COMMON MESSAGES ON FORESTS AND FOREST PRODUCTS WITHIN THE UNECE REGION
SUMMARY REPORT OF SURVEY RESULTS

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1 Introduction

In the 2011 Strategic Framework for Forest Communication in Europe, it was identified that within the European forest sector there was no ‘common message’ or ‘common voice’. The UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators’ Network believed that research into this area would be beneficial for forest communication in the region. At the request of the network, a study was conducted into common messaging and its feasibility, focusing on the perceptions of the network members.

The objective of this study was to first establish whether common messages on forests and forest products can be successfully employed in the region and then to identify possible challenges to their employment. This paper will present the survey findings and the main conclusions drawn from a thematic analysis of the data.

This paper will propose that yes, common messages on forests and forest products can be successfully employed in the region, but that they face numerous challenges. The three key challenges have been identified as stakeholder knowledge and perceptions, regional differences and the lack of a regional forest policy. This paper will conclude by stressing the need for cooperation within the region and by proposing recommendations for further research.
2 Research Method

2.1 Introduction

This research was designed around the observation that there is a lack of common messages within the forest sector of the UNECE region. In order to determine the overall success of such common messages, this study aimed to answer two questions:

- Can the employment of common messages on forests and forest products within the UNECE region be successful?
- What are the challenges to employing common messages on forests and forest products within the UNECE region?

2.2 Sampling

With their working knowledge of both forestry and communications, the members of the FCN were an ideal sample for this survey. Additionally, they represent the diverse geographical and professional nature of the region. All 200 ordinary members were invited to participate in the study. However, perhaps due to seasonal holidays, the response rate was low with only 37 members choosing to participate. Nevertheless, the amount of data gathered was sufficient for the size of this research project.

2.3 Method

Following a survey research method, data was collected using an online questionnaire hosted on SurveyHero. The research design was embedded mixed methods to allow for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire is attached as Appendix A. This particular method was chosen so the sample could participate at a time and pace convenient to themselves. Furthermore, online questionnaires have the advantage of easily covering large geographic areas.
The questionnaire was split into four sections, each addressing the research objectives from a different angle: About You, Stakeholder Importance, Stakeholder Perceptions and Common Messages. The collected data was then subjected to a thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of repetitions, similarities and differences in the data which might highlight common areas of perceptions and any issues.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

There were a number of ethical issues which were considered in designing this research. Firstly, the matter of participant consent. Every person invited to participate in the study was made aware of the research purpose, intended uses, method and their role within the study. The sample were also made aware of the confidential nature of the research. The study was not anonymous as names were asked for administration purposes. However, the research is confidential as all identifying factors have been removed from the research and all records. Names have been replaced with numbers both in the data records and within this report.
3 Questionnaire Results

3.1 Introduction

The findings and themes from the questionnaire will be presented here under the respective section and question. The chapter will begin with question 1.3 as the answers to questions 1.1 and 1.2 which cover the respondent's name and organisation name are confidential. In sections two and three, which cover stakeholder importance and perception, data has been presented in tables and the highest occurring answers or sets (where there is more than one highest answer per stakeholder) have been highlighted. Once the results have been presented, they will be discussed thoroughly in the next chapter.

3.2 Section One: About You

Q 1.3 How would you categorise your organisation? (37 answers)

![Figure 1 - Q 1.3 How would you categorise your organisation?](chart)

Answers for Other: Academic, Forest Certification Scheme, Research Institute, University, Forest Owners NGO, H2020 EU Funded Project, International NGO, Research Network.
Q 1.4 How would you describe your job? (37 answers)

Answers for Other: Researcher/Economist, Development/Policy Dialogue, Reporting and Assessment, Professional Development for Natural Resources Professionals, Other.

