reach hundreds of hectares in countries with large forest areas. The gene conservation units are often located within protected forest areas but the survey confirmed that many countries also use seed production stands for gene conservation purposes. Furthermore, forest areas managed for multiple uses, following the principles of sustainable forest management, harbour a considerable amount of the gene conservation units in several European countries.

The workshop participants then held intensive discussions on the various requirements for a dynamic gene conservation unit and welcomed the objective of EUFGIS to develop common minimum requirements and data standards for the units at pan-European level. About half of the participating countries have national databases on the gene conservation units, but only in two countries are the national databases publicly available online. Many national focal points in countries which do not yet have a national database expressed their interest in using the EUFGIS information system instead of developing their own databases.

The workshop outputs and recommendations were further discussed by an expert group on 25 October 2007. The expert group consists of representatives of the EUFORGEN Networks and other invited experts. This group's task is to develop common minimum requirements and information standards for the gene conservation units, which will later be circulated to the EUFORGEN Networks, the national focal points and other relevant stakeholders for their comments in spring 2008.

Further information on the EUFGIS project, as well as the workshop presentations and outcomes, can be found at www.euforgen.org



The Rude Skov forest in Birkerød, Denmark.
Photo: E. Hermanowicz, Biodiversity International