

## The EUFGIS information system is taking shape



In spring 2009, the EUFGIS project (Establishment of a European Information System on Forest Genetic Resources) entered its third year of activities with a series of sub-regional training workshops for national focal points. A total of 35 countries have now nominated their focal points to the information system.

The training workshops were organized by the project partners in Austria (Vienna, 24-26 March), Slovenia (Ljubljana, 21-23 April), France (Avignon, 5-7 May) and Denmark (Copenhagen, 12-14 May). Bioversity International also provided training to the national focal points, as part of the workshops, to demonstrate how they should compile data sets and upload them using the intranet of the EUFGIS information system.

An important part of the workshops was an introduction of the pan-

European minimum requirements and data standards for dynamic gene conservation units of forest trees. These were developed as part of the EUFGIS project based on the earlier work of the EUFORGEN Networks. The minimum requirements serve as a check list for which kind of gene conservation units can be entered into the EUFGIS information system. The data standards define what information on the units the national focal points should provide.

The minimum requirements indicate that each unit should have one or more tree species recognized as target species for gene conservation efforts. The units should be predominantly located in native tree populations but additional *ex situ* units can also be included if they represent well-adapted

forests. Units of introduced tree species can be included if they are established for conserving well-identified and differentiated characteristics from their original source populations. The minimum population size is also specified and guidelines are provided for the management and monitoring of the units.

The data on the units will be provided at two different levels: general data on the units and more detailed data on each target tree species within a unit. The data standards include geographical coordinates of the unit, minimum and maximum elevation within the unit, surface area, ownership, type and function of the unit and predominant silvicultural system. For each unit, climatic variables will be obtained based on the geographical coordinates using a common source (i.e. WORLDCLIM). For each target tree species, the data standards also include the origin of the material, the total number of reproducing trees per unit, remarks on sex ratio (in case of dioecious species), regeneration and distribution of the reproducing trees in the unit.

Currently the information system contains data on 1020 gene conservation units in 30 countries. The national focal points are continuing to compile and upload data and this work is expected to be finalized by the end of 2009. Bioversity International is now developing the EUFGIS portal which will be launched online at the final project meeting in Vienna in mid-2010.

The EUFGIS project is co-funded by the European Commission under Council Regulation No 870/2004 on genetic resources in agriculture and coordinated by Bioversity International. Further information on the project is available on the EUFGIS Website ([www.eufgis.org](http://www.eufgis.org)).

## Sixth EUFORGEN Steering Committee meeting continued...

(continued from page 1) on the development of the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources (SoW-FGR) report (see page 5 in this Newsletter for further details). Regional networks and programmes on forest genetic resources, such as EUFORGEN, have an important role in the preparation of this report. FAO invited the Steering Committee to comment on the draft outline of the report, which will be finalized by October 2009. The Steering Committee welcomed the development of the report and recommended that the EUFORGEN Secretariat continue its collaboration with FAO in this regard.

The Steering Committee also agreed that EUFORGEN should finalize the planned report on European forest genetic resources independently from FAO's global report efforts. However, the content of the European report, to be finalized by 2012, should be aligned with the content of the global report to avoid duplication of efforts.

The main item in the agenda of the meeting was a proposal for EUFORGEN Phase IV (2010-2014). In March 2009, a survey was carried out among the member countries to collect feedback on the achievements and the future role of EUFORGEN. The survey also identified needs for further action on forest genetic resources at pan-European level. Based on the results of the survey, a working group of National Coordinators from Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom developed the proposal for further discussion by the Steering Committee.

The meeting endorsed the proposal and agreed that climate change and its implications for forest management (in particular to the use of forest reproductive material) and conservation of forest genetic resources are the main issues that should be addressed during Phase IV. Furthermore, the Steering Committee noted that integration of forest genetic resources into national forest programmes, national biodiversity action plans and national adaptation strategies to climate change still need to be improved in many countries.

The Steering Committee also agreed a major change in the Programme's mode of operation. EUFORGEN will operate through smaller working groups focusing on specific tasks during Phase IV. Each working group will consist of approximately 10 experts and the outputs of the working groups will be presented to the Steering Committee for further action. In addition, the outputs will also be discussed during workshops through which a broader group of stakeholders will be engaged in the EUFORGEN activities.

The Steering Committee further decided that the EUFGIS information system will be maintained and further developed as part of EUFORGEN after the EUFGIS project has ended in September 2010. The EUFGIS National Focal Points will also continue their work providing national data and keeping the information system updated. This work is crucial for developing the pan-European gene conservation strategies for forest trees and providing inputs to the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources report.

The Steering Committee will meet again in early 2010 to further review the budget for Phase IV, develop an overall workplan for various activities and establish the first working groups.

The summary report of the meeting is available at the EUFORGEN Website ([www.euforgen.org](http://www.euforgen.org)).