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UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators' Network – Annual Meeting

30 May -1 June 2017, Málaga Spain

Meeting Report

The annual meeting of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Communication – the Forest Communicators' Network (FCN) took place from 30 May to 1 June 2017 in Málaga, Spain. It was kindly hosted by IUCN Mediterranean.

The objective of the meeting was to raise awareness on challenges of forests and forest communication in the Mediterranean region and to find a common ground for evidence-based communication on forest matters referring to global frameworks such as Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-30. The meeting was attended by 29 participants from 11 countries and 8 organisations.

Topics discussed:

- Challenges for forest communication in the Mediterranean region
- Adapting forests to climate change – the role of communication
- Enhancing communication outreach through cooperation
- Evidence-based communication in the age of fake news and alternative facts
- Communication approaches and cases
- FCN internal business

Report of presentations and group discussions:

Javier Madrid, Director General of Nature and Protected Areas, Regional Government of Andalusia opened the meeting and highlighted the importance of forest conservation for the Mediterranean region. Marina, Bravo, Deputy for the Environment and the Promotion of the Territory, Diputación of Málaga, Antonio Troyo, Director of the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, and Ingwald Gschwandtl, Leader of the UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators' Network, welcomed the participants emphasising the crucial importance of forest communication to raise awareness of the role of forests for climate change and sustainable development.

Patricia Sfeir, Coordinator of the Mediterranean Forest Communicators' Network, briefed participants about the 5th Mediterranean Forest Week, which took place 20-24 March 2017 in Agadir, Morocco under the theme "Towards an enhanced regional cooperation to restore Mediterranean landscapes: improving resilience for the benefit of people and environment". She encouraged participants to concentrate on positive forest communication based on case studies, which can improve the perception of forests in the Mediterranean region.



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Lourdes Lázaro Marín, IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, presented the organisations efforts to address forest challenges in the region. She presented activities under the Bonn Challenge, the Mediterranean Ecosystems Programme the Life Adaptamed Project and the communication opportunities coming along with these initiatives.

Georg Rappold, Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria, presented the national campaign “The use of wood is good for the climate – We make our forest climate fit” addressing small-scale private forest owners and new forest owners as well as the general public and consumers. He explained Austria’s approach to motivate forest owners to actively manage their forests in a sustainable manner in light of climate change and how to encourage the consumers to use more wood products.

Gerald Steindlegger, Integrated Sustainability Solutions, presented a local approach to reach the objective of informing and motivating small-scale forest owners to optimise their forest management for climate, society and nature. This local project is in line with the overall goal of the national campaign of Austria, “We make our forest climate fit”.

Eduard Plana and Marc Font, Forest Science Centre of Catalonia, shared their lessons learned on wildfire risk communication and their experiences in dealing with complexity. They emphasised the importance to raise awareness about fire and people’s responsibility to deal with related risks, this includes civic leaders, business owners, first responders, land managers and homeowners in affected areas.

Meeting participants discussed in small moderated groups the topic “Adapting Forests to Climate Change – the role of Communication” with an emphasis on (1) Whom to reach out to?, (2) Effective approaches, and (3) Best Messages.

Outcome of the discussion on “Adapting Forests to Climate Change – the role of Communication”:

Whom to reach out to?	Effective approaches	Best messages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General public > divide a diverse group into stakeholder categories and use them as multipliers • Affected people “on the ground” • People who should become actors • Decisions makers and administrations • User/ people who benefit from FES • The ones who start the discussion • Academia • NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared responsibilities > collaborative approach > empowerment • Pay attention to the things you CAN change/influence • Get attention through e.g. scandal/catastrophe > use this as an entry point • Involve journalists long-term • Tell a story and propose a solution specific to stakeholder categories • Educational movies • Create entrance gates for companies • Take things that have worked and adapt them to new situations • Be positive • Stories (less facts) • Demonstrate best case examples • One messages (many voices) • Sense of urgency • Practical guidance • Solid data (evidence) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a shared responsibility • What is in for you? • Are you part of the problem or of the solution? • SFM saves lives • Let the forest help you • If you help the forest, the forest will help you • Use wood from sustainable resources • It is your choice: wood, steel or plastic?

Kai Lintunen, Finnish Forest Association, presented some controversial forest communication campaigns to start a lively discussion on how better collaboration can influence the perception on forest use in order to oppose campaigns with the message “Don’t touch the forest”. In small groups, meeting participants discussed ideas for collaboration to enhance the outreach of forest communication.

