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PROTECTION OF FORESTS IN EUROPE

LIAISON UNIT VIENNA

MCPFE Paper 2, April 2002

# **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN FORESTRY IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA**

Synopsis

PDF version



JOINT FAO/ECE/ILO COMMITTEE ON  
FOREST TECHNOLOGY, MANAGEMENT  
AND TRAINING

TEAM OF SPECIALISTS ON  
PARTICIPATION IN FORESTRY

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# **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN FORESTRY IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA**

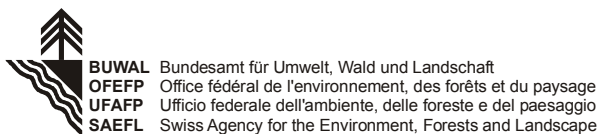
Synopsis of the Report of the FAO/ECE/ILO Joint  
Committee Team of Specialists on Participation in  
Forestry

PDF version

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Liaison Unit Vienna  
Marxergasse 2, A-1030 Vienna, Austria  
Tel: +43 1 710 77 02, Fax: +43 1 710 77 02 13  
E-mail: [liaison.unit@lu-vienna.at](mailto:liaison.unit@lu-vienna.at) <http://www.mcpfe.org>

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# CONTENTS

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Foreword by the Publisher .....	2
Background to the Report .....	3
<b>What is Public Participation? .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Principles and Characteristics of Public Participation .....	4
Comments on the Principles .....	5
<b>Why Public Participation in Forestry? .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Reasons for Undertaking a Public Participatory Process .....	6
Benefits and Contributions of Public Participation to Sustainable Forest Management .....	7
<b>What Practice in Europe and North America Today? .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Types of Public Involvement in Forestry .....	8
Level, Stage and Intensity of Public Participation .....	9
<b>How to Undertake Public Participation? .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Framework for Public Participatory Management .....	10
<b>Who is the Public? .....</b>	<b>12</b>
How to Identify Stakeholders? .....	12
Four Main Reasons for Lack of Participation by the Public .....	12
<b>What Are the Limits of Public Participation? .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Problems and Limits .....	13
<b>Special Contexts of Public Participation in Forestry .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Public Participation in Public Forests .....	14
Public Participation and Private Forest Ownership .....	14
Participation of Workers and Unions in Forestry .....	14
Participation in the Context of Community Based Forest Management in Europe (CBFM) .....	15
Public Participation in Countries in Transition .....	15
Public Participation in the Context of an Increasingly Urbanized Society .....	15
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Members of the FAO/ECE/ILO Team of Specialists on Participation in Forestry .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Annex: Selection of Case Studies .....</b>	<b>18</b>

# INTRODUCTION

This booklet presents a synthesis of main findings and recommendations of the report “**Public Participation in Forestry in Europe and North America**” prepared by the FAO/ECE/ILO Joint Committee’s Team of Specialists on Participation in Forestry (ILO 2000)<sup>1</sup>. It is aimed at promoting open dialogue and creative discussions about the concept of public participation in forestry at the Pan-European policy level as well as at national institutional and operational levels.

## Foreword by the Publisher

At the Third Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe held in Lisbon in June 1998 the European ministers responsible for forests signed resolution L1 “People, Forests and Forestry – Enhancement of Socio-economic Aspects of Sustainable Forest Management”. With this commitment the interaction between the forest sector and society was given high political importance.

As a consequence of the Lisbon Conference an MCPFE Work Programme was developed for the implementation of the ministerial commitments. One element in the implementation of L1 was to increase the knowledge on “Public Participation”, which in the last years has become increasingly important in international, regional and national policy making.

In contributing to the implementation of the MCPFE Work Programme the FAO/ECE/ILO Team of Specialists on Participation in Forestry took over the important task to clarify the meaning and elements of public participation. As a result a comprehensive report was developed and published in 2000 by the Team. In order to facilitate a wider distribution of the findings of its work, the Team suggested to produce a short synopsis. The MCPFE is pleased to present this synopsis within its MCPFE paper series.

My special thanks goes to the Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape for their generous support of the printing costs and all persons involved in the preparation of the paper. On behalf of the Liaison Unit I wish you an interesting reading and hope that this MCPFE paper will facilitate the work of policy makers and practitioners.

Peter Mayer  
Head of the Liaison Unit Vienna

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<sup>1</sup> ILO (2000): Public Participation in Forestry in Europe and North America. FAO/ECE/ILO Team of Specialists on Participation in Forestry. International Labour Office, Sectoral Working Paper n° 163, Geneva, 119p.



## Background to the Report

The interaction between forestry and society and the concept of public participation are important and integral parts of sustainable forest management - SFM (MCPFE Helsinki 1993 and Lisbon 1998)

In order to better understand the concept of public participation in forestry and to integrate it more fully and transparently into forest policy making and management, the report “**Public Participation in Forestry in Europe and North America**” was prepared as a contribution of the joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training to the follow up of the Lisbon Conference.

