

# Report of the UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators' Network – Annual Meeting

---

22-24 May 2018, Wageningen, Netherlands

The annual meeting of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Communication – the Forest Communicators' Network (FCN) took place on 22 - 24 May 2018 at the Wageningen University, Wageningen, Netherlands. It was kindly hosted by the Ecosystem Services Partnership (ESP).

The meeting was attended by 22 participants from 7 countries and 14 organisations. All presentations held at the meeting are available on the meeting website: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=48171>

The objective of the meeting was to exchange experiences on communicating about forest ecosystem services and to find common messages for communication on forest-related matters.

## Opening of the meeting

Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtl, FCN leader, welcomed the participants and summarized past achievements of the team of specialists (ToS). He noted that the Warsaw Integrated Program of Work (WIPoW) provides a new mandate and guidance to the work over the next two years that should be considered while planning activities of the Network. The agenda was introduced and adopted as proposed.

Ms. Theresa Loeffler, UNECE/FAO Secretariat, provided an overview of the Warsaw Integrated Program of Work (WIPoW) and highlighted the revised guidelines for UNECE/FAO Teams of Specialists and the revised Terms of Reference for the FCN. The full list of planned activities and functions of the FCN can be found on page 42 of the report of the joint 75<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the 39<sup>th</sup> session of the European Forestry Commission ([ECE/TIM/2017-2 – FO:EFC/2017/2](#)).

## Election of officers

The FCN elected Mr. Kai Lintunen (Finland) as new team leader and Ms. Lourdes Lázaro Marín (IUCN) as new deputy leader. Mr. Tomass Kotovičs (Latvia), Mr. Colin Morton and Ms. Gerda Wolfrum (IUFRO) were re-elected as deputy leaders. Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtl (Austria) stepped down after leading the team since 1996. The Secretariat as well as the FCN group thanked Mr. Gschwandtl for

the many years of leadership and for the energy and dedication he brought to the task. He will continue in his function as chair of the Global Group on Forest Communication, established by FAO for coordinating among the regional forest communicators networks.

## Challenges and opportunities ahead

The FCN noted that communicating to other sectors is a continuous challenge and an area that should be further explored.

Communication events at international conferences should continue to reach out to a broad audience. The communication session at the 2017 IUFRO anniversary meeting was mentioned as one successful example. In addition, stakeholder-dialogues could be considered as an option for the future. The IBFRA 2018 conference in Laxenburg, Austria, 17 - 20 September 2018; the ESP regional conference for Europe 2018, 15 – 19 October 2018, in San Sebastián, Spain; the IUFRO 2019 World Congress, 29 Sep – 5 Oct 2019 in Curitiba, Brazil; the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, 11 – 19 June 2020, in Marseille, France; were mentioned as upcoming opportunities for communication events.

The FCN should increase efforts to involve youth in its work, especially in the light of the upcoming International Day of Forests (IDF) 2019 to be celebrated under the theme “Forests and Education”. It was proposed to involve the International Forestry Students’ Association (IFSA) more actively within the FCN and to strengthen personal contacts with Universities. Further efforts should also be made to bring the private sector to the table. Therefore, it is necessary to make the FCN meetings attractive to the above mentioned groups, for instance by reinforcing training components.

Emphasising a specific topic during the annual meetings was seen as positive and should be continued. It was further suggested to link forest topics, especially forest products, to the circular economy as the overarching rationale for forest communication activities.

## Communicating ecosystem services - report of presentations

Ms. Martine van Weelden, Ecosystem Services Partnership (ESP), presented the ESP, a worldwide ecosystem services network that connects over 3000 people and 40 organizations from 85 countries to enhance the science, policy and practical application of ecosystem services for conservation and sustainable development.

Ms. Sarah Adams, EFIMED, presented the SINCERE project (Spurring INnovations for forest eCosystem SERvices in Europe), and the communication challenges that come along with it. Within the project a focus is set on liaising with journalists to make them aware of improved evidence and science-based articles on ecosystem services. The hook for a joint workshop with scientists and journalists is a 3D video training for journalists.

Ms. Jolanta Stankiewicz, State Forests Poland, presented an educational video on climate change, the greenhouse effect, the Kyoto protocol and the role of forests. The video was prepared for the upcoming COP24, 3-14 December 2018, in Katowice, Poland.

Ms. Ewa Hermanowicz, EUFORGEN, presented a communication campaign on “Afforesting Iceland” and reflected on storytelling about research through short films. Key to a successful story is to make it personal and local while at the same time promoting a universal message. Another success factor for this campaign was that National Geographic picked it up and spread it through several networks.

Ms. Gerda Wolfum, IUFRO, presented activities to communicate forest science to policy-makers and to promote the IUFRO study on Forest and Water Interactions. Through global forest expert panels (GFEP) forest-related intergovernmental process are supported with assessment reports on emerging global issues of high concern. The GFEP have triggered involvement of scientists from various disciplines in policy processes and an increase in collaboration with non-forest sectors. The publications are usually published along with briefing documents for negotiators, guidance for strategic policy development or teaching materials and have considerable impact.

