

Current Status of the Preparation of the State of Europe's Forests Report 2020

Background document

Summary: The purpose of this background document is to update FOREST EUROPE signatories and observers on the progress made in implementation of FOREST EUROPE Work Programme activities: Collaborative data collection (4.2.1), Production of State of Europe's Forests Report (4.2.2), Pilot studies elaboration on new indicators (4.2.3) and Reporting on goals and 2020 targets (4.2.4)

Introduction

Monitoring and reporting on forests and Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) are regular and ongoing activities within FOREST EUROPE. The current FOREST EUROPE Work Programme covers these activities accordingly, reflecting that at the Madrid Conference, the ministers responsible for forests expressed their commitment to continue and enhance monitoring and reporting on the state and trends of European forests and progress towards SFM. Furthermore, they also committed to monitor and report on the achievements in the implementation of the Goals for European Forests and the European 2020 Targets for Forests.

A collaborative data collection with FAO's global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) was introduced in the 2015 reporting cycle. As a result of this process, a part of FOREST EUROPE quantitative indicators were collected through the Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire (CFRQ) by FAO and included in the "Forest Data Reporting Package for 2015".

According to the FOREST EUROPE Work Programme, the collaborative data collection system should be further developed to improve quality and harmonise the data collection and reporting, both through further collaboration with FAO, regional processes and partners for the further improvement of CFRQ, and through exploring new ways of collecting data on quantitative indicators jointly within FAO's global FRA. At the same time, the pan-European forest monitoring and reporting shall reflect the updated pan-European indicators for SFM.

1. Progress in the implementation of joint FOREST EUROPE/ECE/FAO data collection (Activity 4.2.1)

With the aim to streamline the joint data collection, the Liaison Unit Bratislava organized and/or contributed to agenda of the following meetings:

- FRA 2020 CFRQ partners meeting (Rome, Italy, 21 July 2016),
- [UNECE/FAO ToS on Monitoring SFM meeting](#) (Zagreb, Croatia, 14 – 16 September 2016),
- Meeting of FOREST EUROPE – LUB, UNECE – FTS and FAO – FRA on the coordination of reporting (Rome, Italy, 30 November 2016),
- [Meeting of FE Expert Group on Implementation of the Updated pan-European Indicators for SFM](#) (Zvolen, Slovakia, 24 – 25 January 2017),
- Workshop on design of FAO FRA Platform (Rome, Italy, 6 -7 March 2017),
- Weekly on-line meetings on the implementation of FRA Platform (2017),

- [ECE/FAO ToS on Monitoring SFM meeting](#) (Tromsø, Norway, 22 – 24 May 2017),
- Expert Consultation on Global Forest Resources Assessment: Towards FRA 2020 (Joensuu, Finland, 12 - 16 June 2017),
- FRA Advisory Group meeting (Joensuu, Finland, 14 June 2017),
- [FOREST EUROPE Advisory Group meeting](#), (Bratislava, Slovakia, 27 – 28 September 2017),
- Meeting of FOREST EUROPE – LUB, UNECE – FTS and FAO – FRA on the integration of reporting (Bratislava, Slovakia, 28 September 2017),
- [Joint session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the European Forestry Commission](#), Item 2(f) (Warsaw, Poland, 9 – 13 October 2017),
- FRA 2020: Meeting of the Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire (CFRQ) partners (Nelson, New Zealand, 13 November 2017).

At the CFRQ meeting in July 2016, it was noted that national correspondents in the pan-European region would like to have more collaborative reporting to avoid reporting duplicities and find synergies.

Subsequently, the meeting of UNECE/FAO ToS on Monitoring SFM meeting in Zagreb (September 2016) provided a forum for joint discussion on FRA and pan-European (FOREST EUROPE/UNECE/FAO) reporting content and the timetables for 2020 reporting, indicating that the data collection for both processes will start at the beginning of 2018 and will be completed to mid-2018. Reporting content of FRA will reflect needs for reporting on SDGs and pan-European reporting content will reflect the Updated pan-European Indicators for SFM and reporting on national and pan-European achievements on Goals for European Forests and the European 2020 Targets for Forests.