The report was prepared by the FAO/ECE/ILO Joint Committee’s Team of Specialists on Participation in Forestry. The Team was composed of 23 specialists from across Europe and North America – managers, researchers, practitioners, policy, private forestry and non-governmental organisation advisers<sup>2</sup>. Specialists were appointed to the Team in their personal capacity, not as representatives of their countries or institutions.

Thanks is due to the Swiss and Flemish Forest Services for funding the co-ordinator support, to the Swiss Forest Service and Swedish Forest Owners’ Association for hosting the first (November 1999) respectively the second workshops of the Team (March 2000), and to all the countries and organizations for supporting the work of their specialists during the year.

A copy of the report, including country experiences and case studies, is available online ([www.unece.org/trade/timber/joint-committee/participation/report.pdf](http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/joint-committee/participation/report.pdf)) or can be obtained from the ILO secretariat:

International Labour Office (ILO)

Mr. Peter Poschen	Tel.	+41 22 799 61 88
Route des Morillons 4	Fax.	+41 22 799 79 67
CH-1211 GENEVE 22	E-mail:	poschen@ilo.org

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<sup>2</sup> Members of the FAO/ECE/ILO Team of Specialists on Participation in Forestry are presented at the end of the document.

# WHAT IS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

“Public participation is a voluntary process whereby people, individually or through organized groups, can exchange information, express opinions and articulate interests, and have the potential to influence decisions or the outcome of the matter at hand” (ILO 2000, p.9).

## Principles and Characteristics of Public Participation

To differentiate public participation from other ways in which people in the forestry sector can interact with the public, the Team characterizes public participation in forestry as a process which complies with the following principles:

Public participation

- is *inclusive* with respect to interests;
- is *voluntary* with respect to participation and - except where a legal requirement specifies otherwise - to the initiation of the process and to the implementation of its results;
- may be a *complement to legal requirements*, but cannot conflict with legal provisions in force, in particular with ownership and user rights;
- is *fair* and *transparent* to all participants and follows agreed basic rules;
- is *based on* participants acting in *good faith*;
- *does not guarantee* or predetermine what *the outcome* will be.

Public participation may occur at various stages of the decision and/or implementation policy cycle. Further, the intensity of direct public involvement in forestry may vary from simple information exchange to more elaborate forms of collaborative decision-making or implementation.

This definition emphasizes the “process” rather than the content of participation. It considers public participation in forestry mainly as a tool, rather than as an end in itself. Other options notwithstanding, it is one tool among many and may be more or less suitable to resolve a given problem or to seize an opportunity – but it cannot be expected to solve all problems or conflicts.

## Comments on the Principles

- *Inclusiveness* expresses the willingness to involve all interests concerned by the issue which drives the public participatory process. This does not mean that the process must involve large numbers of participants. The number of people directly involved may well be small, particularly if interests are articulated by representatives, as is often the case. In practice, only those who see a potential benefit will participate (self selection).
- The *voluntary* nature of public participation cannot be overemphasised; it applies to all stages of the process. Because participation in the process is voluntary, the result can only be a common agreement among all parties. By this means all participants have an equitable chance to defend their interests and no decision or solution can be imposed on anybody. When participants can agree on a decision they will also commit themselves more fully to its implementation.
- It needs to be borne in mind that no obligation can be imposed on any party over and above legal requirements, even where some form of consultation is mandatory. The role of public participation processes is thus rather to *complement the existing legal and institutional framework*, to improve its functioning and sometimes to contribute to its evolution.
- There is no limitation *per se* concerning the *geographical* or *organizational level* at which participation can or should take place, provided that the process abides by the principles of the definition - in particular that it is voluntary and does not infringe on ownership and user rights. The appropriate level is determined by the issue that the process is addressing.
- In principle, public participation processes may be applied to all types of forest ownership. While public participation cannot go ahead without their acceptance, *private forest owners* may choose to take part in or initiate a participatory process like any other actor in the forestry sector. It is however recognized that private ownership represents a different context for participation than public forests.
- *Fairness and transparency* are essential to successful public participation. Fairness means participation and negotiation in good faith with best efforts applied to reach consensus, considering all interests equitably. Acting in *good faith* means that available information and knowledge is not going to be abused to sabotage a process. However, *there is no guarantee what outcome will emerge*. The best result is when participants can identify themselves with the outcome.

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*Public participation is much more than a technique, it is a way of thinking and acting...*

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# WHY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN FORESTRY?

The aim of public participation is constructive co-operation and widely acceptable results, which can be justified from different perspectives and commit involved parties to their implementation.

