

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE
PROTECTION OF FORESTS IN EUROPE



NATIONAL FOREST PROGRAMMES IN EUROPE

Steps taken by the MCPFE towards
the development, dissemination
and implementation of the concept
of the National Forest Programmes
in Europe



WARSAW, 2005

Introduction

The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) has been working on a concept of the national forest programmes (nfps) in the pan-European context since 1998. Two workshops (Tulln, Austria 1999; Lillehammer, Norway, 2001) and the Preparatory Group on the national forest programmes (Riga, Latvia, 2002) resulted in the foundation of the MCPFE Approach to National Forest Programmes in Europe.

In April 2003, at the Vienna Conference, the Ministers responsible for forests from 40 European countries and the European Community endorsed the Vienna Declaration and the five Vienna Resolutions. The Annex to Vienna Resolution 1: “Strengthen Synergies for Sustainable Forest Management in Europe Through Cross-Sectoral Co-operation and National Forest Programmes” embraced the MCPFE Approach to National Forest Programmes in Europe.

Building on the consensus achieved by the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and its successor, the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), the MCPFE shares the following approach to the nfps in Europe:

“A national forest programme constitutes a participatory, holistic, inter-sectoral and iterative process of policy planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation at the national and/or sub-national level in order to proceed towards the further improvement of sustainable forest management as defined in Helsinki Resolution H1, and to contribute to sustainable development. It

- is based on national sovereignty and country leadership and on long-term high level political commitment,
 - makes best use of existing capacities and is supportive to the development of intellectual, human and institutional capacity in the field of sustainable forest management”.

Principles of nfps in Europe¹:

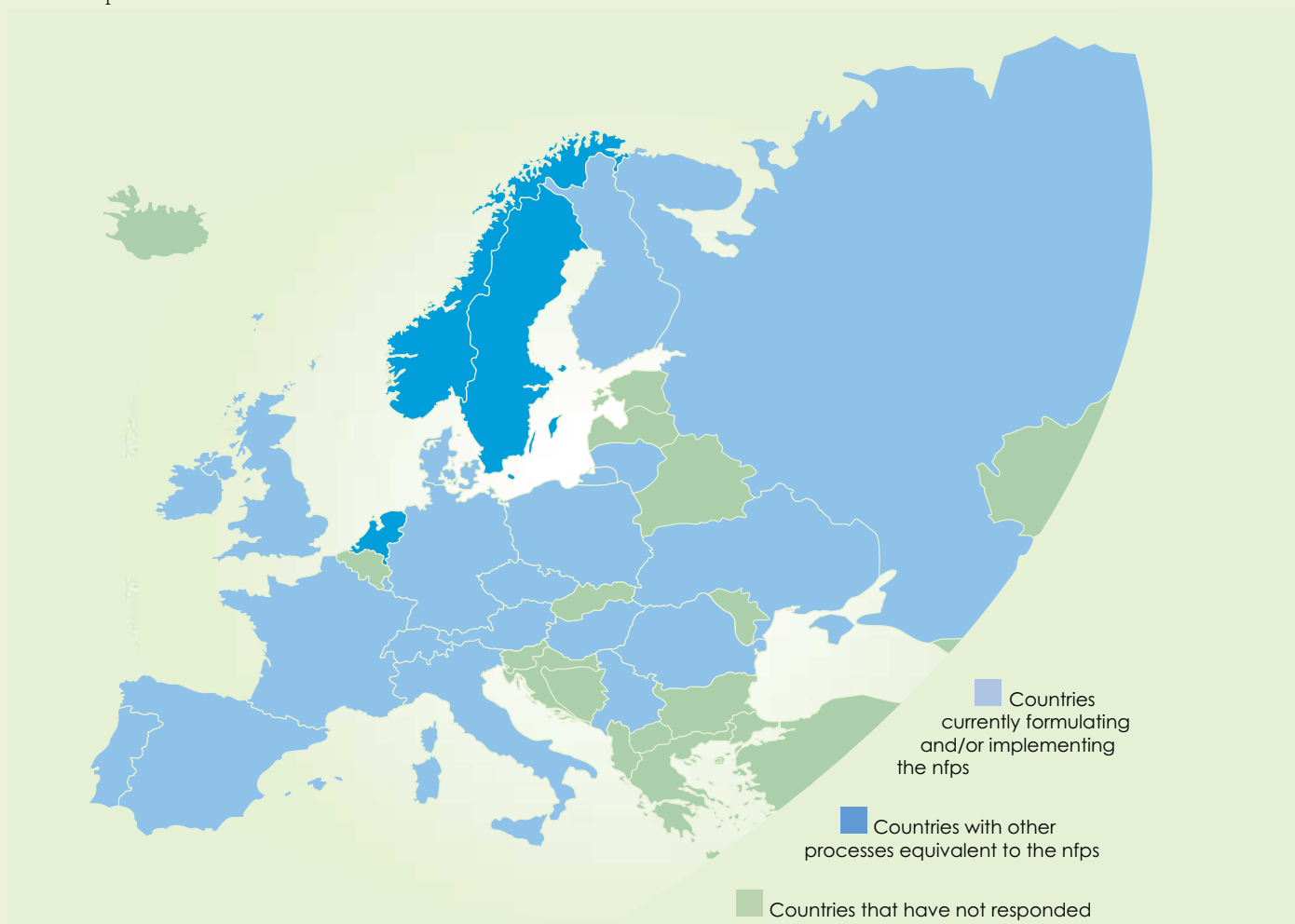
- Participation
- Holistic and inter-sectoral approach
- Iterative process with long-term commitment
- Capacity-building
- Consistency with national legislation and policies
- Integration with national sustainable development strategies
- Consistency with international commitments recognizing synergies between international forest-related initiatives and conventions
- Institutional and policy reform
- Ecosystem approach
- Partnership for implementation
- Raising awareness