The options for the joint FOREST EUROPE/ECE/FAO data collection were discussed at the meeting of the secretariats in Rome in November 2016. LUB and FAO/FRA have harmonised their roadmaps for data collection and coordinated themselves in this regard. The convergence of the following cycles (Figure 1) of the pan-European and global FRA reporting (the common reporting year 2020) was identified as a unique opportunity for further integration of the data collection processes. This coordinated approach in data collection would lead to the reduction of national reporting burden and, potentially to an improved completeness of data. It was presented that the FRA team will rebuild FRIMS/FRA platform to a modular system to allow integrated reporting with FOREST EUROPE/UNECE.

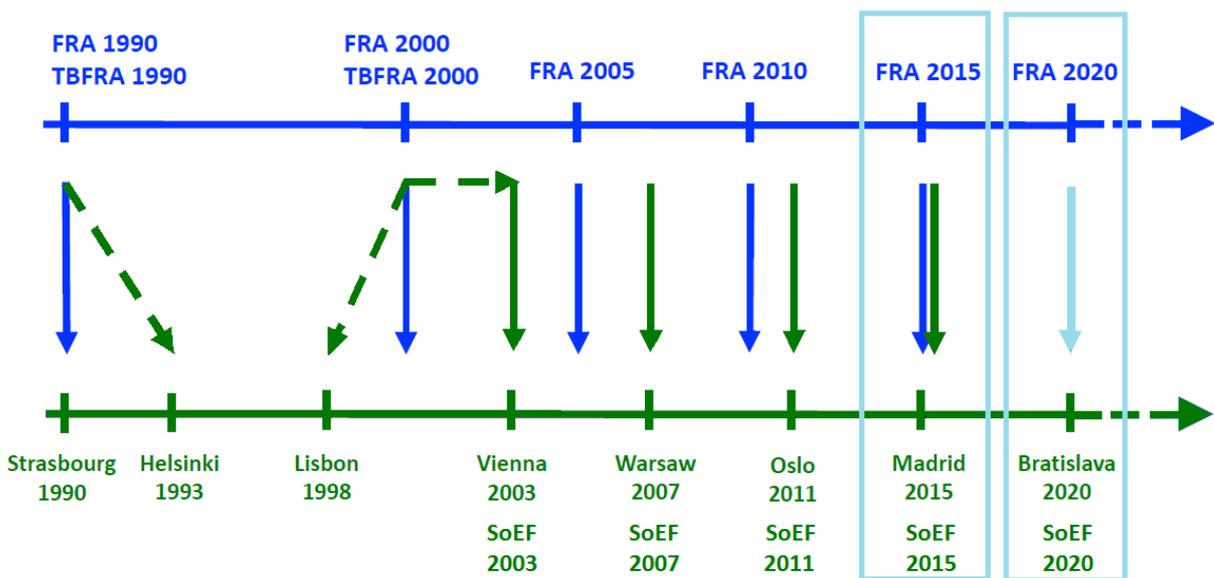


Figure 1 Reporting cycles of global and pan-European reporting

The integration of global FRA reporting with the annual reporting on SDGs resulted in the need for a significant upgrade of FRIMS and development of a new data interface - FRA Platform. FAO/FRA contracted an external IT company to implement this.

FRA Platform allows for modular extension by the pan-European questionnaires, however, its implementation requires substantial additional human and financial resources. Both pan-European questionnaires (quantitative and qualitative) are much more extensive than FRA questionnaire, which makes the plan to implement them into FRA platform demanding.