## International Day of Forests

Ms. Maria DeCristofaro, FAO, and Ms. Lourdes Lázaro, IUCN, presented activities and communication efforts on the occasion of the International Day of Forests (IDF) 2018 “Forests and Cities”; and led over to a brainstorming session on IDF 2019 which will focus on the theme “Forests and Education”.

Outcomes of the brainstorming session:

### Audiences

- Children, teenagers and adults should be addressed

### Actions

- Learning related contests (games, quizzes)
- Quiz/ 360 tech; image; “find an object”
- Seeds for every participants to plant a tree
- “tree of the year” plant
- Messages on genetics of the trees
- Governments could send experts to schools
- Travel kits, circulate gear, school to school with a little investment; twinning schools; educational toolkit for schools
- Treasure hunting campaign
- Pokémon partnership (as kids are able to recognize more Pokémon than real animal species)
- PSAs (public service announcements) “talks on trees”
- “wow the readers”

### Messages

- Circular economy – should be the overarching rationale
- Multi-functionality of forests; get interest through complexity
- Cool forests (cooling effects of forests)
- How forest depends on me; and how I depend on forest



- Learn from forests
- Cutting trees is not bad – wood is good
- Learning together, growing together, rooting knowledge
- Meeting point forest
- You can't make toilet paper out of plastic
- What has the forest taught you?
- May the forest be with you
- Sometimes you can't see the tree from the forest
- Book vs. mobile pics taken of reader

#### Activities/Tools/Channels

- Social media; get social media influencers to spread the message
- Apps, e.g. tree finders (works like an identification key)
- 10 best quirky trees
- 30 sec to 1 min video: fun on forest products “teaser”
- Smart use of forest products
- On the date – send pics and films (Where is Waldo? / Where is Woody?)
- Rose lyrics; Bette Midler – green under the snow...
- Globe Network

## Common strategies for communication and outreach

Ms. Mita Sen, UNFF, presented the recently adopted [Communication and Outreach Strategy](#) of the [UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030](#) (UNSPFF). The strategy aims to raise awareness of forests, promote sustainable forest management, raise awareness of the Global Forest Goals and encourage implementation of the UNSPFF 2030 as well as to amplify communications from the forest community.

Mr. Thomas Baschny, Forest Pedagogics subgroup, presented the activities, achievements and plans of the FCN sub-group on Forest pedagogics. Since 2006, an annual forestpedagogy congress has been held; the next session will take place 2 – 5 October 2018 in Pudasjärvi, Finland. The main objectives are to improve social and political awareness, establish forestpedagogy as a recognized Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) part and to elaborate common quality standards of forest pedagogy programs.

Ms. Theresa Loeffler, UNECE/FAO, presented communication activities of the joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, including the IDF 2018 event “The Sky is the Limit” and the 4<sup>th</sup> European Forest Week, and asked the team to provide input to the Communication Strategy for the UNECE/FAO Secretariat which was proposed to be developed.

Outcome of the brainstorming session on the Communication Strategy for the UNECE/FAO Secretariat

### Objective of the strategy

- Support of the UN cause on forest: The shared United Nations vision is of a world in which all types of forests and trees outside forests are sustainably managed contribute to sustainable development and provide economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits for present and future generations. (UNSPFF 2017-2030)
- Engagement with other relevant sectors; forestry is connected to many other sectors

### Audiences

- Member States
- United Nations system and international and regional organizations
- Major groups and other stakeholders (among others civil society, private sector, youth)
- Influencers/opinion-makers/communication networks
- The public

### Key messages

- Building the future with forests
- Healthy forests work for you
- Showing the value of forests
- Thinking along value-chains; from forest producers to the products
- Why should you care about the fate of forests?
- What benefit do you have from forests?



- Tailor the message to the specific audience

#### Methods to communicate within and outside the forest sector/alignment with the SDGs

- Improve the titles of publications to be precise and catchy
- Storytelling
- Data visualization > flourish and use data as a hook (tip: <https://hackastory.com/>)
- Repackaging and repeating of the important data outcomes
- Become a reliable and important information producer
- Infographics
- Work with the SDG icons whenever possible > visual branding

#### Recommendations on communication activities

- We over-communicate internally and under-communicate externally (look outside the forest)
- Target other meetings (within UN and outside) to promote publications, data outcomes etc.
- Show the linkages to the SDGs
- Send the right specialist to the right meeting
- Most efficient use of social media
- Use the right method for the right audience
- Private sector – create a network; - give them the floor

## Best practices and success stories – lighting talks

Ms. Maria DeCristofaro, FAO, presented a [forestry communication toolkit](#) which is available in English, French and Spanish on the FAO website and provides communication tools like videos, publications, social media cards, infographics etc. on various topics like biodiversity, cities, desertification, climate change, energy, food security, mountains, sustainable forests and watersheds.