¹ MCPFE (2003), Annex to Vienna Resolution 1

Status of the National Forest Programmes in Europe

The results of the survey conducted by the MCPFE Liaison Unit Warsaw

In 2004, in order to review the status of the nfps in Europe, the MCPFE Liaison Unit Warsaw conducted a survey among the signatory states. A questionnaire relating to the establishment, progress and evaluation of the nfps was sent out to 44 countries and a response was received from 23, among which 20 are currently formulating and/or implementing national forest programmes in line with the MCPFE approach. Three countries have put other processes equivalent to the nfps in place. In most countries the ministries responsible for forests have initiated and coordinated the nfps.



1. Stages of the nfp

	Austria	Czech Republic	Denmark	Finland	France	Germany	Hungary	Ireland	Italy	Lithuania	Luxemburg	Netherlands	Norway	Poland	Portugal	Romania	Russia	Serbia	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	UK	Ukraine	
Formulation	■			■	■		■			■			■	■	■	■	■							
Implementation		■	■		■		■			■	■	■		■				■		■	■	■	■	
Evaluation			■		■		■																	

The results of the survey showed that the majority of the countries are at the stage of formulation and implementation of the nfps. Portugal and Luxemburg are experiencing the formulation and implementation concurrently. In Germany and Ireland the implementation takes place along with the evaluation phase.

2. Reason for initiation

The variety of reasons for launching the nfps indicated by responding countries included:

- a need to comply with international commitments signed by governments,
- a call for integration of forests with other sectors relevant to forestry,
- devolution of institutions,
- exploration of existing and future challenges as regards the development of the forest sector,
- a need for outdated forest strategies to be replaced,
- a reduction of negative impacts on forests.

3. Nfps and forest legislation

Different effects of the nfps on forest legislation were reported. The nfps:

- integrate international forest-related commitments and legislative acts (CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD, IPF/IFF/UNFF, MCPFE, Natura 2000),
- have strong influence on the existing legislation acts,
- are a basis for the amendment and revision of forest law,
- consolidate existing national forest and forest-related legislative acts.

The nfp documents have legally binding status in 5 countries.

4. Public participation in the nfps

Societies participate actively in the nfps, though the patterns of public participation vary significantly. The most common form of participation is an exchange of information and consultation during the process. Taking an active part in the decision making process by society was reported in a few cases.

5. Evaluation of the nfps

In the majority of responding countries the nfps include different types of evaluation. Continuous evaluation was reported most often (from 11 countries). The intermediary evaluation was indicated by 6 respondents, and final evaluation by 2 respondents.

6. SFM monitoring

Monitoring of SFM is included in the nfps in the majority of the countries. The activity is conducted using a variety of measurement tools, among which the MCPFE Criteria and Indicators (C&I) are the most frequent:

Measurement tools used in SFM monitoring

Measurement tools	Number of countries
MCPFE C&I	14
National C&I	9
Target levels	8
Baselines	4
Other	3



Photo: T.J.