3.3 Section Two: Stakeholder Importance

Q 2.1 In terms of importance to your organisation’s communication, how would you prioritise the following stakeholders on a scale of 1 to 5? (37 answers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 – Not Important</th>
<th>2 – Slightly Important</th>
<th>3 – Moderately Important</th>
<th>4 – Quite Important</th>
<th>5 – Very Important</th>
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Table 1 – Perceived Stakeholder Importance to the Respondents’ Organisations’ Communication.
The data from question 2.1 is presented in Table 1 above. The most commonly occurring answers for each stakeholder are mostly clear, with the exception of Local Politicians where the answers are so divided that none has been highlighted. A clear pattern can be observed, with seven out of the nine stakeholders having a high answer in the ‘Very Important’ column. There is also no answer below ‘Moderately Important’. For the majority of members, all of these stakeholders are perceived to be of at least moderate importance to the communication of the members’ organisation.

Q 2.2 In terms of importance to communication within the UNECE region, how would you prioritise the following stakeholders on a scale of 1 to 5? (37 answers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>1 – Not Important</th>
<th>2 – Slightly Important</th>
<th>3 – Moderately Important</th>
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<th>5 – Very Important</th>
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Table 2 – Perceived Stakeholder Importance to Communication within the UNECE Region.

The data from question 2.2 is presented in Table 2 above. The data here does not differ drastically from that in question 2.1 but there is slightly more division here, with only three stakeholders having a clear highest answer. However, the two most popular columns are ‘Quite Important’ and ‘Very Important’ with only a few answers below this. This suggests that for the majority of members, all of these stakeholders
are perceived to be of at least moderate importance to communication within the UNECE region.

**Q 2.3 Are there any other stakeholders which you believe are important to forest communication in general? (26 answers)**

There was significant consensus with the answers to this question and three themes were identified. The largest was ‘those who use the forests’ with nine respondents referring to this. This theme includes the following answers: the public, local communities, rural communities, citizens, local population, indigenous people, community forest inhabitants and forest recreation users.

The second commonly occurring theme was ‘educational institutions’, with seven respondents referring to this. This theme includes the following answers: educational institutions, students, academic institutions, universities, K-12 educators, researchers and the research community.

The third theme identified was ‘forest owners and managers’ with five respondents referring to this. This theme includes the following answers: Forest owners, forest managers, forest owners who don’t live close to their forests, forest owners’ associations, private forest owners and forest entrepreneurs.

Despite this consensus, the list of other stakeholders which did not fall under these themes was fairly long: certification bodies, forestry and natural resources sciences, nature protection institutions, policymakers, youth, Chambers and Industry Associations, consultants, special interest media, health agencies and organisations, other sectors of the economy (energy sector), donors, project staff, Other Forest Communicators’ Networks and the European Commission, Parliament and Council.

**3.4 Section Three: Stakeholder Perceptions**

**Q 3.1 On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the level of knowledge of forest policy and practice within each of these stakeholder groups? (31 answers)**
The data from question 3.1 is presented in Table 3 below. The majority of answers fall between ‘Low’ and ‘Moderate’ with only a few in ‘High’ or ‘Substantial’. This suggests a generally held perception that these stakeholders, which have been identified in section two as important for forest communication, have a relatively low level of knowledge of forest policy and practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 – None</th>
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<td>The Media</td>
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</table>

Table 3 – Perceived Stakeholder Knowledge of Forest Policy and Practice.

**Q 3.2 On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you assess the perceptions of forest policy and practice within each of these stakeholder groups? (31 answers)**

The data from question 3.2 is presented in Table 4 below. There is much more variation here than in the other tables. The most common answers are ‘Neutral’ and ‘Fairly Positive’, although the data suggests that perceptions are varying. Interesting to note are the high number of ‘Don’t Know’ answers, as high as 9 for International Agencies and 8 for Other Government Bodies. This suggests that the perception of forest policy and practice within these groups is unknown to a fair amount of FCN members.
Q 3.3 Are these perceptions particular to your geographic area or are they common across the UNECE region? (27 answers)

The top answer was ‘particular to their geographic region’ with thirteen participants including this in their answer. Eight participants answered that these perceptions were common across the UNECE region.

Eight participants also included in their answer that perceptions will vary across nations and sub-regions. This is because nations and sub-regions have different: size of forest industry, forest history, forestry bias, importance placed on forestry, understanding of forestry practice, level of urbanisation, access to forests, level of forestry industry/employment and awareness and perception of politicians.