Achievement of this ambitious target in the stipulated time schedule (January 2018) requires many efforts and mobilization of additional financial and human resources. Full technical integration of the pan-European questionnaires into FRA platform in order to secure full functionality, modularity and benefit of this advanced system poses requirements for additional funding, which has not been resolved yet. An initial official offer from the external company contacted by FAO and forwarded to LUB in October 2017 involves the total sum 170.000 € for the full implementation of pan-European module into the platform. FRA team has been further searching for possibilities how to accomplish this task in a less costly manner (40 - 50.000 USD), however technical aspects of reporting formats and subsequent database functionalities are not clear at the time of writing this background document.

The proposal of integrated FRA and pan-European data collection was presented (without any notes on financial requirements) and welcomed by the participants of the FRA Advisory Group Meeting (Joensuu, Finland, 14 June 2017), at the FOREST EUROPE Advisory Group Meeting (Bratislava, Slovakia, 27 – 28 September 2017) and at the Joint session of the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission (Warsaw, Poland, 9 – 13 October 2017).

A special Annex I to the Note by the Secretariat¹ for the Joint session was dedicated to the integrated data collection. The document outlined full coordination of the FOREST EUROPE/FAO/UNECE data collection process with the global Forest Resources Assessment 2020, including the continuation of the CFRQ with the following tentative schedule for the 2020 integrated data collection:

- (a) Launch of reporting – January 2018;
- (b) Deadline for national reporting – end of June 2018;
- (c) Completion of the national data review – end of September 2018;
- (d) Completion of the verification of the data reported through International Data Providers – end of November 2018;
- (e) Compilation of datasets – end of 2018;
- (f) Public release of the joint interactive database – tbd.

Integration and consolidation of data collection and reporting activities with other organizations and processes through the joint interactive platform developed and hosted by FAO is considered by the Liaison Unit Bratislava to be a significant step towards the harmonization of both systems (global and regional), leading to reduction of the burden put on national correspondents and reviewers. However, benefiting from and using full potential of this advanced system and subsequent database functionalities requires solving challenging technical and financial issues.

These issues are becoming urgent in the light of actual time schedule for the pan-European reporting (launch in January 2018). Therefore, the above-mentioned challenges need to be resolved without any delay not to threaten either timeline of the SoEF reporting on one hand or application of the joint data collection on the other.

¹http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/timber/meetings/20171009/Las_Documents/ECE_TIM_2017_5_FO_EFC_2017_5_FRA2020_E.pdf

2. Progress in preparation of report on State of Europe's Forests 2020 (Activity 4.2.2)

Reporting on forests and SFM is a regular activity within the FOREST EUROPE process and the Report on State of Europe's Forests (SoEF) is one of the main outcomes considered a flagship of the process. It is a reference source of information on the state of forests and their roles in Europe's society fostering SFM and a base for further analyses, strategic planning and decision making at regional, as well as national levels.

SoEF is based on the national data collected within the pan-European reporting through the questionnaires, which are now based on the set of Updated pan-European Indicators for SFM (as adopted by the Expert Level Meeting on 1st July 2015 and endorsed by the Ministerial Conference in Madrid, Spain).

Right after being appointed, Liaison Unit Bratislava launched the preparation of the next edition of the report, conducted a survey on the previous report 2015, prepared a road map for future work and searched for possibilities of cooperation with its regional partners (especially UNECE, FAO, EFI) to this end. The allotment of human capacities, financial resources provided by GCC countries and the stable structure for guidance of the process (Advisory Group for the preparation of SoEF) set the framework to advance towards implementation of this respective action within the mandate of the FE Work Programme.

Survey on the reporting for State of Europe's Forests 2015

The FOREST EUROPE report on State of Europe's Forests 2015 (SoEF 2015), prepared by Liaison Unit Madrid, provided high level European policy makers, experts and wide public with the recent, comprehensive information about all major aspects of SFM in the region. Through the description of the status and trends for the quantitative and qualitative indicators, the SoEF 2015 assessed the progress towards SFM in Europe. The SoEF 2015 continued the series of European forest resources assessments, which is expected to be maintained and further developed.

