



## Exchanging country's experiences in the nfp processes in the practical application of the MCPFE Approach to nfps in Europe

22-24 November 2004, Gdansk, Poland

### Minutes of the meeting

#### 1. Introduction

The workshop took place on 22-24 November, 2004 in Gdansk, Poland. It was organized by the MCPFE Liaison Unit Warsaw with the support of the Regional Directorate of State Forests in Gdansk. Financial support for participants from Central and Eastern Europe was provided by the Government of the Netherlands and the FAO National Forest Programme Facility.

Forty five delegates from 20 countries, the European Commission, international governmental and non-governmental organizations came to Gdansk to share their experiences and to exchange ideas on the implementation of the nfps in Europe.

The purpose of the workshop was to review current and emerging issues faced by the MCPFE signatory countries developing, implementing or evaluating national forest programmes according to the MCPFE Approach to National Forest Programmes in Europe.

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Piotr Borkowski (Head of the Liaison Unit Warsaw) Welcome remarks were given by Mr. Edward Lenart (Ministry of Environment, Poland) and Mr. Andrzej Gajowniczek (Regional Directorate of State Forests in Gdansk).

As an introduction to the working sessions Mr. Tomasz Juszcak gave a presentation on the outcome of the survey on the nfps in Europe conducted among the MCPFE countries by the Liaison Unit Warsaw. Prof. Andrzej Szujecki from the Warsaw Agricultural University (Forestry Faculty) gave a presentation on the current state of the nfp in Poland.

#### 2. Organization of work

Three thematic sessions took place:

Session I: Role of the nfps in the integration of international commitments with national forest policies (Chair: Mr. Alexander Buck, International Union of Forest Research Organizations)

Session II: Mechanisms for cross-sectoral co-ordination and public participation developed by countries in the nfp processes (Chair: Mr. Tomasz Juszcak, Liaison Unit Warsaw)

Session III: Assessment of existing capacities in the context of the nfps & experiences and lessons learned concerning the evaluation of the nfp process (Chair: Mr. Wouter Hijweege, Netherlands)

Each thematic session began with a panel presentation which served as a background for a discussion in working groups. The following presentations were given:

- From global to local – the case of the Finnish nfp  
Marja Kokkonen, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finland
- The European Union and the concept of national forest programmes  
Marius Lazdinis, DG Agriculture, European Commission
- Experiences with participation and cross-sectoral coordination in the Swiss nfp process  
Claudia Zingerli, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Switzerland
- Supporting the involvement of civil society in nfp processes  
Francois Wencelius, FAO, the NFP Facility
- An attempt to use iterative and consultative theory methods in the nfp process in Norway,  
Johan Barstad, Research Foundation, Norway

Furthermore, the Liaison Unit Warsaw prepared a background document which included specific questions for each session. In order to facilitate the discussion, three working groups were formed that considered the topics of all three sessions, using the specific questions included in the background paper as a starting point. Mr. Johan Barstad (Norway), Ms. Maria Kokkonen (Finland) and Ms. Claudia Zingerli (Switzerland) served as moderators of the three working groups. The results of the working group discussions were reported at the end of each session by Mr. Johan Barstad (Norway), Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtl (Austria) and Mr. Richard Broadhurst (UK).

### **3. Outcomes of the discussion**

The following outcomes of the workshop discussion were prepared on the basis of the reports of three working groups:

**Session I:** Role of the nfps in the integration of international commitments with national forest policies

A number of participants reaffirmed that the policy issues connected with the international dialogue on forestry were still too remote for national stakeholders. It was noted that information would frequently stay within the high level institutions, among those directly involved in the international forest policy dialogue, and too little knowledge and detail about the international agreements and commitments signed by the governments was filtered down to the nfp stakeholders.

During discussion, the participants stressed the potential use of nfps process as a tool for an effective dialogue at the different levels and among different forest-related sectors. There was an overall agreement that the nfp process could serve as a communication channel to capture

national experiences on SFM, and could give feedback to the higher international forest policy forums.