Four participants did not know or did not answer the question asked.
Q 3.4 How might these perceptions present a challenge to forest communication for your organisation? (28 answers)

The themes for this question were almost evenly spread, with no one theme being the most common. Four respondents referred to the perceptions presented previously as contradicting reality and therefore making communication difficult. Four respondents referred to the need to tailor and prioritise messaging. These answers included: designing communications strategies to meet the needs/levels of understanding across all levels of perception is difficult and expensive, one message cannot be applied to all, the right messages need to reach the right stakeholder group, it is hard to standardize a message for all levels of understanding and perception and they need to be tailored to specific groups. Three respondents referenced a need for these perceptions to change, however the process for this is difficult. Three referenced a need to make stakeholders understand forest issues and what it is that their organisation is doing.

Other answers include: need to bring forestry issues closer to stakeholders, perceptions de-value the sustainability benefits of forest-based products and thereby discourage companies and consumers from utilizing them, need to translate scientific language into a more easily understood language, increase promotion in the role of the wood-forest sector in economy and society, lack of funding for research and outreach, negative perceptions are easily spread to others in the media, building trust and reputation, negative perceptions affect how forest communication is received, gives sector a negative reputation, the sector has to work much harder than other sectors of the environmental world and lack of knowledge and poor perceptions can lead to bad policy and decision-making.

Three respondents answered that these perceptions are not a challenge at all, but merely part of their normal daily job.

Three respondents did not answer the question asked.
Q 3.5 How might these perceptions present a challenge to forest communication in the wider geographical area? (21 answers)

**In Europe**

There were two themes that emerged from this question but they were not overly common. The first was a 'difference between countries' with only four respondents referring to this. This theme included the answers: alternate opinions causing disconnections, communication across such a broad region is difficult and a need for specifically targeted messages.

The second theme was ‘changing perceptions’ with only three respondents referring to this. This theme included the answers: changing perceptions is unrealistic or too difficult and changing perceptions means changing the information that the perceptions rest on (which is often out-of-date or biased) with “good facts and figures”.

Other answers include: lack of funding for research and outreach, contradiction around harvesting, visibility, education, communicating sustainable forestry practices, selling good stories, segmentation, state of the forest is different to what is perceived by the public, messages from governments are not trusted and bad policy.

Five respondents did not know or did not answer the question asked.

**In the UNECE Region**

The majority (13) of respondents provided the same answer as for the European region. One respondent answered that it affects policy, practice and ground-level organization.

Seven respondents did not know or did not answer the question asked.
Q 3.6 Aside from stakeholder perception, what are additional challenges to forest communication in the wider geographical area? (19 answers)

In Europe

There were a multitude of challenges presented here, suggesting that forest communication in the region faces significant issues. Although there were no major themes for this question, there were a few answers that occurred more than once. ‘Youth education and attraction’ appeared three times and covered education about forestry issues and making these issues more attractive to this group. ‘Too much information’ appeared three times and included information overload, needing to stand out and get your voice heard and needing to compete for attention.

Others answers included: bridging the gap between urban and rural communities, lack of understanding of policies that impact the forest sector, money, willingness to commit time to develop understanding, giving people the wider picture about forests and forestry, methods/means of communicating with a variety of people, showing that forests can be managed sustainably, showing the merits of forests and forest products for society, climate change and the consequences for the sector, the perception that forests are being lost when the reality of the opposite, lack of interest from mainstream media, size and complexity of the modern communications world and the variety of media available.

Six respondents did not know or did not answer the question asked.

In the UNECE Region

The majority (10) of respondents provided the same answers as for the European region. All additional answers involved the media: information from the sector not reaching the mass media, when the sector is represented in the mass media it is negative or involving disasters and negative forest stories such as evacuations, property loss, deaths, wildfire and conflicts.

Seven participants did not know or did not answer the question asked.
Q 3.7 Where do you believe stakeholders receive their information about forest issues from? (24 answers)

The major theme here was ‘the media (social and traditional)’, which was mentioned directly or indirectly by all but five respondents. NGOs and ENGOs were also a popular choice as they were mentioned by nine respondents.

