

FOREST EUROPE

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The Newsletter of the Liaison Unit Bratislava

[Latest insights into European green economy and forest based bioeconomy](#)

At the FOREST EUROPE Seventh Ministerial Conference in Madrid in 2015, the ministers responsible for forests in Europe adopted the [Madrid Ministerial Resolution 1 "Forest sector in the center of Green Economy"](#) where they committed themselves to enhance the contribution of sustainable forest management to a bio-based low carbon economy, promoting innovation and research and encouraging use of wood from sustainably managed forests ensuring a sound basis for bioeconomy. Moreover, promoting green jobs in forestry, adapting education and training systems, social inclusion and gender equality as well as incorporating value of ecosystem services in a green economy were also embedded into the political commitments of this resolution.

Contribution to efforts in transition to a green economy (including bioeconomy and circular economy) through enhancing the role of sustainable forest management is at the core of the [FOREST EUROPE Work Programme](#) for the next period 2016-2020, which was adopted by the Expert Level Meeting held on 11-12 May 2016. This pan-European follow up process to the Madrid Ministerial Conference contains activities such as promoting long-term competitiveness of the whole forest sector and its related value chain, highlighting the role of wood, including innovative materials. Other related activities aim at enhancement of education and training systems, defining requirements for green jobs in the forest sector as well as promoting the pan-European practices on valuation of and payment for forest ecosystem services.

Two events important from green economy and bioeconomy viewpoints were held in the beginning of June this year. Helsinki hosted the seminar [Building the bioeconomy: Insights from European strategies](#) organized

by European Forest institute on 7 June 2016 and its ThinkForest initiative. The [8th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference](#), held on 8-10 June 2016 in Batumi, Georgia, put transition to a green economy at its core.

Greening the economy, improving air quality and emphasising the role of Education for Sustainable Development were at the top agenda of this Environment for Europe Conference. Greening the economy, an approach to foster a healthy economy while ensuring environmental sustainability and social equity, has been considered as one of the most promising ways to achieve sustainable development. The Conference endorsed the [Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy in the pan-European region](#). The Framework equips countries with a common vision and outlines broad objectives to reduce environmental risks and ecological scarcities, and to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. [Batumi Initiative on Green Economy \(BIG-E\)](#) launched on this occasion, is made up of over 100 voluntary actions submitted initially by 34 countries and organizations, in order to pave a way and encourage other actors to take actions to this end.

On the other hand, EFI's seminar [Building the bioeconomy: Insights from European strategies](#) held in Helsinki a day before the Batumi Conference, tackled bioeconomy from the perspective of the European forest sector. The Minister of Economic Affairs of Finland, Olli Rehn, and Theresa Knapp speaking on behalf of the Minister for Policy Coordination and Energy of Sweden highlighted a need for long term policy framework reducing possible regulatory uncertainties for bioeconomy business development and investments, which should be elaborated utilizing existing legislative and policy instruments to avoid excessive administrative burden. Shift from the fossil to sustainable renewable era should not be done only for climate related objectives, but

also for security of supply, industrial competitiveness and creation of new jobs. Bioenergy and forest biomass are tackled especially in the Nordic countries. It was stated that EU policies for sustainable bioenergy should contribute to increasing use of sustainable bioenergy and promote open internal as well as export bioenergy markets without any indirect trade barriers. One of the key messages from the seminar “don’t just make plans – open opportunities“ underlined a need for urgent strategic decisions and actions in bioeconomy, if Europe wants to exploit its opportunities, as there already is ongoing rapid development outside of Europe.

industrial applications and innovative forest products are gaining more and more importance powered by high-tech sectors and other emerging industries.

As bioeconomy is gaining its momentum, several countries in Europe already have or are currently developing national bioeconomy strategies. The EU Bioeconomy Strategy from 2012 is currently under review. The European Commission (EC) plans to update the strategy to better encompass decarbonisation and circularity while also promoting industrial renaissance, dynamic regional economies and the renewal of key sectors



Bioeconomy has gained its momentum – industrialized and emerging economies across the world have been developing their bioeconomy strategies for fostering innovation, sustainable development and green growth.

Source: German Bioeconomy Council, <http://bioekonomierat.de/en/international0/>

The concept of bioeconomy evolved over the recent few years from substitution of fossil fuels in the early 2000's to technological innovations today. Although forest biomass for production of bioenergy substituting fossil fuels is still important, mainly in countries with vast forest resources and more wood available per capita (Nordic countries), other countries with limited forest resources are composing their energy mix from different energy sources according to their conditions (and in some cases targeting their focus at other forest ecosystem services with potential to be economically viable). On the other hand, higher value added from primary industries,

Forestry and the forest sector should be firmly anchored in this updated strategy to strengthen its role and position among other sectors. Forest sector can contribute to the creation of decent employment conditions for its workforce, to innovating sustainable ways of using wood and improving biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. The Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy, adopted in 2013 by the joint sessions of the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission in Rovaniemi, Finland, describes how the forest sector could contribute or even lead the way

First FOREST EUROPE Expert Level Meeting during Slovakia's chairing

Bratislava hosted the first Expert Level Meeting since the Slovak Republic took over the chairing of the FOREST EUROPE process from Spain. Nearly 70 delegates representing 29 signatory countries, the European Union and 14 observer organisations gathered on 11-12 May 2016 to discuss and adopt new FOREST EUROPE Work Programme for implementation of the commitments made at the 7th Ministerial Conference and Extraordinary Ministerial Conference in October 2015, in Madrid.