## Reasons for Undertaking a Public Participatory Process

There are a wide range of possible reasons for undertaking a public participation process in forestry, including:

- a) Improve understanding of forestry issues and mutual recognition of interests
- b) Gather information and enhance knowledge on forests and their users
- c) Improve provision of multiple forest goods and services
- d) Stimulate involvement in decision making and/or in implementation processes
- e) Enhance acceptance of forest policies, plans and operations
- f) Increase transparency and accountability of decision making
- g) Identify and manage conflicts and problems together, in a fair and equitable way

The varying relevance of the above mentioned reasons depends on the context of the participatory process, in particular:

- the issues being addressed by the participatory process;
- the perspectives of the initiator of the process;
- the interests of the participants in the process;
- the cultural, political and institutional context.

A clear appreciation of the main reasons for undertaking a participatory process is key to successful public participation.

# Benefits and Contributions of Public Participation to Sustainable Forest Management

When related to forest and forestry issues, public participation may contribute to sustainable forest management in a way that:

- Increase public awareness of forests and forestry among the public

Active participation, information exchange and collaborative learning are means to increase awareness of the public about various forestry issues. Mutual recognition between forest related interests improves general awareness of the multiple values of forests and strengthens trust between forest related actors.

- Maximize the total benefits of forests

Increased dialogue with the public opens up new possibilities to improve market-oriented delivery of forest goods and services. It enables to keep track of changes in the use of forests and facilitates the integration of these changes in forest management. This contributes to improving multiple-use forestry and to maximize the total benefits of forests.

- Share costs and benefits in a fair and equitable way

In public participation, all parties involved have an equal opportunity to express their opinions and an equitable chance to assert their interests and rights. Because of the voluntary nature of the process, no decision can be imposed on anybody. This implies that the results of the process are commonly agreed solutions and that resulting costs and benefits are shared. In these ways, public participation opens new perspectives to improve the valuation of forest goods and services.

- Enhance the social acceptance of sustainable forest management

Finally, public participation in forestry may be a means to develop better-informed and more widely accepted forest management outcomes. In this sense, public participation represents a tool to enhance the social sustainability of forest management.

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*Public participation is a way to enhance the social sustainability of forest management..*

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# WHAT PRACTICE IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA TODAY?

National experiences on public participation in forestry shows that public participatory approaches offer a wide range of possible applications at all institutional or geographical levels. Depending on the situation, they may occur earlier or later – and more or less frequently – in the decision-making or implementation cycle.

## Types of Public Involvement in Forestry

Based on the country experience, four main types of public participation process in forestry were found (see Table 1), which can take place at various institutional and geographic levels (national, sub-national and local).

### 1) Forest policies, programmes and plans

These processes introduce public involvement at an early stage of decision-making in order to anticipate conflicts and to enhance transparency and social acceptance of policies, strategies or plans. Their implementation is usually the task of national or regional forest services but can in some cases be directed by other actors.

### 2) Promotion of public involvement in specific forest projects

In some cases, public participation aims at promoting or increasing direct public involvement in the implementation of specific forest projects – based on decisions taken earlier (with or without public participation) by forest authorities or other actors (e.g. creation of urban green spaces, afforestation projects, prevention of forest fires).

### 3) Public auditing of forestry projects and practices

Public participatory processes may also refer to formal procedures of public consultation about specific practices or projects (e.g. environmental/social impact assessments, allocation of public grants, citizens' juries). They are often based on legal requirements but may also result from voluntary codes of practice.

### 4) Advisory boards/councils for public advice or management of conflicts

Advisory boards or councils are permanent types of *forum* that help the public to be better informed and to have a more direct influence in forestry-related matters. They group various – mainly organized – interest groups (governmental and non-governmental) and can be found at different institutional levels.

# Level, Stage and Intensity of Public Participation

National experiences show that:

- There are no ideal – or *per se* restricted – stages (whether legislative, strategic or operational) or intensities (which may range from exchange of information, consultation, joint decision-making) of public participation in forestry.
- Public participation processes are dynamic and may change from one to another type of process over time. Some are short lived, others turn into more permanent arrangements.
- The institutional levels, stages in decision-making or implementation and intensities of public participation processes depend on the issues, the objectives of the initiators and the participants, and on the cultural, political and institutional context.

Table 1: Types of public participation process in forestry (country experience)

	1. Forest policies programmes, plans	2. Promotion of specific forest projects	3. Public audits of projects/practices	4. Advisory boards / permanent councils
<i>National level</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– National forest programmes or strategies</li> <li>– Definition of national sustainable forest management standards</li> <li>– Forest Councils</li> <li>– Framework for public involvement in forest management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Forest education and awareness raising projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Environmental or/and social Impact assessment</li> <li>– Nature complaints board</li> <li>– Public audits of private enterprises</li> <li>– Citizens' Juries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Forest council and advisory boards or commissions</li> <li>– Round table with forest industry, environmental groups</li> <li>– User Councils</li> </ul>
<i>Sub-national level</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Longer-term regional forest or natural resources planning</li> <li>– Landscape ecosystem-level planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Planning and implementation of afforestation programmes/projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Allocation of public grants and subsidies for specific forestry operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Regional forestry commission</li> <li>– Permanent advisory councils</li> </ul>
<i>Local level</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Management planning at forest management unit level</li> <li>– Nature protection and recreation planning</li> <li>– Real estate planning</li> <li>– Management of community woodlands</li> <li>– City and communal land and forest use planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Groups of private forest owners</li> <li>– Regulation for forest contractors/merchants</li> <li>– Creation of new forest zones in urban areas</li> <li>– Partnership for the provision of local amenities</li> <li>– Prevention of forest fires</li> <li>– Community based forestry schemes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Allocation of public grants and subsidies for specific forestry operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Partnership with users' organizations</li> <li>– Cases of public discontent</li> <li>– Community based management</li> </ul>