The third theme was ‘official publications’, mentioned by eight respondents. This included: publications, reports, newsletters and other forms of communication from official sources such as the Statistical Office, State Forest, Research Institutes, International Agencies, Forest Experts, Research Institutions, Trade and Professional Organisations, EU Parliament, Government and Intergovernmental research.

Smaller themes were ‘personal connections’ which were mentioned by five participants and ‘local sources’ which were mentioned by four participants.

Other answers include: personal experiences, trade journals, magazines, documentaries and schools/children.

A number of respondents made interesting points. Respondents 14 and 33 both claimed that people will have their “preferred media” which will publish stories in line with views that they already hold. Three other respondents believe that it depends on the stakeholder group. Respondent 8 wrote that stakeholders frequently receive their information from groups whose expertise isn’t forestry. Respondent 27 claimed that as information is mostly from the media it is usually negative and biased.
3.5 Section Four: Common Messages

Q 4.1 Do you believe that common messages on forests and their products can be successfully employed across the region? (30 answers)

Figure 3 - Q 4.1 Do you believe that common messages on forests and their products can be successfully employed across the region?

Figure 4 above presents a breakdown of answers to this question. An overwhelming majority answered yes, they believe that common messages on forests and their products can be successfully employed across the region. The following explanations were given:

- Yes: the only theme here was ‘regional similarities’ (three respondents): the benefits are clear and are applicable globally, the region is on the same page with regards to sustainable forest management and the need for greater transparency in forest product sourcing and the homogeneity of society. Other answers include: there is a need for common messages that are easily understandable and not controversial, common messages can work if they are based on common language and terminology, they promote common understanding of forest management in the region, instead of region specific issues and messages spread by the UNECE, FAO and Forest Europe provides credibility.

- Only three respondents answered yes because they believe there are already common messages in play. An example by Respondent 12 is the messages
used for the international day of forests or the European forest week, which apparently were successful. Additionally, Respondent 14 claims that there are already a core set of messages used by the UNECE, FAO and Forest Europe which are fact-based and therefore perceived as truthful and authoritative.

- The explanations for No were very similar: The situations in each country are different (issues, challenges, cultures, traditions) therefore communication should be more local. Respondent 20 also added that messages need to be tailored for each stakeholder.

- Don’t Know: Respondents 8 and 17 focussed on the differences between countries, regions and individual groups and the need to tailor messages. Even respondent 37, who answered Yes, believes that some messages need to be locally tailored. However, respondent 8 also believes that common messages show solidarity. Respondent 33 wrote that they may work for Europe, but in North America there are too many players and agendas for them to be effective. Finally, respondent 13 wrote that they could only work if related to a specific problem.

**Q 4.2 What opportunities or benefits would result from common messages on forests? (24 answers)**

Most answers to this question could be categorised under a theme. The biggest theme here was ‘co-operation’, although this was only mentioned by six respondents. Answers include: co-ordinated actions, feeling of ‘belonging together’, more political weight, united we are stronger, strength, united front, broad acceptance of common goals for the sector, common perspective and learning from the mistakes of others.

‘Understanding and awareness in the region’ came in second with five respondents and refers to: the multifunctionality and specific long-term processes, active management of forests, the importance of forests and forestry and the geographic zone as a whole.
The theme of ‘credibility’ was referred to four times and includes: credibility will increase, messages are legitimised as endorsed by a wider audience, credibility from hearing the same messages from multiple sources, authoritative and fact-based messages.

Smaller themes include the sector having a ‘stronger voice’ (three respondents), ‘financial benefits’ (two respondents) and ‘increased resources’ (two respondents).

Other answers include making communication easier for the communicators and providing consistency.

One respondent said that there were no benefits and three did not answer the question asked.

**Q 4.3 What are the main challenges to creating effective common messages on forests? (24 answers)**

Two large themes were identified in this data, making the main challenges clear. The first was ‘stakeholder co-operation’ with twelve respondents. Answers include: some countries think that they should act independently from others, consensus and trust among partners, co-operation, lack of a common agenda, bringing together different views and opinions, difficulty/unwillingness to see the bigger picture, promotion of own positions/actions/interests, different list of priorities when dealing with communications, gaining support of all/majority of stakeholders involved in the process and differing priorities among stakeholders.