In order to enhance the role of the nfps in the international forest policy dialogue the participants made the following recommendations:

- Develop synergies for better communication across sectoral boundaries;
- Exchange information on international agreements (and their implementation) with the emphasis on transferring information to stakeholders at the national and regional level within each country;
- Use the nfps as an interface to integrate forest concerns and develop consistency across different sector policies at the national level;
- Strengthen understanding of the nfps at the international level;
- Make every effort to gain strong political commitment;
- Create better communication among countries.

The following specific recommendations were made for the MCPFE:

- Consider the development of guiding principles for evaluation of the nfps in the European context;
- Learn more from national experiences and focus on developing low cost evaluation;
- Strengthen the role of country/regional experiences in the international dialogue on forests;
- Coordinate the process to develop consistency across different policy sectors.

**Session II:** Mechanisms for cross-sectoral co-ordination and public participation developed by countries in the nfp processes

Countries are at different stages of the nfp processes. A number of countries are currently in the process of identifying and engaging stakeholders, whereas others are dealing with participation and clarification of the mandates of all involved. An overall tendency is that a new culture of discussion is taking over from the previous traditional top-down forest policy planning. In some countries the activities do not constitute just mere exchange of information but incorporate an active involvement of society in the decision making process. Still, countries see the involvement of the public in different ways and frequently there is a need for clarification of the approach. The question arises as to whether the approach should be representative or participatory. During the discussion it was stressed that the more powerful stakeholders were often over-represented. A balanced representation is an important precondition for the successful public participation in the nfp process.

A number of suggestions for achieving successful participation were made:

- Establish clear structure and mandates for all stakeholders engaged in the nfp (the working procedures should be agreed upon and made clear at the beginning of the process);
- Legitimate and balanced representation of stakeholders;
- Clear allocated responsibilities for the implementation among all involved;
- Increase awareness of the impact, benefit, and relevance of forestry to all stakeholders;
- Exchange knowledge in the process;

- Present of results and lessons learned;
- Address stakeholders' concerns proactively;
- Define the public in terms of stakeholders;
- Build capacity for stakeholders to enable them to play their role;
- Ensure legitimacy of the nfp through defining the limits of participatory democracy.

Difficulties with engaging the representatives of other sectors, as well as lack of interest, in some quarters were recognized as main obstacles in developing mechanisms for cross-sectoral coordination in the nfp process. Other constraints include lack of skills and capacities for such activity and lack of widespread knowledge of opportunities and benefits for stakeholders in other sectors.

In order to overcome these problems and enhance cooperation with other sectors, the participants suggested that it was necessary to:

- Provide information to increase awareness and to demonstrate the benefits and the full value of forestry to other sectors;
- Obtain commitment from high level authorities;
- Promote openness and reliability;
- Develop communication skills;
- Build trust and partnership;
- Think beyond foresters;
- Demonstrate achievements;
- Support implementation by allocating specific roles and responsibilities in the action plan;
- Share and learn from experiences;
- Include the effectiveness of the cross-sectoral cooperation as a part of overall evaluation of nfp;
- Reveal and resolve conflicts during the nfp process.

**Session III:** Assessment of existing capacities in the context of the nfps & experiences and lessons learned concerning the evaluation of the nfp process

During the third session the participants discussed the role of capacity building, and evaluation as well as a possibility of joint learning in the nfps processes. Frequently insufficient attention is paid to capacity building activities in the process and often this element of the nfps is neglected. Participants agreed that capacity building should constitute a central element of the nfp as a necessary means to the end. Capacity building is time and resource intensive but an essential part of the evolving process. An important prerequisite to the nfp should be an assessment of existing and required capacities.

Although often not specifically intended at the outset, the nfp process constitutes joint learning for all involved. The stakeholders gradually begin to understand each other's needs and gain knowledge and trust.

The process should involve:

- Efficient combination of issues to encourage the wise use of limited resources;
- Balanced consultation as a key to successful learning;
- Investment in all stakeholders;

- Best use of available scientific expertise;
- Focus on communication, training and education;
- Investment in up to date technologies and methodologies;
- Lessons learned by doing – feedback of experience;
- Dissemination of the successes achieved during the process;
- High political commitment.