Note: The list of examples above is not exhaustive and does not mirror all the different principles of the working definition. However, these examples all contain key elements – at some stage of the process – of what is understood here as public participation.

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*An amazing diversity of public participation practice across European and North American forestry...*

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# HOW TO UNDERTAKE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

Participatory management is much more than a technique, it is a way of thinking and acting for both organizers and participants. All problems or conflicts may however not be solved within the participatory process. Creating a climate of good faith and involving all stakeholders in cooperative problem solving is a true challenge for public participation.

## Framework for Public Participatory Management

Best public participatory management is based on *mutual trust, improved communication* and *co-operation* among all people involved in the process. This requires from both organizers and participants a clear understanding of what the participatory approach is about and what participation opportunities are being arranged. Depending on the scale and the context of the process, various organisational stages can be more or less formally identified (see Table 2).

### Preparing the process

- A clear, competent and motivated attitude of organizers toward public participation is key to successful participatory management. A good starting point is co-operation between organizers.
- Before starting the process of public participation, existing interests should be extensively searched for and contacted, including non-organized interests.
- Agreement on a work plan and on goals and commitments within a time frame, as well as clarity on tasks and responsibilities, are key elements.
- Appropriate public participation models and techniques need to be creatively selected and flexibly adapted to the planning situation and context.

### Conducting the process

- From the outset, clear rules should be established with participants on how and when they can participate, on what kind of subject matter, and how their inputs will be used in the process.
- Adequate information management - within and outside the process - is a means to increase the transparency of the process and the competencies of participants.
- It is important to identify and discuss existing or potential conflicts openly and fairly. Mediation techniques or an outside facilitator may be helpful.
- Public participation has implications for intra-organizational functioning – it should improve communication between hierarchical levels. It often requires training.



- Providing feedback on visible results is important to maintain and increase the motivation and trust of the participants.

## Evaluating the process

- Evaluation is an integral part of successful participatory management. Criteria of success and indicators for monitoring progress should be defined at an early stage of planning (i.e. participants' activities, process organization, expected results, etc.).
- Evaluation should apply to all activities (i.e. management activities, invested resources, achieved results, etc.) and at all stages of the process - at the beginning (adequacy), during (flexibility), and at the end (feedback and evaluation) of the process.
- Participants should be involved not only in the definition of the evaluation parameters but also in the evaluation process. Transparency in evaluation is likewise essential.

Table 2: Stages to consider when planning a public participation process

<p><b>Define the context of public participation</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Identify</i> subject, issue and geographic area for collaboration, and potential interests/stakeholders</li> <li>2. <i>Define</i> expected objectives, <i>estimate</i> suitability, needs and budget for public participation (also for participants) and <i>draft</i> possible approaches to public participation (or alternatives)</li> <li>3. <i>Decide</i> to start a participatory process (or to opt for another type of decision-making process)</li> <li>4. <i>Open</i> the subject to all interested parties: publicize / inform / inventory / survey interests</li> </ol> <p><b>Plan the process</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. <i>Develop</i> a participation plan with participants including : <i>goals, timetable, subjects and issues, rules, responsibilities, management of information and inputs, techniques to be used, needs for training or external coaching, internal and external communication, evaluation</i></li> </ol> <p><b>Conduct the process and evaluate the results</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. <i>Implement</i> the participation plan</li> <li>7. <i>Evaluate</i> the participation plan and conclusions with stakeholders</li> <li>8. <i>Communicate</i> the outcomes to all stakeholders and wider interests</li> <li>9. <i>Implement</i> public participation conclusions and <i>provide feedback</i> on progress</li> </ol>
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*The real challenge is to adapt each process to a particular situation...*

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# WHO IS THE PUBLIC?

The “public” is a vast and heterogeneous group of people or stakeholders, organized or not, who are concerned by a specific problem or issue and who should be given the opportunity to take part in discussions and to influence and/or jointly make decisions regarding the issue at hand.