‘Regional differences’ was also a main theme with eleven respondents. Answers include: regional priorities and practices, different cultural, political, social and environmental contexts, different forest policies, multiple ecosystems which face different challenges based on species diversity and geo/political environments, language and cultural differences, no common understanding of the meaning of “sustainability”, definition of what a forest is differs by location, different contexts and perceptions, differences among countries and different forest situations (e.g. North vs. South).
Smaller themes were ‘money’ (3 respondents) and ‘communications’ (two respondents).

Other answers include: possible absence of clear leadership (UNECE, Forest Europe, UNFF), easy access to information, creation means time and effort, getting ‘the word out there’ and being noticed, time, commonly held inaccurate beliefs, forests as environment are not the agenda of politicians and mass media and hence society.

A few respondents made interesting points. Respondent 19 claimed that endless discussions among foresters about regional differences was in itself a challenge. Respondent 33 argued that convincing everyone involved to buy into what the common messages will finally say can often mean backing off so far from anything that has any point to it, that the ultimate messages are innocuous to the point of meaningless. Finally, Respondent 2 asserted that simply translating a good message may bring a wrong meaning in another language.

One respondent did not answer the question asked.

**Q 4.4 How might the lack of a single regional policy on forests affect the creation of effective common messages on forests? (20 answers)**

There was a clear answer to this question, with the central theme being ‘competition’ with nine respondents. Answers include: every region is probably going to feel their policy is best so common messages should reflect their policy, diverse nature of land control and local decision-making processes, lack of co-operation, more difficult to align messages because partners don’t see the need to speak with a common voice, everyone will continue to stress their own topics and priorities and not understand them as part of a great concept, different priorities and interests among countries, different national contexts will affect priorities of communication strategies, heterogeneous national and subnational policies contribute to the fragmentation of the sector and the lack of consensus of a few key strong messages and inter-state agencies and elected officials can’t prioritize messages if they don’t align between regions.
Other answers include: lack of information, dissatisfaction with common messages, harder to create common messages, fragmentation of messaging, confusion among the public, less well-informed gatekeepers, distrust.

An interesting point was made by Respondent 37 in that it shouldn't prevent the creation of at least some common messages (especially over-arching ones) as it should be possible to create a framework within which local varied messaging can be consistent with the common, over-arching messages.

Six respondents did not know or did not answer the question asked.

**Q 4.5 What would need to be done to achieve agreed common messages? (21 answers)**

‘Communication’ was the predominant theme here with eleven respondents. The focus here is on communication, discussions, exchanges, networking processes, participatory processes, science-communication, workshops on communication happening across national boundaries and within/across sectors and between communicators/policy-makers/practitioners/stakeholders.

Smaller themes were ‘working towards common goals/policy first’ (four respondents), ‘co-operation’ (four respondents) and ‘commitment’ (two respondents).

Other answers include: agreeing on a common understanding of “sustainability” and using science-based information, valid facts and figures.

Interestingly ‘agreeing on common messages’ was only mentioned by three respondents.

Two participants did not know or did not answer the question asked.
**Q 4.6 What should be done to promote messages across the sector? (20 answers)**

‘Co-operation’ was the largest theme with six respondents. Answers include: bring the relevant stakeholders together for consensus-based decision-making at the appropriate levels, trust and confidence building measures, unified strategy promotion, achieving compromises, explain the benefits of working together using success stories, co-ordinated social media efforts and shared media.

‘Spreading the messages’ was a close second with five respondents. This included: use their various communication channels and means to multiply and repeat common messages for wider acceptance, all involved organisations/countries do their best to spread the messages and push them and use all the channels and media at their disposal to weave those messages into their day-to-day communication with audiences and stakeholders.

A smaller theme was ‘funding’ (3 respondents) which included the suggestion of raising money into a European communication budget by Respondent 27. ‘Finding common goals’ also had three respondents.

