

Background Document for the FOREST EUROPE Expert Group on Implementation of the Updated pan-European Indicators for SFM

1. Background

Over the last 15 years remarkable progress has been made in achieving a sustainable forest management (SFM) in the pan-European region's forests. This progress has been established following the SFM guidelines and through the implementation of the pan-European criteria and indicators (C&I) for SFM and other SFM tools.

However, new goals and challenges for European forests and the forest sector have to be addressed continuously. The initiatives such as UNFCCC Paris Agreement, UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its Sustainable Development Goals, reporting on Goals for European Forests and the European 2020 Targets for Forests should be reflected in the implementation of pan-European C&I for SFM.

The issues such as climate change, impacts of globalisation, green economy, increasing demands for biomass and bioenergy, the need to further enhance the full range of ecosystem services from European forests, require further development and implementation of sustainable forest management, its tools and assessment, to better comprise new knowledge and emerging issues

In the Madrid Ministerial Declaration adopted by ministers at the 7th FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference (Madrid, Spain, 20-21 October 2015), the signatories agreed, inter alia, on:

- 15. Raise awareness of the importance of forests in the post-2015 development agenda as a key contributor to sustainable development, and in particular of their contribution to the achievements of several of the sustainable development goals and targets,*
- 21. Monitor and report on the achievements in the implementation of the goals and targets of European Forests 2020,*
- 22. Increase efforts to raise awareness on the multi-functionality of forests and benefits they offer to society, as well as to increase the efforts on communicating the importance of sustainable forest management in managing and protection of forests in Europe,*
- 25. Provide regional inputs to the work of the International Arrangement on Forests through the United Nations Forum on Forests,*
- 27. Endorse the updated pan-European indicators for sustainable forest management as adopted by the Expert Level Meeting on 1st July 2015 in Madrid, Spain, and use them in forest policy, forest monitoring, as appropriate, and for collaboration with other sectors,*
- 28. Further develop and update policies and tools for sustainable forest management in order to adapt them, where appropriate, to changing circumstances and to take them fit for addressing new regional and global challenges,*
- 30. Use subsets of the pan-European criteria and indicators as appropriate for communicating the achievements of sustainable forest management, and explore the possibilities for various applications for them, notably in relation to other policies.*

Following the outcomes of Madrid Ministerial Conference 2015, the Expert Level Meeting held in Bratislava on 11-12 May 2016 approved FOREST EUROPE (FE) Work Programme for the period 2016-2020 (WP).

In order to support implementation of above mentioned actions of Madrid Ministerial Declaration, the FOREST EUROPE Expert Group on Implementation of the Updated pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management (hereinafter termed “EG”) is established according to the FE WP, Action 4.1 – “*Further development and updating of policies and tools for sustainable forest management*”, and its Activities 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 – “*Enhancing tools to promote SFM*”. EG will enable dialogue and mobilise expert forum for further development of C&I and their use as a tool for SFM. EG should analyse the present use of the C&I for SFM and their linkages to other initiatives, to identify and analyse the need in other sectors for forest information and indicators, and prepare a proposal for subsets of indicators to this end.

2. Detailed activities of the Expert Group

Detailed activities of the EG will be based on the Action 4.1 of the approved FE WP:

Activity	Time fram	Related Goals
Enhancing tools to promote SFM		
4.1.1. <i>An expert group shall explore considerations on tools to promote and assess SFM through methodological support and better incorporation of the updated set of SFM indicators and new knowledge in the activities 4.1.2. and 4.2.1.-4.2.4. Outputs will be provided by an online consultation. The expert group shall, inter alia, monitor</i>	2016-2019	G1-7 T4, T6, T7, T8
4.1.2. <i>Analysis of the possible uses of the pan-European C&I subsets including their applications at global (e.g. SDGs, FRA, CFRQ) regional (Goals and 2020 Targets for European Forests), sub-regional and national levels. The output of the analysis should include detailed explanation and clarification of the particular subsets, inter alia, for</i>	2016-2018	G1-7 T4, T6, T7, T8

3. Scope and objective of the work of the Expert Group

The EG is an *ad hoc* mechanism established with the purpose of advancing implementation of the Work Programme on specific subjects of technical and scientific nature. EG is initiated to share the expertise, analyse possible approaches and formulate its opinions on the thematic areas related to the implementation of updated set of pan-European criteria and indicators for SFM, including further development of indicators and possible uses of C&I subsets.

The objective of the work of EG is to provide policy and expert advice to the Expert Level Meeting and guidance to the Liaison Unit Bratislava (LUB) in their work related to the activities 4.1.1-2 and 4.2.1-4. of the FE Work Programme. More specifically, the EG will carry out the following tasks:

- Explore considerations on tools to promote and assess SFM,
- Analyse how C&I are developed, update their background information where necessary and analyse how they can be implemented,
- Contribute to a better coordination of policies and tools on SFM at global, regional and national levels,
- Analyse the possible uses of the pan-European C&I subsets, including their applications at global (e.g. SDGs, FRA, CFRQ) regional (Goals and 2020 Targets for European Forests), sub-regional and national levels, and present conclusions to the subsequent Expert Level Meeting,
- Support incorporation of the updated set of SFM indicators in SFM monitoring and reporting, including methodological support and new knowledge incorporation in:
 - Collaborative data collection
 - Production of the State of Europe's Forests
 - Pilot studies on the new indicators
 - Reporting on national and pan-European achievements on Goals and 2020 Targets for European Forests

The expert group shall focus its work on following areas related to above mentioned tasks on SFM tools:

The indicative list below provides main aspects that are pertinent for SFM tools, taking into account ministerial commitments, relevant FE WP activities, as well as work done in this respect¹ by FE and other international institutions and bodies. The EG might reconsider the given scope and may propose modifications, if necessary, however they should be in line with the ministerial commitments and FE WP adopted at the ELM.