Within the framework of preparation for the next reporting cycle, it was of the utmost importance to collect experiences and views from both report's users and producers. For this purpose FOREST EUROPE – LUB together with UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section conducted the survey on reporting for SoEF 2015 with the objective to collect the experiences and views related to the production and use of the SoEF 2015 report as well as the ideas for the future development.

The survey's results represent an invaluable input for the preparation of the next edition of the report for the next Ministerial Conference, and can contribute to the improvement of the European component to the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020. In general, the results affirmed a need to improve communication, overall coordination and outreach of the report to other sectors. Respondents called for more user-oriented, demand-driven approach linked to other international processes. More information is available at http://foresteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Background-information-on-Survey_MM.pdf.

Informal meetings of LUB with UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section

With the aim to discuss possible cooperation between both secretariats and to find synergies in implementation of their Work Programmes, the informal meeting FOREST EUROPE LUB with UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber section (FTS) took place in September 2016, Zvolen,

Slovakia. A special attention was paid to further development of SFM tools, forest monitoring and reporting including the preparation of the next edition of SoEF 2020.

At the meeting, the results of the survey on SoEF 2015 were addressed at length. Furthermore, an open discussion on possible joint steps how to advance the whole process of the next report preparation was carried out.

Participation of LUB representatives at the thirty-eighth and the thirty-ninth sessions of the Joint UNECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management in March 2016 and 2017 in Geneva, at the Celebration 70 years of UNECE/FAO Cooperation on Forests in Mariánské Lázně as well as at the recent Joint Session of the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) and the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC) Las 2017 in Warsaw generated several possibilities for informal debates targeted at strengthening partnership on the elaboration of the SOEF 2020.

The “Road Map” for the elaboration of the next report “SoEF 2020”

To meet the recommendations for an effective time management reported in the survey of the previous edition, LUB prepared a proposal of the “Road Map” for the elaboration of the next report. It constitutes an effective tool for the achievement of all objectives within the given time schedule, continuous monitoring and assessment of progress and identification of any potential shortcomings in timely manner.

The road map was presented and discussed with experts at all relevant meetings:

- FOREST EUROPE Expert Group on Implementation of Updated pan-European Indicators for SFM held in Zvolen (January 2017),
- UNECE /FAO Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management held in Zagreb (September 2016) as well as in Tromsø (May 2017),
- FOREST EUROPE Advisory Group on the Preparation of the Report “State of Europe’s Forests” held in Bratislava (September 2017).

More information on the Road Map can be found in Annex 1 of this document.

FOREST EUROPE Advisory Group for the preparation of the report „State of Europe’s Forests“

In accordance with the FOREST EUROPE Work Programme, the Advisory Group (AG) was affirmed as an official structure appointed for the preparation of the report as an informal body comprising of individuals from relevant international organizations and experts invited to provide recommendations on all aspects related to the scope and organization of the SoEF process.

The main AG’s objective is to provide technical and scientific guidance to the LUB in its work related to respective activities such as data collection on quantitative and qualitative indicators, analysis of the information, and compilation of the report. The AG is expected to review and make recommendations on how to improve the already existing institutional networks and providing responses to the crosscutting and emerging policy issues and evidence-based messages.

Advisory Group Terms of Reference (ToR) are available at http://foresteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/SoEF2020_Advisory_Group_Terms_of_Reference_updated.pdf.

Update of the questionnaires on the quantitative and qualitative indicators

Another effort towards the elaboration of the SoEF 2020 undertaken by LUB was elaboration of proposals of the updated questionnaires for data collection of both quantitative and qualitative indicators. Updated questionnaires are based on the “Updated pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management” (UPEI) adopted by the Madrid Ministerial Conference in 2015.

In addition to original indicators, with unchanged titles and full texts, the document on UPEI contains also few altered indicators as compared to the preceding set of Criteria and Indicators used in the previous reporting cycles. New wording of these indicators will have to be reflected in respective reporting forms and tables of the above-mentioned questionnaires.