Other answers include: spreading the information on good examples, getting their superiors in policy and management to support the messages and their efforts to promote them, strong leadership by the UN and intergovernmental institutions, more workshops among FCN members about communication, promoting Sustainable Forest Management everywhere, better identify target groups and focus on the largest and most influential segment and look at what other sectors facing some controversy do and learn from them.

Two respondents did not know or did not answer the question asked.
Q 4.7 What activities would you recommend the Forest Communicators’ Network or its members participate in to promote messages on forests? (19 answers)

This question had the lowest amount of answers and was particularly difficult to analyse for themes. The predominant theme was ‘co-operation’ with eight respondents. Answers include: exchange information regularly and support each other with the dissemination of information, learn from each other about best practices and stories of successes and failure, regular meetings and discussions, more networking opportunities, design actions in which all the members can contribute and implement in their influence’s area of work, sharing of public opinion research to determine where the boundaries of priority issues can be grouped, discussions with policymakers and practitioners across national and organisational boundaries to agree on common policies and messages.

Other answers include: systematically using the messages in papers/articles/presentations/communications, utilizing the sustainable development goals as a structure to craft messages, more workshops for FCN members about communication, use the available sound information and translate the messages into the language needed for any specific target audience (avoids misinformation and misinterpretation), information on the website, having a clear and authoritative ‘sender’ such as the UNECE, FAO or Forest Europe, communication strategy, support/encourage/inspire the local forest people as they are at the ‘helm’, good education of foresters and about forests, more frequent communication, time allotted in normal job duties to plan and follow-up, fairs and exhibitions, translated publications, social networks structured presence, documentaries (TV) and YouTube clips.
4 Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The data presented in the previous chapter provides an excellent insight into the opinions of the FCN members regarding common messages on forests and forest products. The thematic analysis of this data highlighted many possible challenges to the successful employment of these messages. In order to fulfil the research objectives of this study, the themes observed in the previous chapter have been collated to identify the key issues. This chapter will consider the first research objective before discussing these challenges in detail.

4.2 Successful Employment of Common Messages

In accordance with the first research objective, it is confidently proposed here that common messages on forests and forest products can be successfully employed within the UNECE region. This proposal rests on the answers provided to question 4.1. When asked if they believed that these common messages can be successfully employed, 22 out of the 30 members who answered this question responded ‘Yes’. Only four responded ‘No’ and similarly four responded with ‘Don’t Know’. Although only 30 members answered this question (out of 200 total members), the results are still remarkably positive.

The justifications provided in question 4.1 reinforce the confidence these members have in regional messages on forests and forest products. Although practically every member had a different justification for their answer, there were small themes that emerged from this data such as ‘regional similarities’ and ‘common messages are already in play’. Furthermore, the absence of major themes suggests that the justifications for these common messages being successful are ample. The members also appeared to agree on the benefits from employing these messages, with themes such as ‘co-operation’ and ‘understanding/awareness in the region’
present in the answers to question 4.2. Finally, the main reasons provided for the ‘No’ responses were the differences within the region. Nevertheless, as many members added, messages can be tailored to overcome this.

Despite the positive start to this chapter, the data did also raise some issues. In accordance with the second research objective, various challenges to the successful employment of these messages were identified in the data and should be carefully considered. Although the challenges presented were plentiful, the thematic analysis highlighted the following three key challenges.

4.3 Challenge: Stakeholder Knowledge and Perceptions

The first challenge can be categorised broadly as ‘stakeholder knowledge and perceptions’. This refers to the interlinking concepts of perceived low stakeholder knowledge of the forest sector and unknown stakeholder perceptions of the sector. This presents a challenge to the successful employment of common messages because the stakeholders these messages would be aimed at don’t properly understand or are aware of forestry issues. Furthermore, the variation of knowledge and perception observed in the data means that common messages need to be tailored for each group.

