

Foreword to the Special Section FORESTERRA

The FORESTERRA project is entitled “Enhancing FOrest RESearch in the MediTERRanean through improved coordination and integration” and is one of the ERA-NET initiatives of the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development¹. FORESTERRA aims to reinforce the scientific coordination and integration of Mediterranean forest research programmes as well as scientific cooperation with Mediterranean-area countries (including EU and non-EU member states) and with countries from other Mediterranean Climate Areas. FORESTERRA had as partners several different ministries and research funding and performing institutions from twelve countries coordinated by Spain and including France, Italy, Turkey, Portugal, Tunisia, Morocco, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Croatia, Greece and Algeria, as well as two international institutions².

The objectives of FORESTERRA have been: i) mapping and information exchange to improve mutual knowledge of existing programmes and capacities; ii) defining common strategic activities to reduce the fragmentation of the research community, avoiding overlaps and promoting synergies; iii) the implementation of joint activities to consolidate partnerships and develop common schemes for programme evaluation, as well as for mutual opening facilities; and iv) to launch calls for joint transnational research projects fully funded by the partners of FORESTERRA to maximise the research impact of the network.

One of FORESTERRA’s final actions has been the organization of its final Conference in Lisbon, Portugal, on 24-26 November 2015, with the collaboration of the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) from Portugal. The objectives were to disseminate FORE-

TERRA’s results and achievements, and to become a forum on perspectives and challenges for the Mediterranean Forest Industry and Research. Results and achievements from the past four years were reviewed and analysed in a participatory set-up with 108 representatives from 21 countries. The conference was structured in three main sessions (“FORESTERRA’s achievements”, “What do we want from our forests?”, and “Brainstorming session: Key questions for future research on Mediterranean forests”), 25 voluntary poster contributions and three side events: the INFORMED³ stakeholder group meeting, a MedWildFire-Lab⁴ project meeting, and the SUMFOREST⁵-FORESTERRA Cooperation Task Force meeting.

This first session highlighted the considerable fragmentation still present in the Mediterranean forest research community and the need to build on the work accomplished by FORESTERRA in order to be able to generate and share the knowledge needed to face the multiple and complex challenges ahead. Cooperation with SUMFOREST and WOODWISDOM⁶ ERANETS was regarded as a positive step, as long as Mediterranean priorities were well represented among the research and innovation priorities of this collaborative effort. Future challenges identified were to strengthen alliances and exchanges with similar networks & projects, to continue the synergies and cooperation of FORESTERRA in other EU and international Mediterranean Climate areas, to bring together efforts on European bioeconomics & forest policies, such as the Cofund initiative for innovative forest-based bioeconomics.

The main conclusions of the second session were that science-based knowledge and mechanisms to con-

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² The FORESTERRA Consortium: Spain, Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness; International Organization, Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza / International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies; France, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forest; Italy, Ministry of agriculture forestry and food policies; Turkey, Ministry of Forest and Water Affairs, General Directorate of Forestry, Southwest Anatolia Forest Research Institute; Internacional Organization, European Forest Institute-Mediterranean Regional Office; Italy, The Agricultural Research Council; France, National Institute for Agricultural Research; Portugal, The Foundation for Science and Technology; Tunisia, Institution of Agricultural Research and Higher Education; Morocco, The Office for Water, Forests and Desertification Control; Bulgaria, Executive Forestry Agency; Slovenia, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food; Croacia, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports; Greece, Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change; Algeria, National Institute of Forest Research.

³ http://www6.inra.fr/informed-foresterra_eng.

⁴ <http://www.isa.utl.pt/ceabn/projecto/2/79/medwildfirelab>.

⁵ <https://www.sumforest.org/>.

⁶ <http://www.woodwisdom.net/>.

nect science/policy/and practice should support forest management measures in order to adapt for future challenges such as climate change. These measures should be conceived for adaptation at short term (mitigate climate change) and at long term to preserve diversity.

The third session stressed the need to increase the science-policy-practice dialogue with a credible, clear, science-based message, focusing not only on what to do, but also understanding the socio-economic context (the who and the how). This should be considered in a context of great uncertainty, which is forcing us to rethink the way we do science, we transfer knowledge and we develop management tools. There was also a clear mandate to complete and capitalise existing research with innovation activities by leveraging the capacities of local actors, and to concentrate efforts in raising capacities and mutual understanding of young researchers and so-

cial leaders. To this end, it is important to develop new tools to strengthen transnational research through interdisciplinary and multi-scale projects and integrated experimental sites. It is also important to increase networking and mobility, capacity building, knowledge transfer and innovation throughout the Mediterranean. In this sense, the experience of FORESTERRA was considered as very relevant and hopefully a first step towards scaling-up research and innovation funding in the Mediterranean.

The Conference Proceedings, which are published in this special issue of the Forest Systems journal, include the full text of keynote lectures, theatre presentations and posters presented in the Conference.

David González, *Project coordinator. MINECO, Spain*

Inazio Martínez, *EFIMED*

Dunixi Gabiña, *IAMZ-CIHEAM*