1. Structure of tools to promote SFM

- Identification of tools to promote SFM
- Strategy for further development of tools to promote SFM

The work in this area may include overview of tools to promote SFM identified by FE and other relevant organizations. The FE priorities in further development of tools to promote SFM should be identified.

- #### **2. Background information on C&I** – the FE updated set of pan-European C&I was adopted in 2015 and the background information on updated indicators should be elaborated in due time for data collection for next report on State of Europe's Forests. The information on data availability and reliability for three newly adopted indicators will be collected in pilot studies and EG should provide indication on feasibility of these indicators for reporting by FE signatories.

¹ - The FE Advisory Group on the updating of the pan-European Indicators for SFM;
- The FE Expert Group to Propose Improvements in Tools for SFM;
- EFI project report “ Implementing Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management in Europe”;
- FAO SFM Toolbox (<http://www.fao.org/sustainable-forest-management/toolbox/sfm-home/en/>);
- FAO project “Strengthening criteria and indicators for SFM in policy and practice”;
- Standing Forestry Committee ad hoc Working group on SFM C&I

3. **C&I subsets** – considering new sustainable development agenda, commitments related to mitigation of climate change and other relevant global and regional efforts, the possible uses of the pan-European C&I subsets should be analysed. Regional processes for SFM are invited to report on regional contributions to all Sustainable development goals (SDGs) where contribution of forestry sector is identified, as well as progress towards regional Goals and 2020 Targets for European Forests should be reported adequately – selecting and interpreting appropriate C&I.
4. **Communication and reporting** – the report on State of Europe's Forests is periodically issued for FE ministerial conferences, providing comprehensive overview of progress towards SFM in European region. The report is based on national submissions structured according FE C&I. The data collection, assessment and interpretation of progress towards SFM require expert knowledge and elaboration which can be provided by EG.

4. Composition of the EG

The EG is to be composed of relevant experts nominated by signatory countries and observer organisations/countries. Other relevant independent experts or relevant organisations can be invited to provide their expertise on specific subjects.

Building on the experience and knowledge of the Advisory Group on the updating of the pan-European Indicators for SFM, the Expert Group to Propose Improvements in Tools for SFM, Team of Specialists on Monitoring of SFM, the participation in these groups should be considered in nominations.

5. Mode of work and the outputs

The EG is established by the FE WP for the period 2016-2020, approved by the Expert Level Meeting held in Bratislava on 11-12 May 2016.

Duration: XI 2016 – XII 2020.

Expected outputs

The Expert Group should produce a report on its findings, including:

- analysis of the possible uses of the pan-European C&I subsets, including their applications at global, regional and national levels;
- definitions and background information related to the new adopted indicators and modified indicators;
- recommendations on reporting on national and pan-European achievements on Goals for European Forests and the European 2020 Targets for Forests;
- recommendations for further actions to be taken.

Means of work

The e-mail exchange of working materials will be used and experts will be requested to provide their inputs. For individual tasks moderator will be appointed or LUB will act as a moderator. The outputs will be provided by an online consultation. The face-to-face meetings will be arranged to initiate work of Expert Group and to finalize outputs if necessary. Other appropriate forms of work can be considered by the EG, considering their effectiveness, efficiency and transparency.

6. Annex

Proposal of the tentative “Road Map” for EG

Activity	Date	Comment
1. First EG meeting (back-to-back to EG on green jobs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting information of the work done so far on the SFM tools and on C&I specifically, discussing and specifying the thematic focus of the EG 	I 2017	
2. Analysis how C&I are developed and how they can be implemented, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> completion of C&I Background information 	I 2017 – X 2017	
3. Support in Pilot studies on the new indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recommendation on feasibility of reporting 	I 2017 – X 2017	
4. Analyse the possible uses of the pan-European C&I subsets, including their applications at all levels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recommendations for SDGs, G&T2020, etc. 	I 2017 – XII 2017	
5. Support in Reporting on national and pan-European achievements on Goals and 2020 Targets for European Forests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> support in enquiries preparation support in report preparation on G&T2020 	I 2018 – XII 2019 I 2017 – X 2017 VIII 2018 – XII 2019	
6. Support of Collaborative data collection on C&I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recommendations for questionnaires preparation 	I 2017 – XII 2017	
7. Support in Production of the State of Europe’s Forests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> involvement in report elaboration 	I 2018 – XII 2019	
8. Explore considerations on tools to promote and assess SFM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recommendation on SFM assessment method identification of tools to promote SFM and strategy for their further development 	I 2017 – XII 2019 VI 2018 – XII 2018 I 2017 – XII 2019	
9. Contribute to a better coordination of policies and tools on SFM at global, regional and national levels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recommendations on SDGs regional reporting, CFRQ, etc. 	I 2018 – XII 2019 I 2017 – XII 2017	
10. EG meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> preparation of the recommendations on further development of SFM tools 	VI 2019	