## How to Identify Stakeholders?

There are no objective and generally acceptable criteria to define stakeholders (e.g. “*primary*” or “*secondary*”). Such a definition depends on the context and characteristics of a participation process. Specific groups, such as forest workers, small forest owners, industry, small forest user groups, and lower social classes tend to be under-represented. To ensure the inclusiveness of the process it is important not to overlook stakeholders, in particular non-organized or weakly articulated interests. Particular attention needs also to be paid to the inclusion of women.

## Four Main Reasons for Lack of Participation by the Public

- *Lack of information*: stakeholders do not have the necessary information or knowledge to understand the issues, or how they may be affected. As a result they cannot make a judgment, or take a position.
- *Lack of interest*: People choose to enter and stay in the process only as long as they perceive that the benefits outweigh the costs of their participation. Some stakeholders may also show a lack of interest because they consider as satisfactory other mechanisms to influence outcomes.
- *No belief in the ability to influence the outcomes*: This may be due to a lack of supportive democratic institutions or of a public participation culture. It can also be caused by the initiating organization’s lack of credibility, or an actual or perceived imbalance of power, in participation.
- *No access to the participatory process*: Potential participants may not be forthcoming because they were not approached in an appropriate way, because their interests have not been recognized, because of perceived lack of resources, or because of cultural or psychological barriers.
- *Tactical behaviour*: At times some interests groups deliberately stay out of a participatory process because they see better opportunities to influence outcomes from the outside.

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*The public is all who are potentially concerned by the process  
and wish to take part...*

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# WHAT ARE THE LIMITS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

Public participation is part of a broader societal and institutional context and functions in a network of complex power relationships. Whatever the many expectations associated with public participation, such processes have limits that originate from within and beyond their realm of action.

## Problems and Limits

Notwithstanding the principles of the definition, the following aspects constitute tangible limits to effective public participation. These need to be clearly recognized and openly considered.

- **Cultural and institutional context**

Depending on the situation, cultural and institutional – including regulative and ownership – context may be more or less conducive to public participatory approaches.

- **Legal frameworks, property and user rights**

Public participation may be a complement to legal requirements, but cannot conflict with legal provisions, property and user rights. Public participation can, however, in some cases catalyse changes in legislation and may offer opportunities to increase recognition of owners' and users' interests.

- **Costs and benefits**

Availability of resources, be it financial, time, capacity, information and/or creativity may be a limiting factor. Perceived imbalances in the expected cost/benefit of a participation process may also prevent some parties from getting involved.

- **Issue driven limits**

Public participation – as a context driven process – may not always be the most appropriate process for addressing forestry issues, and other arrangements may be simpler and more efficient. For representative types of participation processes, communication with wider constituencies may also be a constraint.

Limits to effective public participation are not excuses for avoiding participation but rather challenges for creating best possible conditions for successful public participation

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*Limits are not excuses but challenges...*

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# SPECIAL CONTEXTS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN FORESTRY

Contexts	Benefits and Recommendations
<p><b>Public Participation in Public Forests</b></p> <p>In the mid-1990s, about 30% of all forest and other wooded land in the EU-15 were in public ownership. For the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) it was 100%, but as a result of privatization and restitution the percentage is currently decreasing. Achieving public participation in public forests is important because public managers are acting essentially on behalf of the public as the ultimate “owner”.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Public participation in public forests</i> is a means to improve multiple use forestry through balanced integration of the various social demands towards public forests and to enhance the social acceptance of their management.</li> <li>• It also meets society’s growing concern for more transparency, accountability and efficiency in the activities of public forest services.</li> <li>• To improve the effectiveness of public participatory approaches, the organizational and technical capacities of public forest services have to be adequately developed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Public Participation and Private Forest Ownership</b></p> <p>Almost two-thirds of the forests in Western Europe, outside the countries in transition, are privately owned. In the Central and Eastern European countries, restitution and privatization of forests leads to an increasing share of private forest holdings. There are also new private forest owners in western countries with large afforestation programmes (e.g. Iceland, Ireland, United Kingdom, etc.).</p> <p>Within the legal framework all forest owners, be they private or public, are expected to practice sustainable forest management. The decision of all, including private, forest owners on whether to get involved in a public participatory process depends on their perceived benefits and costs (including intangible costs and benefits).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Participation by private forest owners</i> is a means for balancing the development of forest policies, programmes and legislation.</li> <li>• Further, participatory approaches open new opportunities to improve relations with the public and to enhance recognition of private forest owners’ investment in SFM.</li> <li>• It also opens new perspectives to respond to the demand for new forest products and services.</li> <li>• To make best use of these opportunities, institutional and technical support should be developed, particularly for small private forest owners (i.e. better organization and assertion of their interests) or in countries where private forest ownership is recent and increasing (i.e. CIS countries).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participation of Workers and Unions in Forestry</b></p> <p>Unions are present at all levels of forestry work: international, national and forest management unit (FMU). For unions, participation is a basic requirement for workers in the entire forestry sector. It has to be understood in different ways, as workers may be state employees, employees of companies, self-employed, or contract workers, with different participatory roles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The participation of forest workers and unions</i> is a means for valuing the knowledge they offer and for ensuring that the social issues of workers’ health, safety and equity are included in forest management.</li> <li>• Since forest workers implement forest management decisions, they should be systematically involved in both the planning and the monitoring of sustainable</li> </ul>

*Partnership* represents a possible positive outcome of a participatory process with equitably distributed rights and duties for each participating person or group.

forest practices.