Lessons Learnt and Experiences Shared: the MCPFE workshop on nfps, 2004

The MCPFE workshop on “Exchanging country’s experiences in the nfp processes on the practical application of the MCPFE Approach to the nfps in Europe”² took place on 22-24 November 2005, in Gdańsk, Poland. Three thematic sessions were held, and the following issues highlighted:

1. *Integration of international commitments with national forest policies*

The nfps can be used in building an effective dialogue at different levels and among different forest-relevant stakeholders. The nfp process can serve as a communication channel to capture national experiences on SFM and can give feedback to the higher international forest-policy fora. With a view to the role of the nfps in the international forest-policy dialogue being enhanced, the following suggestions were made:

- exchanging information on international agreements (and their implementation) with the emphasis on transferring the information to stakeholders at the national and regional levels within each country,
- using the nfps as an interface to integrate forest concerns and develop consistency across different sectoral policies,
- strengthening the understanding of the nfps at the international level,
- making every effort to gain strong political commitment.

2. *Mechanisms for cross-sectoral co-ordination and public participation developed by countries in the nfp processes*

A number of countries in Europe are currently in the process of identifying and engaging stakeholders. Several countries are dealing with participation and are clarifying the mandates of all involved. The overall tendency is for a new culture of discussion to take over from the traditional top-down forest policy planning in place previously. Successful participation could be assured by:

- clear structures and mandates for all stakeholders engaged in the nfps (in line with procedures agreed upon and made clear at the beginning of the nfp process),
- legitimate and balanced representation of the stakeholders,
- clearly allocated responsibilities for implementation among all involved,
- increased awareness of the impact, benefit, and relevance of forestry to all stakeholders,
- proactive addressing of stakeholders’ concerns.

Difficulties with engaging representatives of other sectors – reflecting a lack of interest in, and widespread knowledge of the opportunities and benefits for stakeholders are seen as the main obstacles to cross-sectoral coordination activities. These difficulties could be overcome by:

- providing information that demonstrates the benefits and full value of forestry to other sectors,
- developing communication skills,
- demonstrating achievements,
- including the effectiveness of cross-sectoral cooperation as a part of the overall evaluation of nfp,
- revealing and resolving conflicts arising during the nfp process.

² To obtain a full version of the outcome of the workshop and other documents related to this event, please visit MCPFE website: <http://www.mcpfe.org/>



Photo: M.M.



Photo: A.R.

3. Assessment of existing capacities in the context of the nfps & experiences and lessons learnt concerning the evaluation of the nfp process

Although capacity-building is both time and resource intensive, it is seen as an essential part of the nfp process. An assessment of existing and required capacities is an important prerequisite to the nfps. Efficient capacity-building procedures should include:

- combination of issues to encourage wide use of limited resources,
- balanced consultation as a key to successful learning,
- investment in all stakeholders,
- best use of available scientific expertise,
- communication, training and education,
- investment in up-to-date technologies,
- feedback on experiences (learning by doing).

In order to “not to get lost in the process” there is a call for establishment of systems enabling comparisons with other programmes and strategies and for continuous evaluation. These are seen to be complex tasks, when the iterative character of the nfp is recalled, as well as the need for the new circumstances developing during the process to be adapted to. Effective evaluation procedures should encompass:

- the establishing of criteria and goals on the basis of consultation with all participants prior to the start of the process,
- a form of evaluation agreed at the outset,
- a focus on the nfp process and its inputs, impacts, outputs and outcomes,
- all aspects of SFM,
- a demonstration of the impact evaluation exerts.

Evaluation should be independent and conducted by internal and external actors.

References

MCPFE 2003. Vienna Declaration and Vienna Resolutions. Adopted at the Fourth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe. <http://www.mcpfe.org>

MCPFE 2004. Minutes of the workshop: “Exchanging country’s experiences in the nfp processes on the practical application of the MCPFE Approach to the nfps in Europe.” <http://www.mcpfe.org/documents/minutes/arcdoc/work/>



Photo: A.R.



Photo: G.O.

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE
PROTECTION OF FORESTS IN EUROPE



MCPFE
Liaison Unit Warsaw

ul. Bitwy Warszawskiej 1920 r. nr 3
00-973 Warsaw, Poland
tel. **+48 22 331 70 31**
fax **+48 22 331 70 32**
e-mail: liaison.unit@lu-warsaw.pl

www.mcpfe.org