



## Case study // Round Table SDG 15: Sustainable Forest Management and the SDGs

### INTEGRATE – A European-wide network to enhance nature conservation in sustainably managed forests

#### *European Network Integrate*

*Level: regional, sub-regional, national*

#### Summary

Integrated forest management represents a key strategy to further integrate nature conservation objectives into the practical implementation of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). In the framework of the EU Forest Strategy and its Multiannual Implementation Plan, with reference to lessons-learned and outcomes of the INTEGRATE/ INTEGRATE+ studies of the European Forest Institute (EFI) and based on the Prague Declaration on Forests signed by the Czech Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Jurečka, and by the German Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture, Mr. Schmidt, at the Conference in Prague in October 2016, the two ministers invited for the establishment of a voluntary cross-border network on the further integration of nature conservation enhancement in sustainably managed forests in Europe. The objective of the European Network Integrate is to promote and advance forest management approaches as related to the integration of nature conservation in SFM at three levels: policy-making level; forest practitioners and managers; and research and academia. The network presently includes 15 states and the European Commission. EFI facilitates the network's activities in the framework of its project InForMAR funded by Germany.

#### Situation

There is a rich tradition of integrative approaches at the forest practice level across Europe. In the last decades, new concepts have been developed and implemented throughout different parts of the Pan-European region. Yet, despite this positive trend, the potential to integrate nature conservation and wood production under changing socio-economic and environmental driving forces is subject to ongoing political and scientific debate. For instance, the question of how nature conservation objectives and wood production can be combined under changing climate conditions and increasing risks would be fundamental to address. Moreover, barriers exist in the science-policy-practice interface as regards integrated forest management approaches. There is consequently a need to demonstrate the potential of these approaches to policy makers, backed up by scientific findings. It would also be relevant to initiate mutual learning related to the prospects of integrated forest management approaches amongst policy makers, administration, practitioners and scientists.

## Strategy

### Objectives and tasks

- Promote cross-border and cross-sectoral learning and cooperation on innovative and successful approaches to further integrate nature conservation, especially the maintenance and enhancement of biological diversity, into sustainable forest management practices.
- Offer an active interface between research/academia, policy, administration and forestry as well as nature conservation practitioners.
- Provide a platform for on the spot (forest) discussions of demands of nature conservation, including opportunities to reconcile and combine them with other forest functions and vice versa.
- Promote transfer of knowledge and capacity building on integration in all sectors involved.

### Working modus

- Regular meetings once a year or irregularly for specific reasons (on invitation and hosted by members).
- Meetings in conjunction with on the spot forest visits and practical demonstrations.
- Regular feedback/reports to the Standing Forestry Committee and other European fora.
- Networking – to the extent feasible through national focal points.
- Promotion of cross-border expert visits and exchanges.
- Joint projects as needed and supported.

### Member's contributions

- The network is voluntary, works on an informal basis and builds on effort-sharing.
- States members participate as they like and establish focal points at their responsible forest administrations.
- The European Commission as well as national and international research institutes that have relevant projects running in Europe can also join the network, share their expertise and contribute to the discussions.
- Each member state establishes at least one demonstration site in typical managed forest types for innovative and successful integration of nature conservation and offers an expose on it.
- Member states are invited to stand ready for hosting expert meetings on the (forest) spot as needed, following an effort-sharing approach.
- Member states are invited to promote the participation of national experts from science, administration, policy and practice in such meetings and in online-dialogues.
- All members are invited to contribute to joint reporting and feedback.

### Results and impact

At the moment, there are 42 forest demonstration sites (so-called Martescopes) established in 10 European states. These Marteloscope sites are fully inventoried forest plots that allow for practicing a decision making “on the ground” with regard to wood production and forest biodiversity protection. The focus of the latter is on habitat trees and microhabitats. A modern software allows to carry out various simulations, taking into account both economic and ecological value of individual trees. The sites are currently used for forest management training and education, research, but also to allow concrete forest management related debates between policy or decision makers. Specifically with regard to the latter, the network has shown to be suitable for conducting well-informed policy debate and solving forest-related conflicts on the ground. The network of forest demonstration sites has been currently quickly increasing with regard to the number of sites and the functionality of the network. The network is coordinated by EFI within the InForMAR project, a project that also facilitates the European Network Integrate. The catalogue of microhabitats, that is essential to the network’s model of integrated forest management, is meanwhile available in 10 languages. The concept of integrated forest management is also explained in a movie: <http://www.integrateplus.eu/>.

### Challenges and lessons learned

Nature conservation is already an important objective in most sustainably managed forests in Europe. Foresters are however facing a growing demand to increase nature conservation as well as the request to leave more forests unmanaged. These demands, the latter in particular, are nevertheless very difficult to combine with other societal demands placed on the forests, as well as, in many cases, forest owners' perceptions and intentions. Moreover, as science tells us, setting aside managed forests is not always the best way to protect species and habitats in the European cultural landscapes. There is furthermore the urge to increasingly bring European forest management in line with climate change adaptation.

INTEGRATE can help to build bridges between different parties. It explores the potential to enhance nature conservation in a most effective and efficient way, “integrating” it with other demands towards forests. Many best practise examples already exist throughout Europe from which we can learn, including the translation of success stories and lessons-learned to other forest-related situations.

Integrative approaches can maintain and enhance forest-related biological diversity with respect to the historical, multifunctional and professionally managed forests in Europe. It offers win-win solutions (supporting both the bioeconomy and biodiversity), cost-efficiency and low impact on public budgets, possibilities of a large-scale application, respect to local economies and making use of traditional forestry technics.

Our vision is that:

- The European Network Integrate involves all EU Members States, relevant European Commission services and new non-EU countries.
- The European Network Integrate is a well-known and respected platform for building consensus on balancing bioeconomy and biodiversity enhancement in forests and on integrating nature protection into sustainably managed forests.



- Integrative approaches are widely accepted both by forest owners/managers and by nature protection community.
- The methodology is further elaborated and simplified so that it can be easily applied by forest owners.
- The data collection methods on the Marteloscope demonstration sites, including the monitoring of tree microhabitats, are the basis for designing biodiversity related payments for forest ecosystem services or rural development forestry measures.
- The European Network Integrate is dynamic enough to provide professional support to its members or various stakeholders upon request.

### **Potential for replication**

The project offers standardized tools (Marteloscope demonstration sites, catalogue of microhabitats, software) which can easily be used in various forest types across Europe and at the same time an open forum for exchange on other approaches to integrate nature protection into sustainably managed forests. One of the basic working methods is cross-boarded expert exchanges which serve to spread the knowledge. It has potential to be replicated also outside Europe at least in boreal and temperate zones.

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