- Women working in forestry face special issues that should be addressed as a priority.

## Participation in the Context of Community Based Forest Management in Europe (CBFM)

Community based forest management may be considered forest management by, for and with the local community. Self-mobilized forms of public participation can be found in just about all European countries. Participation in the context of CBFM is special because the motive and outcome is usually to redress the existing asymmetrical patterns and relations of power between different actors in favour of marginalized rural communities.

- *Participation at local community level* enable the special roles of CBFM in sustainable forest management to be recognized by many stakeholders.
- Effective participation at local-community level, traditional forms of CBFM and new self-mobilized initiatives should be supported through appropriate policy, institutional and economic frameworks.

## Public Participation in Countries in Transition

After the political and economic changes of the late eighties, the forest sector of former planned economies of eastern European has been substantially transformed. However, the “countries with economies in transition” are not changing in a homogeneous way. They are facing major challenges, for instance in: restitution of public forests to private owners, involving new private forest owners in SFM, increasing public awareness about forests, improving the provision of multiple goods and benefits from the forests, enhancing the interest of local communities in forest management, etc.

- *Public participation in countries in transition* can contribute to involving new private forest owners in the sustainable management of their forests and raising public awareness about forestry issues.
- It can also improve the provision of multiple forest goods and benefits, including non-timber forest products, so as to enhance the interest of local communities in forest management.
- To this end, institutional frameworks, as well as organizational and technical capacities of the forest sector, need to be strengthened adequately.

## Public Participation in the Context of an Increasingly Urbanized Society

Across Europe as a whole, 70 to 80% of people live and work in sizable towns and cities. In many countries the percentage of the population directly employed in the primary sector (farming, fishing, mining and forestry) is already less than 5% and is still declining. These current trends in urban development strongly influence the evolution of society’s interest in forests. While their knowledge about forests and forestry is tending to decline, urban dwellers have an increasing direct influence on the way forests are used as well as a growing indirect impact on forest conditions – whether in urban, suburban or rural areas.

- *Public participation in the context of an increasingly urbanized society* is a way of increasing mutual understanding of various urban and rural people’s interests and values in forests, and to avoid and/or manage conflicts in the use of forests and forest resources.
- By effectively participating in sustainable forest management, both urban and rural people also enhance their awareness of its benefits.
- This implies a need for forest authorities and forest managers to develop adequate opportunities for people to be more fully involved in sustainably managing forests.

## CONCLUSION

In the modern framework of sustainable forest policies and forest management strategies, the human dimension is intrinsic to environmental and forestry issues. The FAO/ECE/ILO Team of Specialists on Participation in Forestry is convinced that public participation in forestry, used creatively and with an open mind as a means of communicating more directly with people, could help:

- public forests to meet social demands better;
- private forestry to be better understood by society and to improve relations with the public;
- workers in forestry to be more involved in sustainable management;
- rural communities to receive greater support;
- urban people make best use of forests;
- and therefore has much to offer.

To act effectively on the considerations outlined in this booklet requires coherence and a broad consensus on policy measures, programmes and investments as well as a medium- to long-term perspective. The considerations presented here on public participation in forestry demonstrate that much is to be gained from co-operation within the European region. Emphasis should be on policy, on research and on education and training of practitioners.

# MEMBERS OF THE FAO/ECE/ILO TEAM OF SPECIALISTS ON PARTICIPATION IN FORESTRY

## Chairman, Co-ordinators, Secretariat

**Miles Wenner** (*United Kingdom*)

Forest Enterprise  
UK - DUMFRIES DG1 1NPUK  
E-mail: miles.wenner@forestry.gov.uk

**Yves Kazemi & Andréa Finger** (*Switzerland*)

Forest & Society Consulting  
CH - 1096 CULLY  
E-mail: ykazemi@vtx.ch and finger@isp.fr

**Peter Poschen** (*ILO*)

International Labour Office  
CH - 1211 GENEVE 22  
E-mail: poschen@ilo.org

## Specialists

**Wim Buysse** (*Belgium*)

Administration of Environment, Nature, Land & Water, Division of Forests & Green Spaces  
B - 1000 BRUSSELS  
E-Mail: wim.buysse@lin.vlaanderen.be

**Tove Enggrob Boon** (*Denmark*)

Danish Centre for Forest, Landscape and Planning  
DK - 2970 HØRSBOLM  
E-mail: teb@fsl.dk

**Paul Wallenius** (*Finland*)

Finnish Forest and Park Service  
FIN - 01301 VANTAA  
E-mail: pauli.wallenius@metsa.fi