In question 3.1, the members perceived most stakeholder groups to have a significantly low level of knowledge of forest policy and practice, with most answers falling under the ‘Low’ or ‘Moderate’ categories. Subsequent to this, the need for education was stressed throughout the data. In question 3.2, when asked about stakeholder perceptions of forest policy and practice, generally the responses were positive. However, a significant number of members answered either ‘Neutral’ or ‘Don’t Know’. This suggests that many members either don’t know how stakeholders perceive the sector or don’t consider these stakeholders to have any opinion of the sector. Both options are worrying, as audience perceptions are needed for the creators of the messages to understand how they will be received. Moreover, when asked in question 3.4 if the respondents believe these perceptions present a challenge to communication for their organisation, only three responded that they did not. Members were then asked in question 3.5 if these perceptions presented a
challenge to communication within the wider geographical region and the overall response was the same.

4.4 Challenge: Regional Differences

The second key challenge is ‘regional differences’. This was one of the biggest themes in question 4.3, where members were asked to identify and explain the main challenges to creating common messages on forests. The members cited numerous differences, including regional priorities and practices, different ecosystems, varying meanings of the term forest and language and cultural differences. The diversity of language and culture is particularly challenging as, according to Respondent 2, simply translating a message may bring a wrong meaning in other language.

However, Respondent 19 makes an interesting point, claiming that endless discussions among foresters about regional differences is in itself a challenge. The respondent did not elaborate, but perhaps this is a challenge due to foresters not being able to get past these differences and progress with their discussions. In line with this, the other big theme from question 4.3 was ‘co-operation’, with answers such as lack of a common agenda, different views and opinions and an unwillingness to see the bigger picture. Co-operation is therefore needed for these common messages to be successful, despite these differences.

4.5 Challenge: Lack of a Regional Forest Policy

The last key challenge to emerge from the data was the ‘lack of a regional forest policy’. This challenge was apparent from question 4.4, which asked members how the lack of a single regional policy on forests might affect the creation of effective common messages. All bar one member who answered this question believed that the lack of a single policy for forests in the region could be a challenge, with almost half of the respondents claiming this was due to competition with regards to policy. The almost unanimous response to this question identified it as a clear issue.
4.6 Achieving Successful Common Messages

Although the focus of this research was to identify challenges to successfully employing common messages on forests, the data did also provide a slight insight into how these messages could be successful. Two interesting points arose from section four, which will be discussed here briefly.

Firstly, the members were in partial agreement on how common messages could be agreed. When they were asked in question 4.5 what would need to be done to achieve common messages, they generally shared the same ideas. The most common theme was ‘communication’, which included half of the members. ‘Co-operation’, ‘commitment’ and ‘working together towards a common goal or policy’ were also themes.

Secondly, there are a variety of ways that common messages could be promoted. When asked in question 4.6 what would need to be done to promote common messages across the sector, the top themes were ‘co-operation’ and ‘spreading the messages’. In question 4.7, when asked what activities the FCN or its members could participate in to promote common messages, the top theme was again ‘co-operation’. However, for both of these questions the list of other answers was significantly long. Although this could be seen as a potential challenge, it is viewed here positively. The conclusion made here is that the more ideas that are presented for promoting common messages, the more opportunities and avenues the FCN and its members have available for promotion.
6 Conclusion

This study set out with two objectives: to establish whether common messages on forests and forest products can be successfully employed within the UNECE region and to identify the key challenges to their employment. It has been proposed that yes, these common messages can be successfully employed within the UNECE region. However, there are three key challenges that should be considered when planning these messages: stakeholder knowledge and perceptions, regional differences and the lack of a regional forest policy.

The last major theme from the data was the need for co-operation within the FCN, the forest sector and the UNECE region with regards to communication. This theme was apparent throughout the data and can be considered as an overarching issue. When dealing with common messages, emphasis should therefore be on the need for co-operation. Although the members touched briefly on potential ways this could be realised, further research into this area would be of benefit.

Conclusively, research into the actual knowledge and perceptions of stakeholders would be valuable. This would allow the creators of the messages to know which messages are needed and how they will be received. This research would also help to close the gap between public perception and the reality of forests that underpin one of the key challenges identified here.
Appendix A – Questionnaire

Forest Communication Survey

Hello

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research.