Substantially altered quantitative indicators in the new UPEI set are: 6.4 “Investments in forests and forestry”; 6.10 “Recreation in forests”; 4.2 “Regeneration”; 4.3 “Naturalness”; 1.4 “Forest carbon” and the former quantitative indicator 3.5 “Forests under management plans”.

There are also three new indicators in the set of UPEI: 2.5 “Forest land degradation”, 4.7 “Forest fragmentation” and 4.10 “Common forest bird species”. Pilot studies are expected to be elaborated for these three new indicators to determine whether the data are available and reliable and whether these indicators are feasible for reporting.

To steer further work, LUB drafted initial proposals of a new reporting approach, content and forms for both new and altered indicators and consulted these with the experts attending the FOREST EUROPE Expert Group on Implementation of the Updated pan-European Indicators for SFM in Zvolen (January 2017) and UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Monitoring of SFM in Tromsø (May 2017).

Based on the experts’ recommendations, LUB initiated online discussions via the FOREST EUROPE Communication platform to resolve remaining issues on reporting of altered and new indicators. Within these discussions, LUB obtained proposals from Expert Group as well as ToS members that are considered in finalization of the reporting forms.

Special attention was paid to the Quantitative indicator 6.4 “Investments in forests and forestry” due to the inconsistency of its title, full text, reporting notes, definitions and previous reporting forms. LUB invited all FOREST EUROPE signatories and observers for their assistance in form of the online survey in the formulation of the reporting approach for this indicator. To support the survey, LUB prepared detailed background information on the actual state, the development and proposals related to the reporting content and format of the indicator 6.4. It was recommended to focal points to fill in the questionnaire in close cooperation with the experts who report data related to the socio-economic criteria and indicators and/or the European Economic Accounts for forestry.

The results of the survey have provided important feedback for shaping the next data collection and reporting format in this field. Preliminary results of the survey were tackled at the meeting of FOREST EUROPE Advisory Group for the preparation of the report „State of Europe’s Forests“.

Reviewing the questionnaires has been regularly consulted with experts from UNECE, FAO and European Forest Institute (EFI), as well as independent experts (contracted by LUB). LUB presented the progress in the preparation of the questionnaires and discussed the issues in both UNECE/FAO meetings of the Team of Specialists on Monitoring of SFM in Zagreb (September 2016) and Tromsø (May 2017).

These meetings provided the platform for information exchange on reporting timetables and formats for global FRA and regional Pan-European reporting. UNECE and FAO representatives have provided valuable inputs for the meeting of Advisory Group for the preparation of the „State of Europe’s Forests“ and also to the meeting of FOREST EUROPE Expert Group on the Implementation of UPEI.

3. Pilot studies on new indicators (Activity 4.2.3)

The set of Updated pan-European Indicators for SFM contains 3 new indicators. In the set of UPEI these are listed with footnotes requiring further development and testing. Final Report of the Advisory Group for Updating of the pan-European Set of Indicators for SFM recommended carrying out pilot projects in the next reporting period to check the feasibility, availability and reliability of data for these new indicators.

Each of these new indicators imposes different challenges and it will require different approaches.

The indicator 2.5 “Forest land degradation” should indicate the trends in forest land degradation. It was noted that the definitions of land degradation and degraded land are the crucial. LUB with the assistance of the Advisory Group, FOREST EUROPE Expert Group and the UNECE/FAO ToS on Monitoring SFM is analysing the documents of UNCCD and C&I processes to solve the issue. New definition with relevant notes and explanation will be included in the quantitative questionnaire.

The indicator 4.7 “Forest fragmentation” should be based on the area of continuous forest and of patches of forest separated by non-forest lands. This indicator replaces the former indicator “Landscape pattern”. LUB initiated the cooperation with experts from JRC Ispra (international data provider for former landscape pattern indicator). The possible data inputs for forest fragmentation assessment include CORINE land cover maps and similar products.