Outcomes of the discussions on “Don’t touch the forest! – Working together to enhance communication outreach”:

Enhance collaboration and partnership	Challenges	Step by step recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Willingness to partner and collaborate (identify partners like NGOs, civil society, private sector, academia, media) - Increase communication - More contact - Common target and objectives: recognition (vision) of the same objective, acknowledge different objectives/perspectives of reality - Capitalize on existing networks (mobilization/lobbying and success stories) - Concrete mechanisms /channels/structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do we keep a good idea alive? - How do we overcome ignorance, apathy, vested interest and lack of resources? - How do we streamline messages? - How do we align objectives? <p>Obstacles for international campaigns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leadership should be clear - Ownership to the topic (also on national level) - Too many logos - National adaptability - Slow communication channels and many bureaucracy involved - passiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set long-term objectives - Identify common ground (where is it?) - Come up with a theme - Create short-term plans (audiences, messaging, metrics, tactics) - Identify amplifiers/influencers - Debrief

Ana Belén Noriega, PEFC Spain, briefed meeting participants about how PEFC Spain uses the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for communication on forests. In addition, she presented a communication campaign on Mediterranean cork oak forests “Communicating sustainability from the forest to the bottle”.

Gerda Wolfrum, IUFRO, informed about the 125 Years Anniversary Congress of IUFRO, taking place 18-22 September 2017 in Freiburg, Germany. A sub-plenary session on communication with the title “Communicating with Einstein – about forest facts, feelings and fake news” organized by FCN was accepted for the Congress and will take place on 20 September.

Mita Sen, UNFF Secretariat, presented the recently adopted UN Plan for Forests 2017-30. She informed that based on the positive experience with involving FCN experts in IYF 2011 preparations,



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the UNFF Secretariat considers tapping again into the expertise of the UNECE/FAO FCN and other regional FCNs for support in the development and implementation of the communication and outreach strategy of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests.

Theresa Loeffler, UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, briefed about ongoing activities on the 70th anniversary of forest collaboration between FAO and UNECE in 2017. Further, she announced the International Conference “Marianske Lazne +70: Celebrating 70 years of UNECE/FAO cooperation on forests”, which will focus on forest certification and the future of the forest sector. It will take place 5-7 September in Marianske Lazne, Czech Republic. In addition, she announced the 4th European Forest Week, 9-13 October 2017, hosted by Warsaw in conjunction with Las 2017, the joint session of the Committee of Forests and the Forest Industry and the European Forest Commission. Under the European Forest Week, a call for national events, special session during Las20017 and spreading the word about the EFW Art Contest was launched.

Maria DeCristofaro, Outreach and Capacity Building Officer for the FAO Forestry Department, presented highlights of the work of the Forest Communicators’ Network over the past two years, including the Forest Communicators’ sessions at the XIV World Forestry Congress, COFO 23, the Asia-Pacific Forestry Week, and the Fifth Mediterranean Forest Week, as well as an overview of the upcoming capacity-building workshop to be held in Kyrgyzstan in July 2017. The three-day international workshop in Kyrgyzstan will be co-led by Maria, along with Ingwald Gschwandtl, Director of the Forest Policy Division at Austria’s Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, and Kai Lintunen, Communications Manager at the Finnish Forest Association – respectively leader and deputy leader of the Forest Communicators Network. At the training, participants from 14 countries will learn how to create a communication strategy for forestry work, from setting out aims and objectives, identifying target audiences and developing messages, to evaluating the efficacy of campaigns. She also presented an overview of the 2billioncare social media and outreach campaign and provided an update on the theme for the 2018 International Day of Forests which will be *Forests and Sustainable Cities*.

Thomas Baschny, leader of the FCN sub-group Forest Pedagogics, informed about the relaunch of the group’s website (www.forestpedagogics.eu) and announced the 12th European Forest Pedagogics Congress, which will take place 3-6 October 2017 in Milovy, Czech Republic.

Colin Morton, UK, presented the SDGs as a communication framework stipulating discussions that were further elaborated in the workshop on the same topic. He emphasised the opportunities that the SDGs bear for the forest sector by providing a common and consistent framework for reporting progress and helping people to understand sustainability. With the SDGs we have a unique opportunity to engage stakeholders and different sectors and agencies.

Stefanie Linser, European Forest Institute, presented indicators for sustainable forest management (SFM) as evidence-based policy and communication tools in the age of fake news and alternative facts. She concluded that criteria and indicators for SFM serve well as a framework for dialogue and communication on forestry issues, as an adequate tool for monitoring and reporting on SFM, in

facilitating implementation of set goals and developing and adaptation of national policy instruments.