The questionnaire will contain 20 questions and should take between 10 and 15 minutes to complete.

The data collected will be used in both a masters dissertation for Queen Margaret University and a report for the Forest Communicators’ Network. Both pieces will examine the employment of successful common messages on forests and forest products within the UNECE region. The data provided will be treated confidentially and the respondent’s personal details will be anonymised in the research.

By choosing to complete this questionnaire, the respondent consents to their data being used in the above research.

To begin, please click ‘next’.
Section One - About You

Section One will cover some administrative questions for contact purposes and to help provide perspective. All information provided in this section will be anonymised in the final research.

1.1 What is your name?

1.2 What is the name of your organisation?

1.3 How would you categorise your organisation? (please choose one)

- Government Ministry or Agency
- Commercial Forestry
- Forest Products
- ENGO
- Industry Lobby Group
- International Institution
- Other (Please Specify)

1.4 How would you describe your job role? (please choose one)

- Policymaking
- Technical
- Communications
- Marketing
- Other (Please Specify)
Section Two – Stakeholder Importance

This section will assess the importance of stakeholder groups to your organisation and the wider geographical area, based on either evidence or your best professional judgement.

2.1 In terms of importance to your organisation’s communication, how would you prioritise the following stakeholders on a scale of 1 to 5? (With 1 being not important and 5 being very important)

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<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>1 – Not Important</th>
<th>2 – Slightly Important</th>
<th>3 – Moderately Important</th>
<th>4 – Quite Important</th>
<th>5 – Very Important</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
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2.2 In terms of importance to communications within the UNECE region, how would you prioritise the following stakeholders on a scale of 1 to 5? 
(With 1 being not important and 5 being very important)

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<th>3 – Moderately Important</th>
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2.3 Are there any other stakeholders which you believe are important to forest communication in general? Please describe why they are important.
Section Three – Stakeholder Perceptions

This section will assess stakeholder perceptions of forest policy and practice, based on either evidence or your best professional judgement.

3.1 On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the level of knowledge of forest policy and practice within each of these stakeholder groups?
(With 1 being none and 5 being substantial)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>1 – None</th>
<th>2 – Low</th>
<th>3 – Moderate</th>
<th>4 – High</th>
<th>5 – Substantial</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
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3.2 On a scale of 1-5, how would you assess the perceptions of forest policy and practice within each of these stakeholder groups?
(With 1 being negative and 5 being positive)

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<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>1 – Negative</th>
<th>2 – Fairly Negative</th>
<th>3 – Neutral</th>
<th>4 – Fairly Positive</th>
<th>5 – Positive</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
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3.3 Are these perceptions particular to your geographical area or are they common across the UNECE region? Please use the space provided to explain your answer.


3.4 How might these perceptions present a challenge to forest communication for your organisation?


3.5 How might these perceptions present a challenge to forest communication in the wider geographical area?

   i. In Europe


   ii. In the UNECE region.
3.6 Aside from stakeholder perceptions, what are additional challenges to forest
communication in the wider geographical area?

i. In Europe.

ii. In the UNECE region.

3.7 Where do you believe stakeholders receive their information about forest issues
from? *Please use the space provided to explain your answer.*
Section Four - Common Messages for the UNECE region

The final section will cover common messages on forests and forest products within the UNECE region to assess if and how they can be employed successfully.

4.1 Do you believe that common messages on forests and their products can be successfully employed across the region?
   i) Yes/No/Don’t Know (please tick one)
   ii) Please use the space provided to explain your answer.

4.2 What opportunities or benefits would result from common messages on forests?

4.3 What are the main challenges to creating effective common messages on forests? Please use the space provided to explain your answer.
4.4 How might the lack of a single regional policy on forests affect the creation of effective common messages on forests?


4.5 What would need to be done to achieve agreed common messages? Please use the space provided to explain your answer.


4.6 What should be done to promote common messages across the sector?


4.7 What activities would you recommend the Forest Communicators Network or its members participate in to promote common messages on forests? Please use the space provided to justify your answer.


Thank you for completing this survey.
If you have any further comments, please leave them below.

[Finish]