

Forest Communicators Network Task Force Meeting

Vienna, Austria, 11-12 April 2016

Summary Report

Present:

Ingwald Gschwandtl (Austria, FCN team leader)

Kai Lintunen (Finland, deputy FCN leader)

Markus Kühling (Germany)

Maria de Cristofaro (FAO)

Gerda Wolfrum (IUFRO, deputy FCN leader)

Lisa Lehner (Austria, IFSA)

Ludmila Marusakova (FOREST EUROPE Liaison unit Bratislava)

Igor Vizlai (FOREST EUROPE Liaison unit Bratislava)

Roman Michalak (UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section)

Elina Warsta (UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, secretary)

Cynthia Miner (US, IUFRO WP, by Skype for parts of the meeting)

Colin Morton (UK, deputy FCN leader, by Skype for parts of the meeting)

The Task Force meeting discussed preparations for the workshop jointly organized by the UNECE-FAO Forest Communicators Network (FCN) and the IUFRO Communications and Public Relations Working Party, to be held in Portland, Oregon on 29 August to 1 September 2016. The Task Force developed a detailed agenda for the meeting in cooperation with the US Forest Service. The time difference to US allowed the group to work in turns with the US Forest Service.

The US Forest Service has kindly offered to host the meeting in Portland, which is a great opportunity to engage North American partners to the communication work. The Task Force discussed the presentation proposals received and agreed to include the majority of them into the programme in varying formats, with the purpose to allow multiple people to present their work bearing in mind the relevance for communications and usefulness to the participants. It was agreed in general that presentations should be short and enough time should be reserved for discussion.

It was suggested to start the meeting with a key note speech setting the scene. Proposals on possible speakers were offered by the group. It was left to the host organisation to identify a qualified speaker.

The agenda will be finalized in the next two weeks (US Forest Service to send to the FCN leader), titles and format will be confirmed with speakers, responses will be sent to all submitters. The agenda is planned to be sent out through the networks to all by the end of April together with logistics information and a call for registration.

The meeting in Portland is constructed around three themes: (1) communication between sectors – trust and sustainability, (2) communicating global, acting

local, and (3) training. No presentation proposals were received from Canada, but it was decided that all efforts will be made to at least have one Canadian representative present in the meeting. Cynthia Miner, Gerda Wolfrum and Elina Warsta will reach out to their Canadian partners to inform them about the meeting and encourage participation.

The hosts indicated the need to find a way for covering expenses for food and refreshments related to the meeting in the form of a registration fee or similar. The Task Force principally agreed to such an approach and suggested to clarify formalities with the colleagues from the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section.

The International Day of Forests 2017 will be addressed at the Portland meeting based on the overall theme to be announced shortly by the CPF. The European Forest Week 2017 will also be on the agenda for the Portland meeting (brainstorming and planning as appropriate), and thus it was decided that Poland should be invited to participate in the meeting to initiate the preparations for the next European Forest Week, which is planned to take place together with the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and FAO European Forestry Commission meeting in October 2017 in Poland (to be confirmed).

Elina Warsta briefed the Task Force about the UNECE-FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management, which took place on 22-23 March 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland. The Working Party is the annual technical level meeting, where the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section presents past and planned activities on all work areas, including communication and outreach, and where all teams of specialists (FCN as one of eight), should inform the member states of their activities and seek guidance when needed.

Roman Michalak informed that the co-operation between UNECE and FAO on forest and timber was initiated in 1947 and will have its 70 years anniversary in 2017. The group suggested to explore how to best use this fact as a communication opportunity.

Maria De Cristofaro briefed the Task Force on the preparations for the Eastern Europe and Central Asia communication workshop (the Russian Speaking Countries Forest Communication Workshop), planned to take place in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, on 1-3 June 2016. The purpose of the meeting is to bring countries together from the region to exchange experiences and views on forest related communications and to learn about the forest communicators networks existing in several regions, showcase the benefits of such networks and explore the possibilities for future cooperation. At the moment these countries are absent in the FCN.

The Task Force agreed that the FCN communications list should be updated and that further work on the updates will be done in the forthcoming months (Ingwald Gschwandtl, Maria de Cristofaro, Elina Warsta).

The possibility to hold the next annual FCN meeting back-to-back with the IUFRO 125th Anniversary Congress, which will take place on 19-22 September 2017 in Freiburg, Germany, was initially discussed. The FCN meeting could be used for providing inputs to the congress and help organizing pre-conference trainings, similar to the ones that were organized before the World Forestry Congress in Durban, South Africa. The discussions on this regard, as well as other options, will continue.

FOREST EUROPE Liaison Unit Bratislava informed the Task Force about their plans for work on communication. The unit will prepare a proposal for the work programme of the FOREST EUROPE process until the next ministerial conference. The work programme will be considered by the Expert Level Meeting, which takes place on 11-12 May 2016 in Bratislava, Slovakia. FOREST EUROPE had initial plans to create a specific platform of communicators within the 46 countries that are signatories for the process. The Task Force suggested to benefit from existing structures such as FCN as much as possible and to avoid duplication, especially taking into consideration the increasing budget cuts even in Western European countries that have started to limit participation in meetings. The FCN Leader highlighted the longstanding fruitful co-operation with the different FOREST EUROPE Liaison Units, starting already in the run up to the Lisbon conference in 1998. The group suggested that this practice be continued and developed further.

FOREST EUROPE is planning to develop a subset of criteria and indicators for Sustainable Forest Management, a specific set for communication purposes. The Task Force suggested that the FCN could assist on tasks similar to this, and further cooperation should be discussed once the draft work programme is ready. FOREST EUROPE will send the draft work programme for comments to the Task Force before the expert level meeting.

The Task Force thanked Ingwald Gschwandtl and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management for hosting the meeting.