Theresa Loeffler, UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, presented the UNECE statistical database (<http://w3.unece.org/PXWeb/en>) and Android app, which includes forestry data reported according to the pan-European SFM indicators, in both Russian and English. She also presented results of the State of Europe's Forest User Survey regarding communication.

Jolanta Stankiewicz, Poland, presented the national campaign "On Natures Side" and related experiences in Poland.

Florian Kraxner, IIASA, presented a global online tool for mapping certified forests. The tool includes a grass root approach, which allows users to validate and improve maps.

Meeting participants discussed in small moderated groups the topic "Identifying opportunities, challenges and recommendations for effective approaches to evidence-based communication". The outcome of the discussions is summarized here:

Opportunities for promoting forestry through SDGs	How to use C&I for SFM to support the SDGs?	How can we act collaboratively to boost our efforts?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess relevant events for greater impact Highlight forestry and SDGs at events Huge outreach to groups you would otherwise not reach/ increase visibility Provide interlinkages between sectors We can find an entrance to every "hot topic" Hook for broader aspects than SDGs Use the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select the relevant indicators for the key message > focus; use the data to underline, strengthen and get the facts Formulate 1-3 scientifically based key messages to specific SDGs broadly accepted and agreed Subsets for communication; Is the available information communicated or not? Talk through results what is important for community outside the forest family Be specific with respect to audience Agile approach, openness Choose carefully between the narrow approach (SDG 15) vs. the broader one ("What would the SDGs be without forests") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We need to overcome our tribal attitude Collectively do what has been identified as priority Significance of forests for the SDGs could be illustrated through a universally understandable animated info graphic or video Use of FCN google group
<p>RISK: to say forestry is the solution per se</p>		
<p>TACTICS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Common outreach strategy SDG to become criteria for eg. Finance in forestry Group SDGs by audiences 		

Within the format of “Lightning talks” 5 minute presentations on exciting communication approaches and cases were held by Maria De Cristofaro, FAO, on a successful social media campaign, by Adrian Schmutz, Switzerland on the wood campaign #WOODVETIA, by Pierre Hermans, PHBois Forest Office, on communicating the multi-functionality of forest and by Jesse Cruz, FSC, on video reporting to replace the boring two pager. The talks were followed by discussions.

Summary of key issues discussed and conclusions:

- It was underlined that the SDGs provide a useful framework for forest related communication. The fact that forests contribute to most of the SDGs offers opportunities for broad outreach across a wide range of sectors relevant to sustainable development. The communication and outreach strategy for the UN Strategic Plan for Forests, which is under development at present, should define the main elements to be addressed.
- A number of specific recommendations were made on how to utilise SDGs for forest communication. The significance of forests for the SDGs could be illustrated through a universally understandable animated info graphic or video. It was suggested to produce, maybe as a collective exercise at the next FCN meeting, a short video on the role of forests for the SDGs. Concerning the task of revising the FCN’s Strategic Framework for Forest Communication in Europe it was suggested to consider making the SDGs the structural framework. It was also suggested to encourage forest experts to make substantive inputs to note forest focussed SDG events and activities.
- Mita Sen will be in touch with the FCN Leader for clarifying arrangements concerning the Communication Strategy for the UN Strategic Plan for Forests. Las2017 was identified as an option for regional consultation on the communication strategy of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030.
- In discussing the Draft FCN Terms of Reference the group expressed general support for it. It was however recommended to add specific references to activities related to the SDGs and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests. The FCN Leader was asked to submit a text proposal to the Secretariat. Changes in the Draft FCN Terms of Reference will have to be proposed to Las2017, the joint COFFI/EFC session in Warsaw, October 2017, when discussing this agenda item.
- With regard to date and place of the next annual FCN meeting Florian Kraxner (IIASA) offered to explore the possibility of holding it in August/ September 2018 in Krasnojarsk, Russia. The group, with a view to the geographic scope FCN is tasked to cover, highly welcomed the proposal. Mr Kraxner will coordinate his activities closely with the FCN Leader and the Secretariat.



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Field Trip

During the field trip to the Sierra Nevada National and Nature Parks at the spot presentations and discussions on forestations and adaptive forest management of climate change endangered Mediterranean socio-ecosystems took place.

