

# ForestBulletin

Forest News from Finland, October 2003

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## FOREST ACADEMY FINLAND

### New approach for cooperation with the new EU countries

Forest Academy Finland (FORAFIN) is a Finnish initiative of new forest forum aimed at supporting EU's commitment for sustainable forest management, and developing mutual exchange of views on forestry's role in socio-economic development, particularly in the new EU countries. Finland wishes to make a contribution in this respect, because in Finland, like in many new EU member countries, forests play an important role in socio-economic development. Finland is also a rather new EU member country itself.

The economic restructuring process of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries has led to a number of changes in forest ownership, management and utilisation in these countries. Meeting these challenges has been on the agenda of many international forest policy processes.

Signatory states of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe have committed themselves to developing co-operation among countries with different socio-economic situations (e.g. CEE countries). Especially in regard to private forestry, the ECOSOC report on the Eastward enlargement of the EU and the forestry sector recommends the establishment of forums for information exchange between new and old EU countries. Moreover, the FAO/IUCN/CEPF workshop on Multifunctional Forestry in the CEE countries pointed out that owing to limited availability of international funding, individual countries' own resources to start up meaningful project activities are needed.

Finland has announced an initiative to respond to this call - Forest Academy Finland (FORAFIN). The idea is to invite groups of top-level representatives of the forest sectors of the new EU countries to Finland for open brainstorming and exchanging information and experiences with core actors of the Finnish forest sector. We aim at a two-way process where Finland and the new EU countries can learn from each other. FORAFIN is not a scientific forum, nor a policy forum. Instead, it is aimed to support national forest sector development in the new EU countries. It is envisaged that within the process of the forum, the European sustainable forest strategy and the competitiveness of EU's forest sector as whole will be strengthened, and Europe's role as an example region in international forest policy highlighted.

In order to test and further develop the concept, a pilot forum of 25-30 key persons is arranged in Finland in late 2003. The participants are expected to represent the decision-making level in the forest sectors of the respective countries, representing different aspects of forestry, e.g. forestry administration, state forest services, private forestry, forest industries, forest research, and social and environmental aspects of forestry.

The idea is to develop the agenda of the forum through a co-operative process between Finland and the new EU countries. Finland is also seeking cooperation with relevant international organisations. The pilot forum will involve plenty of discussion and group work on developing the forum concept further so that it corresponds to the needs and expectations of all parties involved.

If successful, the pilot forum will be followed by 3-4 additional forums to be held in Finland during 2004, in accordance to the recommendations made by the pilot forum. It is envisaged that after the pilot phase funded and organised by Finland (2003-04), the networking activities between old and new EU member countries would be continued at other fora.

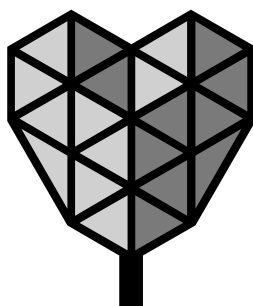
The forum is hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland. Responsibility for implementation is assigned to the Finnish Forest Association, which has long experiences in organising forest forums for top-level decision-makers in Finland (Forest Forum for Decision-Makers).

#### Additional information:

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**FOREST ACADEMY FINLAND**

## INVENTORY OF FINNISH FOREST HABITATS OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE CLOSE TO COMPLETION

The inventory of habitats of special importance defined in the Finnish Forest Act has progressed well. Regional forest centres under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry have during last five years inventoried approximately 80% of privately owned forests in Finland. The surveyors have located 48,000 hectares of valuable habitats in accordance with the Forest Act, which entered into force in 1997.

The purpose of the inventory is to identify those areas in private forests which are of particular importance as regards safeguarding biological diversity of forests. The Forest Act seeks to safeguard biodiversity in managed forests by requiring forest owners and timber harvesters to preserve the special features of habitats listed in the Act.