The nfp should make the best use of existing networks and organizational structures including different actors, connections and linkages. An important precondition seems to be an involvement of all in the process, including the high level officials. In order to “not to get lost in the process” there is a call for the establishment of systems enabling comparison with other programmes and strategies and a need for continuous evaluation. It is a complex task, when taking into account the iterative character of the nfp and the need to adapt to new circumstances as they develop during the process.

The following suggestions were made with regard to effective evaluation:

- Evaluation of the process and contents is required for adjustment of the nfp (feedback);
- Establishment of criteria and goals on the basis of consultation with all participants before the process is started is necessary;
- The form of evaluation and its structure should be agreed at the outset;
- Focus is needed on the process but also on the inputs, impacts, outputs and outcomes;
- At the evaluation of the nfp process it is important to look at all aspects of SFM;
- Continuous evaluation should be carried out at several levels (including the evaluation of cross-sectoral co-operation by the MCPFE);
- Evaluation (independent) should be conducted by different actors (internal and external);
- Openness to the results of evaluation, showing the impact of it, intention to bring a change should be a part of effective evaluation.

#### **4. Final conclusions**

The last item on the workshop agenda comprised of final thoughts and conclusions. In the brief summary the participants agreed that:

**A.** The workshop provided an effective forum for exchanging experiences and sharing knowledge concerning the implementation of the MCPFE Approach to National Forest Programmes in Europe. However, more could be achieved by using the MCPFE website for:

- Presenting case studies and examples for benchmarking;
- Sharing results of monitoring and evaluation techniques;
- Sharing ideas for developing capacities and skills among participants.

**B.** The participants identified the following elements as a prerequisite to engage in the process:

- Establishing clear rules and adherence by all stakeholders in the process;
- Providing clear mandates for all involved in the nfp;

- Building awareness, information, skills and empowerment;
- Preparing a plan for the planning;
- Committing to the process;
- Securing resources;
- Building sincerity (trust);
- Providing independent facilitation;
- Establishing manageable steps on the way to the nfps outcomes.

**C.** The nfps are often seen as a tool for the implementation of international commitments on forests at the national level. On the other hand, the nfps have a potential and can serve as vehicle for transmitting national experiences and concerns to the international level. The MCPFE could perform a useful role in communicating experiences from the European region into the international forest policy dialogue.

**D.** In order to understand the importance of cross-sectoral issues at all levels (international and local) greater political attention is needed in the formulation and implementation stages of the nfps. The nfps as a multi stakeholder processes involve stakeholders with common interest but often conflicting objectives. It is important to address the concerns of all who are engaged in the process. A new culture of discussion is developing. It requires careful planning, agreed rules, and clear mandates for all involved. Openness and willingness to share information and to look for win-win solutions are essential ingredients of the process.

**E.** Capacity building emerged as an important issue in the nfp process which until now received insufficient attention in the majority of countries. Communicative competencies, awareness, and clarity of roles as well as required attitude for more integrated approach of the nfp are among the priority issues mentioned.

**F.** As more countries are finalizing the formulation of nfps it is important to have procedures for the implementation of actions as well as utilization of the experiences from evaluation exercises.

## **5. An overall assessment based on the workshop discussions and the survey conducted by the Liaison Unit Warsaw on the nfps in Europe**

The workshop gathered a number of participants from different fields, with different, not necessary forestry background. The participants created an excellent working atmosphere for an open and frank discussion sharing experiences and knowledge on the nfps. The overall positive tendency is that, once enigmatic, and for many rather vague concept of nfp is now materializing and the full value of this process is being recognized. More and more stakeholders are getting familiar and engaged in the nfps. The majority of countries represented at this workshop initiated their nfp. The way of handling the process depends on a number of factors which are generated by specific conditions to each country. In a couple of cases other processes as an equivalent to the nfp have been put in place, still these are run according to the nfp principles.

Concerns were expressed considering the absence of representatives from Central and Eastern Europe, although financial support was available.