Expert Level Meeting represents the decision-making body of the FOREST EUROPE process in the period between Ministerial Conferences. At the meetings FOREST EUROPE signatories have the mandate to take decisions on implementation of commitments made by ministers responsible for forests and to prepare upcoming ministerial conferences.



Ms. Gabriela Matečná, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic

The recent Expert Level Meeting was prepared by the new Liaison Unit Bratislava under the oversight of the General Coordinating Committee, which currently consists of the Slovak Republic, Spain, Germany, Turkey and Sweden. Ms. Gabriela Matečná, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic, opened the meeting and expressed in her introductory speech the

importance of the task and the responsibility that Slovakia bears for the FOREST EUROPE process. "The goal of our country during our chairing period will be to facilitate dialogue and cooperation on issues that European forests and forestry currently face and strive to achieve consensus among signatories and other stakeholders. Promoting a holistic approach supporting multifunctional role of forests and concept of sustainable forest management will be highlighted within this period," the minister said.

A key objective of the meeting was the discussion and adoption of the FOREST EUROPE Work Programme and its pan-European actions and activities in follow up to the Madrid Ministerial Conferences. Besides the Work Programme, the Expert Level Meeting also discussed next steps in the Review of the FOREST EUROPE process and appointed France and Ukraine as co-chairs of the working group on future direction of FOREST EUROPE.

FOREST EUROPE Work Programme at a glance



The main objective of the FOREST EUROPE Work Programme 2016-2020, adopted at the Expert Level Meeting on 11-12 May 2016 in Bratislava, is to promote sustainable forest management in signatory countries reflecting latest developments, knowledge, innovations on emerging issues, and to develop common strategies. The Work Programme will address thematic areas which are highlighted in the box below.

Thematic areas of the FOREST EUROPE Work Programme
Further development and updating of policies and tools for sustainable forest management
Forest monitoring and reporting
Enhancing the role of sustainable forest management in a green economy
Incorporating the value of forests ecosystem services in a green economy
Protection of forests in a changing environment including their adaptation to climate change
Enhancing the social dimension of SFM in the context of the benefits of forests to human health and well-being
Review of the FOREST EUROPE process
Further discussion on Legally Binding Agreement

Forests in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015 and officially came into force on 1 January 2016. The 2030 Agenda comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, which strive to balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

Forests, as an important component of the environment,

key to combating climate change and biodiversity protection, contributing to food security and providing shelter, are relevant to many SDGs, their targets and respective indicators. The Goal 15 addresses forests most specifically: Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss. The Goal 15 comprises 12 Targets, e.g.:

15.1. - By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements,

15.2 - By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally.

Involvement of international organizations

FAO is the 'custodian' UN agency for 20 indicators, for SDGs 2, 5, 6, 12, 14 and 15, and as a contributing agency for five more. That means the organization coordinates and contributes to the further development of respective indicators and collects data from national sources.

The Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group created during UNFF11 should develop proposals on a replacement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the UN Forest Instrument with an appropriate reference to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as the Strategic Plan for the period 2017-2030.

While the extent and form of reporting on forests and forestry contribution to different SDGs is still discussed, the area of forests and sustainable forest management play a central role in indicators for respective targets of the Goal 15, e.g.:

15.1.1 – Forest area as a proportion of total land area, Tier I indicator,

15.2.1 – Progress towards sustainable forest management, tier III indicator, which requires methodological definition, as it comprises of 4 sub-indicators (change in forest area; change in stock of carbon; share of forest area primary designated for biodiversity conservation; share of forest area under forest management plan and certified under independent forest management certification scheme).

The FOREST EUROPE Work Programme recognizes SDGs as a platform for cooperation with UNFF and actively contributes to the related upcoming meetings:

The informal inter-agency meeting on indicators to monitor progress towards SFM and forest-related SDG indicators (New York, 29 April 2016; Rome, 20 July 2016).

International expert workshop on strengthening collaboration on criteria and indicators (C&I) to promote and demonstrate sustainable forest management (Ottawa, 1-3 May 2016).

UNFF and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) expert meeting for strengthening the involvement of regional and sub-regional organizations and processes in the work on forest-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda (Tehran, 26 - 28 September 2016).

As Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) has supported the suggestion to hold an Organization Led Initiative (OLI) with FAO in the lead, the meeting of experts on C&I is expected to support UNFF tasks related to SDGs.

Perspectives and Challenges Ahead in European Cooperation on Forests

Side event at the 5th World Forest Week

A side event will be held by FOREST EUROPE in collaboration with FAO and UNECE during the World Forest Week at FAO Headquarters in Rome. It will serve to stimulate discussions on the actions embraced in the new Work Programme 2016-2020, including forest monitoring and reporting, and integrating climate change adaptation measures into Sustainable Forest Management.

Date:	19 July 2016
Time:	13:00 – 14:30
Venue:	Mexico Room, FAO Headquarters, Building D, 211

About this newsletter:

This Newsletter provides an update on relevant forest policy developments in Europe. It is edited and published by the Liaison Unit Bratislava, which acts as the secretariat for FOREST EUROPE, a high-level forest policy process established in the 1990s. FOREST EUROPE enhances the cooperation on forest policies in Europe under the leadership of ministers, and secures and promotes Sustainable Forest Management with the aim of maintaining the multiple functions of forests crucial to the society.

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