By the end of 2002, 80% of the total area of private forests had been inventoried, i.e. approximately 12 million hectares, of which some 48,000 hectares were habitats referred to in the Forest Act. The most common sites, comprising one third of the total number of these habitats, were immediate surroundings of streams. Furthermore, surveyors located 56,000 hectares of other habitats valuable in terms of forest diversity. The average area of the habitats of special importance in private forests as defined in the Forest Act was approximately 0.6 hectares. The inventory will largely be completed this year.

The Forest Act, which lists seven habitat categories of special importance from the point of view of forest biodiversity, entered into force on 1 January 1997. These habitats include, among others, immediate surroundings of springs, streams and small pools, herb-rich spruce swamp woods and eutrophic fens and steep bluffs and the underlying forest. The Act requires that the habitats be taken into account in all forestry measures. This requirement has been in force ever since the Act came into effect. However, when approving the Act, the Finnish Parliament required that the habitats defined in the Forest Act be inventoried and forest owners informed about them.

The Forestry Centres started a systematic inventory of the habitats listed in the Forest Act in 1998. Thanks to the survey, forest owners are aware of these habitats and it has become possible to ensure their preservation. At the same time, valuable information has been acquired on the habitats in private forests and biological diversity of managed forests in Finland. The habitats of special importance defined in the Forest Act are the foundation of nature management in managed forests.

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## STATE AND PRIVATE SECTOR CO-OPERATE IN A NEW WAY TO PROTECT NATURE IN FINLAND

### Repovesi National Park opened

The Repovesi National Park, which is intended to protect the largest cliff, forest, mire and lake area in south-east Finland preserved as an unbroken reserve excluded from construction activities, was opened in June 2003. Furthermore, another protection site Aarnikotka Wilderness area, owned by the UPM-Kymmene Group, was established in connection with the National Park. The combined areas form a coherent nature reserve of some 2,900 hectares. The area also provides ample opportunities for hiking, education, training and research.

“The UPM-Kymmene Group’s donation and conservation decision made it possible to establish the protection scheme at Repovesi,” said Managing Director Jan Heino of Metsähallitus, the enterprise managing state-owned forests. “The significance of Repovesi as an example of co-operation between public and private sector in matters of nature conservation is considerable.”

The establishment of the Repovesi National Park and protected area and the joint management organisation for this valuable entity provides a new way to combine nature protection measures in state-owned and private areas. An administrative committee has been appointed to administer the management and usage of Griffin’s Wilderness. The committee includes representatives of UPM-Kymmene as the landowner, Metsähallitus as the manager of the area and the Southeast Finland Regional Environment Centre as the supervisor of the conservation programme.

Co-operation opens up new possibilities and strongly supports the goals established by the committee of the Biodiversity Programme for Forests in Southern Finland (METSO). Valkeala Municipality, the Regional Council of Kymenlaakso, tourism entrepreneurs and other actors have also enthusiastically started to develop the Repovesi area.

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## EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE TO BECOME AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION

The European Forest Institute (EFI), which recently celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Joensuu, east Finland, will become an international organisation. “The change in EFI’s status will also strengthen Finland’s position in international forest politics,” says Director General Aarne Reunala of the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

According to Reunala, an international position is necessary for the Institute for several reasons: “As an international organisation, EFI’s capabilities for research and other operations will improve. One of the factors contributing to the change is also the need to promote the integration of EFI’s research activities with international programmes.”

“Furthermore, by taking EFI to an international level, we want to secure the Institute’s competitiveness as regards recruiting of personnel and improve its position and visibility on an international level,” concludes Reunala.

Finland supports the European Forest Institute annually with one million euro, which this year covers approximately one third of the Institute’s budget.

The European Forestry Institute was founded in 1993 as an enterprise in compliance with Finnish legislation. It is domiciled in Joensuu. The Institute was founded in order to create a hub for European forest research and to provide information required for this. It was also intended as a body able to respond to the new requirements for information posed by changing Europe. The 144 members of EFI include forest research institutions, universities and other organisations from 39 countries.

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