Meeting website

More information about the meeting, links to all presentations and the detailed agenda can be found at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=44991#/>

Video report, by Jesse Cruz: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOixNI3pF6k>

List of participants



Forest Communicators Network - Annual Meeting

Start Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017

End Date: Thursday, June 01, 2017

Participants: 29

Last Name	First Name	Title	Organization	Countries Represented	Phone	Email
Baschny	Thomas	Mr.	Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management	Austria	+43 1 71100 7321	thomas.baschny@bmlfuw.gv.at
Burt	Robert (bob)	Mr.	International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO)	Canada	+1 613 779 9011	bburt3@cogeco.ca
Cruz	Jesse	Mr.	FSC Global Development GmbH			j.cruz@fsc.org
De Cristofaro	Maria	Ms.	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations		+39 06 57052120	maria.decrisofaro@fao.org
Font	Marc	Mr.	Forest Science Centre of Catalonia	Spain		marc.font@ctfc.cat
Gschwandtl	Ingwald	Mr.	Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management	Austria	+43 1-711 00 607305	ingwald.gschwandtl@bmlfuw.gv.at
Hermans	Pierre	M.	PHBois Forest Office	Belgium		info@phbois.be
Kraxner	Florian	Dr.	Ecosystems Services and Management (ESM), International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)	Austria	+43 2236 807 233	kraxner@iiasa.ac.at
Kuehling	Marcus	Mr.	Deutscher Forstverein e.V. German Forest Society	Germany		kuehling@forstverein.de
Lazaro Marin	Lourdes	Ms.	IUCN	Spain		lourdes.lazaro@iucn.org
Linser	Stefanie	Dr.	European Forest Institute – Central-East European Regional Office EFICEEC c/o University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU)		+43 (1) 47654 73222	stefanie.linser@efi.int
Lintunen	Kai	Mr.	Finnish Forest Association	Finland	+358 50 351 2415	kai.lintunen@smy.fi
Loeffler	Theresa	Ms.	UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section			theresa.loeffler@unece.org
Morton	Colin	Mr.		United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	+44 131-314 6249	colinmcmorton@gmail.com
Noriega	Ana Belén	Mrs.	Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC) Spain		915910088	ananoriega@pefc.es
Nurczyńska-Dałek	Marta	Mrs.	General Directorate of the State Forests		+48 22 589 83 42	marta.nurczynska@lasy.gov.pl

Plana	Eduard	Mr.	Forest Sciences Centre of Catalonia (CTFC)			eduard.plana@ctfc.cat
Rappold	Georg	Dr.	Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management	Austria	+431 711-007314	georg.rappold@bmlfuw.gv.at
Rasi	Rastislav	Mr.	FOREST EUROPE - Liaison Unit Bratislava		+421 455314203	rastislav.rasi@foresteurope.org
Riedl	Marcel	Mr.	Czech University of Life Sciences Prague		+420604234003	riedl@fld.czu.cz
Schmutz	Adrian	Mr.	Federal Office for the Environment FOEN	Switzerland	+41 58 464 91 46	adrian.schmutz@bafu.admin.ch
Sen	Mita	Ms.	United Nations Forum on Forests		+1 917 367 5069	sen@un.org
Sfeir	Patricia	Mrs.	FCN Mediterranean/Near East		+9611498188	Patricia.sfeir@seeds-int.org
Stankiewicz	Jolanta	Ms.	State Forests Information Centre	Poland	+ 48 22 18 55 372	j.stankiewicz@cilp.lasy.gov.pl, jolanta.stankiewicz@cilp.lasy.gov.pl
Steindlegger	Gerald	Mr.	Steindlegger ISS - Integrated Sustainability Solutions			geri-sustainability@a1.net
Tamas	Szedlak	Mr.	European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development			tszedl@gmail.com
Viszlai	Igor	Mr.	FOREST EUROPE Liaison Unit Bratislava		+421 45 5314 103	igor.viszlai@foresteurope.org
Wolfrum	Gerda	Ms.	International Union of Forest Research Organizations		+43-1-877-01-51-17	wolfrum@iufro.org
Wolicka	Magdalena	Ms.	Ministry of the Environment	Poland	(+48 22) 57 92 345	magdalena.wolicka@mos.gov.pl



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Forest Communicators Network



UNECE/FAO FOREST COMMUNICATORS NETWORK – ANNUAL MEETING

30th May – 1st June 2017

Draft Agenda as of 26-05-2017

TUESDAY 30 May

09:00 Item 1 Welcome Addresses by IUCN and FCN

- Key Note by Javier Madrid, Director General of Nature and Protected Areas. Regional Government of Andalusia
- Marina Bravo - Deputy for the Environment and the Promotion of the Territory - Diputación of Málaga
- Antonio Troya - IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, Director
- Ingwald Gschwandtl – UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators' Network