**Bernard Chevalier** (*France*)

Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche, DERF  
75349 PARIS 07 SP  
E-mail: Bernard.chevalier@agriculture.gouv.fr

**László Kolozs** (*Hungary*)

State Forest Service  
H - 1054 BUDAPEST  
E-mail: kolozs.laszlo@aesz.hu

**Karl S. Gunnarsson** (*Iceland*)

Iceland Forest Research Mogilsa  
IS - 116 REYKJAVIK  
E-mail: karlsgsr@simnet.is

**Noel Foley** (*Ireland*)

Irish Forest Service  
IRL - Co. DONEGAL  
E-mail: tnoelfoley@eircom.net

**João de Sousa Teixeira** (*Portugal*) &

**Maria João Pereira** (*Portugal*)

Ministerio de Agricultura, Direcção-Geral das Florestas  
P - 1069-040 LISBOA

E-mail: joao.teixeira@dgf.min-agricultura.pt and mariamoura@mail.telepac.pt

**Elena Kopylova** (*Russian Federation*)

IUCN Office for CIS  
RU - MOSCOW 123182  
E-mail: keb\_iucn@aport.ru

**Robert Vinca** (*Slovakia, written contribution*)

Forest Research Institute  
960 92 Zvolen, Slovakia  
E-mail: vinca@fris.sk

**Ana Belén Noriega** (*Spain*)

Ministerio de Medio Ambiente, Subdirección de Política Forestal  
E - 28005 MADRID  
E-mail: ana.noriega@gvsf.mma.es

**Sven Sjunnesson** (*Sweden*)

Committee on International Forest Issues, Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture & Forestry  
S - 28060 BROBY  
E-mail: sven.sjunnesson@telia.com

**Evelyn Coleman Brantschen** (*Switzerland*) &

**Claire-Lise Suter Thalmann** (*Switzerland*)

Swiss Forest Agency, OFEFP  
CH - 3003 BERN  
E-mail: claire-lise.suter@buwal.admin.ch

**Anne Hoover** (*United States of America*)

USDA Forest Service, Research & Development  
WASHINGTON DC 20024, USA  
E-mail: ahoover@fs.fed.us

**Natalie Hufnagl** (*CEPF*)

Confederation of European Forest Owners  
B - 1000 BRUSSELS  
E-mail: ceopf@planetinternet.be

**Jill Bowling** (*IFBWW*)

International Federation of Building and Wood Workers  
CH - 1227 CAROUGE  
E-mail: jill@ifbww.org

**Sally Jeanrenaud** (*WWF/IUCN*)

CH - 1261 St. GEORGE  
E-mail: s.jeanrenaud@span.ch

# **ANNEX:**

## **SELECTION OF CASE STUDIES**

### **Case Studies to Illustrate the Country Experience**

#### **The Spanish Forest Strategy**

The forest sector in Spain needed to update its forest law, which was established in 1957, when there was still a centralist power and the Autonomous Regions did not yet exist. The Spanish Forest Strategy was developed to take into account the general demand for ecological, social and economical forest functions. In 1997, the Ministry of Environment, together with the Autonomies and various administrations, launched the Strategy – or national forest programme – and agreed that it would be based on decisions made by consensus with the participation of all stakeholders. The first draft of the Strategy was sent to some 100 representatives of different interest groups. Taking into account their recommendations, a second draft was then further discussed in nine thematic working groups. After a three years consultation and consensus seeking process, “people feel that the Spanish Forestry Strategy is something of their own”.

#### **Fire Watchers in Portugal – Sapadores Florestais**

The new Portuguese Forest Law (1996) establishes as a priority action the creation of Teams of Fire Watchers (Sapadores Florestais). Private owners, as well as community-based associations managing forest on common land (*baldios*) may apply on a voluntary basis for having teams of at least five fire-watchers certified and supported with professional training, equipment and public funding. The scheme is expected to raise awareness for sound use of fire and forest management, to establish a fair sharing of costs and benefits between the private and the public sector, to empower stakeholders by improving their involvement in decision-making, and pool resources for a common goal of fire prevention and conservation of forests. One of the strengths of this project is the strong involvement of local community-based associations. The weakness is that abandoned agricultural land, or shrubland with high conservation value are not considered, even though many fires are set on such land for pasturing.

#### **User Councils in State Forest Districts in Denmark**

In 1995, the Forest and Nature Agency introduced User Councils at the forest district level. Since then 33 User Councils have been established. Even though the aim was to involve the “common citizen”, the User Councils was finally – for practical reasons – composed mainly of organized groups, such as environmental NGOs, county and municipal officials and – in some councils – representatives from defence, agricultural, hunting and tourist organizations with local affiliation. Seeing that the User Councils have no formal decision making power, their influence depends



largely on the forest supervisor facilitating communication, transparency and accountability. The User Councils have created opportunities for improved dialogue, in particular for the implementation of afforestation and nature restoration projects. However, because they cover relatively big areas, the advantages of local networking are partly lost.