Ms. Milena Serro, Brazilian Tree Industry, presented on creative and didactic communication through infographics to their main stakeholders - government authorities and agencies, production chain and important sectors of the economy entities, social and environmental organizations, universities, schools, consumers and press, both national and international – on the importance of the agribusiness for the environment, the economy and the people.

Mr. Kai Lintunen, Finland, presented a current communication example on the bioeconomy and innovative wood products in Finland. He touched upon the gap between a strong beneficial but vague-sounding forest based bioeconomy and making it understandable to non-expert people. He urged to explore and build the skills of storytelling.

Mr. Marcel Riedl, Czech University of Life Science, presented a collective communication campaign to work on the image of foresters, as most people in the Czech Republic “like forests but do not like foresters”. The central idea of the campaign is that the forest is maintained and developed thanks to the long-term and systematic work of foresters resulting in more habitats, space for recreation and wooden products.

Mr. Pierre Hermans, Sylva Nova, presented how private companies are using forests as a marketing tool. A corporate social responsibility approach is integrated into strategies and companies have decided to work on their image and carbon footprint by financing different afforestation or forest restoration projects.

Ms. Theresa Loeffler, UNECE/FAO, showed the teaser of a short movie “Made in forests – a short story on sustainable fashion” which will be launched at the high-level political forum 9-18 July 2018 by UNDP Goodwill Ambassador Ms. Michelle Yeoh. Fashion does not always have a sustainable image. It is often associated with promoting excessive and unsustainable consumption, using materials that are not environmentally friendly, and, in many cases, relying on indecent labour conditions. However, many wood-based fibers are already used in the fashion industry and gain popularity due their environmental-friendliness.

## Revising the Strategic Framework for Forest Communication in Europe

The [Strategic Framework for Forest Communication in Europe](#), which was developed by the FCN in 2011, was presented by Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtner as a revised version of this document is one of the expected outcomes under the new mandate of the ToS FCN. Ms. Liina Gross, Estonia reported that this strategic framework was used in Estonia as a basis to develop the national framework on forest communication.

The EU Standing Forestry Committee asked FCN to present the possibility of updating the EU Forest Communications Strategy and the EU-wide consumer survey. In addition, the Committee wanted to get updated on FCN activities as well as global communications activities and sound out possible collaboration opportunities.

An updated version of the strategic framework should be in a format that allows monitoring its use and it should be promoted to member States to be used. The option of doing a public perception survey on forests and forestry after the example from 2009 was seen as a good basis for updating the document. It was suggested to contact EFI and the University of Natural Resources and Life Science (Boku) Vienna as well as the University of Freiburg to seek for support in conducting the survey.

Ms. Kim Morton, Queen Margret University UK, presented a survey among European Communicators on common messages within forest communication in the UNECE region. The main outcome was that common messages are believed to be successful, provide credibility and help foster cooperation within the region. Moreover, the survey showed that further research into actual stakeholder knowledge and perceptions would be beneficial.

### **Update on global developments concerning forest communication**

Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtl, Austria, updated the FCN on FAO's global communicators' coordination group. The six regional communicators networks (North America, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Mediterranean and the Near East, Asia-Pacific) are represented in the global group to opportunities for shared messages and outreach to raise awareness on forest issues across the regions and exchange experience.

### **FCN internal business**

Training elements were seen as a positive hook for people to attend the meetings. A call for potential training topics should be send to the FCN google group. The following points were suggested to be considered:

- Train the trainers
- Attach the training to one of the FCN goals
- Story telling training
- Campaigning
- Crisis management; how to regain trust in the forest sector
- Social media expertise
- How to deal with mainstream media
- Common messages, with a professional facilitator

How could we increase our membership and active participation?

- Cross-promotion through the google-group



- A FCN calendar (e.g. wood is good; Did you know this comes from a forest?- forest products of the future; see also [Forest Bioeconomy Future Catalogue](#); plastic vs. wood; the good forester; forest heroes)
- Google-doc with a calendar showing all big regional meetings that are coming up
- To scout for an across the institutions/borders, possibilities and ways forward for a concrete joint efforts on positive features/solutions of using forests communicating (vs. extensive current critical activity); maybe even a joint campaign

The next FCN annual meeting was proposed to be held in Krasnojarsk, Russia, in cooperation with IIASA and the Sukachev Institute of Forest, Russian Academy of Sciences, Siberian Branch focusing on the topic of boreal forests and the upcoming European Forest Week 2019. As an alternative meeting location Tallinn, Estonia, was suggested.

### **Field Trip, Thursday 24 May 2018**

The FCN was invited to visit [the Amsterdamse Bos](#), which is an urban forest three times the size of New York's central park. The Visitor's Center kindly offered a guided boat tour after an introduction to the forest.