The indicator 4.10 “Common forest bird species” is considered as already existing and is being monitored as Eurostat’s Common Bird Index. Data from 1990 are used as a baseline (100%), 34 forest species are assessed (the list of them is the same for all countries). The indicator can be used immediately; however, its interpretation from the viewpoint of SFM remains a challenge. LUB initiated consultations with Eurostat in this field.

4. Reporting on goals and 2020 targets (Activity 4.2.4)

The approach for reporting on the national and pan-European achievements on Goals for European Forests and the European 2020 Targets for Forests (G&T2020) has been discussed at the FOREST EUROPE Expert Group on the Implementation of UPEI. This task has been conducted in a close collaboration with experts from EFI (EFICEEC) who elaborated the mid-term evaluation of G&T2020 in 2015. It was recommended to collect additional data necessary for the assessment of G&T2020 within the Pan-European questionnaire on qualitative indicators, distributed as part for SoEF2020 data collection.

ANNEX 1

Road Map for the preparation of the report on SoEF 2020

Activity	Date	Involved partners
1. Analysis of the previous report on SoEF and suggestions how to improve of the next report	VIII – XII 2016	All interested groups, users
2. Setting up the FOREST EUROPE/UNECE Advisory Group for the preparation of the report	VII 2017	FE, UNECE/FAO
3. Setting up the team of Coordinating and Leading authors of the report (CLA)	VIII 2017	FE, UNECE/FAO, AG
4. Preparation of the indicative table of content of the report (expected content and structure of the report)	VIII – XII 2017	Team of CLAs, AG
5. Development of Background Information for substantially altered UPEI for SFM and Relevant Definitions used for UPEI for SFM	I 2017 – X 2019	FE, UNECE/FAO, CLAs, ToS MSFM, ToS FP, EG-IUPEI
6. Pilot studies on the new indicators; determination if data are available, reliable and if data are feasible for reporting	I 2017 - XII 2018	FE, EG-IUPEI, ToS MSFM, invited experts (EFI, JRC, EEA)
7. Preparation of reporting on national and pan-European achievements on the Goals and 2020 Targets	I – X 2017	FE, EG-IUPEI, EFI, invited experts
8. Preparation of the enquiries for the reporting on the Updated pan-European Indicators (quantitative and qualitative), coordinated with the CFRQ	I – XII 2017	FE, AG, UNECE/FAO, CLAs, ToS on MSFM, EG-IUPEI
9. Implementation of the enquiries into FAO FRA Platform	IX – XII 2017	FE, UNECE/FAO,
10. Dispatch of the final reporting questionnaires, Reporting tables, Guidelines to countries; both questionnaires quantitative and qualitative (descriptive)	I 2018	FE, UNECE/FAO
11. Workshop for the national correspondents	IV 2018	UNECE/FAO, FE
12. National data collections, deadline for Countries replies	I – VI 2018	NC
13. International providers data collection and submission	IX 2018	EUROSTAT, ICP Forests, JRC, EEA, Bioversity International

14. Checking, processing, validation and compilation of data; on both quantitative and qualitative (descriptive) indicators	VI – XI 2018 (database complete XII 2018)	FE, UNECE/FAO, invited experts
15. Decision on and elaboration of SFM Assessment method	I – XII 2018	AG, CLAs, EG-IUPEI, invited experts
16. Selection of and liaising with authors of chapters of the report	XI 2018 – I 2019	FE, CLAs, AG
17. Analysis of data and preparation of the first draft of chapters of the SoEF 2020	I – IV 2019	FE, CLAs, authors
18. Joint conference for the National Correspondent, ToS's on SFM and FP and authors to discuss the 1st draft of the report on SoEF 2020	V 2019	FE, UNECE/FAO, NC, ToS on MSFM, ToS on FP, authors
19. Compilation and design of report	I – XII 2019	FE, CLAs, authors
20. Language review and proofreading	V – IX 2019	UNECE/FAO/ FE
21. Printing of the report	IX – XII 2019	FE
22. Implementation of Dissemination plan	I – XII 2020	FE, UNECE/FAO

CLA - Coordinating Leading Authors