09:40 Item 2 Challenges for forest communication in the Mediterranean region

- Patricia R. Sfeir – Coordinator of the Mediterranean Forest Communicators' Network
- Lourdes Lázaro – IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation
- Q&A

10:10 Item 3 Adapting Forests to Climate Change – the Role of Communication

- “The use of wood is good for the climate – We make our forest climate fit!” a national campaign – Georg Rappold and Geri Steindlegger, Austria

10:30 *Coffee Break*

- ### 11:00
- Risk awareness communication; challenges and lessons learned from communication tools' development and cross-sectoral planning approach, the case of wildland fire risk in the Mediterranean region - Eduard Plana, Marc Font, Marta Serra
 - Q&A

12:00 Break out Groups to discuss and elaborate common findings and recommendations on what worked and what are major challenges

13:00 Reporting back to plenary

13:30 *Lunch*

14:30 Item 4 Working together to enhance communication outreach

'Don't touch the forest!'

- Introduction by Kai Lintunen, Finland
 - Discussion on collaborative action for influencing perception on forest use
-

15:30 Coffee Break

16:00 Item 4 continued

- SFM indicators for communicating on forests – Ana Belén Noriega, PEFC Spain (item 5, rescheduled)
- Ana Belén Noriega, PEFC Spain - Mediterranean cork oak forests: communicating sustainability from the forest to the bottle (Lightning talk, rescheduled)

Updates on:

- The communication session at IUFRO's 125 Years Anniversary Congress, Sept 2017, Freiburg/Germany – Gerda Wolfrum, IUFRO
- Communication in the context of the UN Strategic Plan on Forests – Mita Sen, UNFF Secretariat
- 70th anniversary of the forestry collaboration between FAO and UNECE – Theresa Loeffler UNECE/FAO
- European Forest Week 2017 – Theresa Loeffler, UNECE/FAO
- Assessment of public perception on forests via a survey among FCN members – Colin Morton, UK
- Capacity building workshop for countries in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus, June/July 2017, Kirgizstan – Maria DeCristofaro, FAO
- The cooperation among the regional forest communicators networks - Maria DeCristofaro, FAO
- The International Day of Forests 2018 - Maria DeCristofaro, FAO
- Activities, achievements and future plans on Forest Pedagogics – Thomas Baschny, FCN Sub Group Forest Pedagogics

18:00 End of day 1

WEDNESDAY 31 May

A field trip to the Sierra Nevada National Park has been organized on **Wednesday 31st May**. Please bring appropriate clothes and shoes. Sun cream and a hat are advisable as weather could be hot.

A bus will pick you up at the **HOTEL NH MÁLAGA** (Street San Jacinto) at 7.45 am.

Return to Málaga is scheduled at 18.00 pm





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THURSDAY 01 June

- 09:00 Item 5 Evidence-based communication in the age of fake news and alternative facts
- Sustainable Development Goals as communication framework – Colin Morton, UK
 - SFM Indicators as policy and communication tool - Stefanie Linser, EFI
 - SFM indicators bilingual database of UNECE and State of Europe's Forest User Survey – Theresa Loeffler, UNECE/FAO
 - On Natures Side – Jolanta Stankiewicz, Poland
 - Mapping certified forests for SFM - a global online tool - Florian Kraxner, IIASA
 - Q&A

10:30 *Coffee Break*

- 11:00 Item 6 Workshop on identifying opportunities, challenges and recommendations for effective approaches to evidence based communication (moderated by Colin Moron, UK)

Questions to be addressed:

1. Opportunities for promoting forestry through SDGs
2. How to use C&I for SFM to support the SDGs
3. How we can act collaboratively to boost our efforts

13:15 *Lunch*

14:30 Workshop continuation and conclusions

- 15:00 Item 7 "Lightning Talks" on exciting communication approaches and cases
- Maria DeCristofaro, FAO - Backstage on a successful social media campaign
 - Adrian Schmutz, Switzerland - Swiss Wood Campaign: #WOODVETIA
 - Pierre Hermans, Belgium - Communicating the multifunctionality of forests
 - Jesse Cruz, FSC international – Video reporting (to replace the boring two pager)
 - Q&A and general discussion

15:45 *Coffee Break*

16:00 Item 8 FCN internal business

- Progress report on the FCN Google Group and FCN Google Hangouts
- Renewing the FCN Terms of Reference for the period 2018 to 2021
- Arrangements for Malaga meeting report
- Malaga follow up actions

17:00 End of the meeting

We are looking forward to seeing you!