## **Case Studies to Illustrate the Special Contexts**

### **Finland - Strategic Forest and Land Use Planning in the Metsähallitus (Context 1)**

Before any law required it, the Forest and Park Service (FPS-Metsähallitus) decided that during 1996 public participation would be applied in all regional planning and that all employees have to learn about principles and methods of public participation. The first goal of FPS was to handle the conflicts on state land. Participants included representatives from communities and cities, environmental and citizens' organisations, various recreation users, workers, reindeer owners, etc. All were involved from the beginning of the planning process until its evaluation. Contrary to some apprehension, the demands did not overly focus on increased nature protection in old growth forests and criticize the agency's forest management. Demands were instead often related to living conditions, employment, recreation, and most feedback on state forest management was positive. Citizens did not however show a strong interest in strategic level planning, their comments dealt very often with local details.

### **The Icelandic Forestry Association (Context 2)**

The Icelandic Forestry Association (IFA) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization founded in 1930 involving 57 nation-wide district societies with approximately 7000 members (2.5% of the total population of Iceland). Everybody can join the association's societies. The IFA launched a country-wide participatory process whose main objective were to motivate people to plant trees, to manage various afforestation and revegetation programmes, and to generally foster a forest culture. The initiators of IFA's activities are the members of the local forest societies, and as such the process is bottom-up. Models of participation included organized meetings, open-houses, courses and conferences. The participatory process is continuous through each forest society, up to national representative meetings, and the association's annual assembly. However, the existence of IFA is threatened if it is not able to keep the general interest and awareness concerning deforestation and soil erosion problems alive.

### **Unions' Participation in Forestry (Context 3)**

- *Participation at the enterprise level: Collective agreements* – For example, in 1999, following the violent storm “Lothar”, unions negotiated with German authorities to obtain hourly wages with bonuses for high quality work allowing workers to do their jobs without compromising safety.

- *Multinational framework agreements* – Under these agreements suppliers ensure that they comply with national legislation and respect ILO Conventions, in particular, conventions 29 and 105 on abolition of forced labour, 87 and 98 on the right to organize and negotiate collective agreements, 100 and 111 on equal remuneration and non-discrimination and 138 and 182 on child labour, as well as the “ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Forestry Work”.
- *Participation with non-governmental organizations and local communities* – Unions are forming alliances with international NGOs – notably in establishing eco-labeling guidelines, on socially and environmentally friendly forest restoration, energy saving devices, or community based afforestation projects.

### Crofter Forestry in the North West Highlands of Scotland (Context 4)

Crofting is a form of land tenancy unique to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. The legal arrangements between crofter and landlord were enshrined in the 1886 Crofting Act. The recent public participation process initiated by the crofters aimed at changing forest policy and legislation in order to allow crofters to benefit from trees on common land and to promote specific forest projects, such as: establishing crofter forestry schemes; providing local employment and training; diversifying land use away from subsidized sheep farming; restoring native woodlands; benefiting from woodland grants. The process succeeded in bringing about a new Crofter Forestry Act (1991), which gives crofters the right to manage woodlands and create new ones on their common grazing, and to benefit from woodland grants for the first time. Since 1991, 85 new crofter forestry schemes have been initiated. However, the new legislation fell short of granting ownership of the trees to crofters.

### Slovakia – Afforestation of Lands Unsuitable for Agricultural Production (Context 5)

A decrease in agricultural production is causing many hectares of agricultural land to be unmanaged. These surfaces are already partly covered by trees, while still being accounted as “agricultural land”. In the context of re-privatization, this kind of land is now mainly owned by communities (shared ownership is traditional in Slovakia). A participatory programme supported by a governmental decree is now being implemented across all institutional levels from national to local. It is aimed at convincing owners of the social and ecological benefits they would gain from transferring unused land into forests and it supports their voluntary involvement with subsidies and rural employment opportunities. Owners’ interest is mainly motivated by the access to subsidies, but public funds to cover these are reaching their limits. Furthermore, the programme was not sufficiently made known to a broader public. An other problems is the identification of owners in the process of re-privatization.

## Creation of New Urban Forests in Flanders (Context 6)

The Flemish government developed a participation model for the localization and planning of new urban forests (200-300 ha). The main challenges of the participatory processes were to manage conflicts with other economic interests and to make needs for such forest expansion explicit. Once the perimeter of the areas to be afforested were defined with local governments, a large array of interest groups (youth movements, local organizations, agricultural organizations, etc.) were consulted and stimulated to participate in the design and planning of the areas, as well as in helping to realize the plantations. The objective was to create an urban forest that is integrated as optimally as possible in the local social, ecological and economic web. Thanks to communication efforts there was little or no resistance in the project areas from organizations who were originally opposed to the general idea of forest expansion.