

# Nordic forest policy scientists connect with Central Europe

**The Nordic Network in Forest Policy Science connects with its long-standing counterpart in the Central Europe, by co-organising a scientific conference. This first joint event effectively serves for raising the cumulative capacity of the forest policy science as well as for enhancing the visibility of Nordic research in Europe.**



*Photo: Nordic and Central European forest policy scientists meet in Hannoversch Münden, Germany*

## **Nordic Network in Forest Policy Science**

Thanks to the support by EFINORD-SNS, the Nordic Network in Forest Policy Science exists since 2010. It is a regional hub of scientific networking within the wide discipline that is scattered thematically and organisationally. A recent survey within the network reveals that forest policy science gains more attention in the national debates on forest research. Previously often neglected, forest policy is increasingly acknowledged as an important discipline in current research agendas that emphasize multidisciplinary and societal relevance.

The recent establishment of the professor chair in international forest policy at the University of Helsinki is a welcome example of strengthening the

discipline. At other Nordic faculties, the rhetoric on the importance of forest policy has not yet been accompanied by allocation of any significant resources. The discipline faces expectations for increased research output, without having adequate financial resources and without being given a chance to develop sufficient critical mass. In result, we have a discipline where individual researchers or small research groups work somewhat haphazardly on different topics, scattered at different faculties and departments.

It is in this context that the Nordic Network in Forest Policy Science serves as a connector of researchers, enabling exchange of ideas and recent scientific advancements. On similar grounds, the Nordic network aspires to strengthen the linkages with scientists in Central Europe that harbours a number of strong faculty chairs in forest policy science.

## **Meeting the peers in the Central Europe**

In its second conference (held 2014 in Sweden) the Nordic Network in Forest Policy Science made an important strategic decision to hold a joint meeting with its counterpart in the Central Europe, the network of forest policy scientists from the German-speaking countries. Under mediation by prof. Max Krott, this long-standing network (established in 1969) kindly accepted the Nordic offer and the joint 1<sup>st</sup> International Meeting in Forest Policy Science was held in April 2016. Hosted by the Georg-August-University Göttingen (Germany), the 3-day conference was attended by 66 participants, including 22 researchers from the Nordic and Baltic countries supported by EFINORD-SNS.

Contributions to the conference reflect a wide thematic and methodological span of forest policy sciences ranging from such studies as a qualitative investigation of local perceptions and drivers behind tree species choice in Southern Sweden; over quantitative assessment of national impacts by international environmental regimes; to a participative action research for facilitating the creation of local and national visions for forested

of the fact that various methods and often mixes of methods need to be employed to answer the complex societal questions pertinent to forests and forestry. Based on contributions to the conference, the coordinators of the two “mother” networks are currently preparing a special issue in the peer review journal *Forest Policy and Economics*.

The conference was highly welcomed by the research community that previously lacked a venue for sharing research ideas and results across Europe. The increased networking between Central and Northern Europe has already generated beneficial spin-offs, such as initiation of research consortia under EU Horizon 2020 (e.g. the [ALTERFOR](#) project, running 2016-2020) or planning thematic sessions in the upcoming [IUFRO 125th Anniversary Congress](#) (September 2017). Building on current successes, the networks intend organising such joint conferences biannually, rotating between countries in the Central and Northern Europe. The next conference is planned in the Netherlands in 2018.

## SNS Research Briefs

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