



## COST ACTION FP1301

**“Innovative management and multifunctional utilization of traditional coppice forests - an answer to future ecological, economic and social challenges in the European forestry sector (EuroCoppice)”**

**Minutes of the WG 4 Meeting: *Services, protection, nature conservation***

**Brno, CZ  
April 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

### **Minutes Summary**

#### **WG 4 Participants:**

Gero Becker (DE), Peter Buckley (UK), Alexander Feher (SK), Katrin Heinsoo (EE), Paola Mairota (IT), Rodolpho Picchio (IT), Christian Suchomel (DE), Gheorghe Florian Borlea (RO) Alina-Maria Tenche-Constantinescu (RO), Rachele Venanzi (IT), Debbie Bartlett (UK)

**WG Leader:** Peter Buckley, co-leader Florian Borlea

**Rapporteur:** Jennifer Mills

**Welcome:** Peter Buckley welcomed all participants to the meeting.

### **Agenda**

#### **Progress on Work Plan Item 3 – nature conservation status**

This item involves collecting and comparing information about specific services of coppice forests to nature conservation. The group had already started to collect information on Natura 2000 sites containing forests with coppice potential. A paper based on a critical examination of site management plans in four countries – Italy, Germany, the UK and Estonia was shortly to be submitted at the *Coppice forest: past, present and future* conference and a separate paper had been published on the UK SACs in that country's *Quarterly Journal of Forestry*. The protocol should now be expanded to more countries or to regions within countries. A simple **questionnaire** was suggested which could be circulated to this and other Group members with different nationalities, for example:

- Is coppicing is allowed by law?
- If yes, do management plans for woodland Natura 2000 sites specifically mention protection of endangered species?
- Do all Natura 2000 plans have specific management plans?
- Does 'coppice' refer to forests cut on a regular rotation, or to former coppice forests, or both?
- Are any rare coppice species listed in the habitat description?
- Is coppice management actively being carried out?

- What is the status of habitat: i.e. favourable, unfavourable recovering, unfavourable declining, not assessed, unknown?
- Who is responsible for writing Natura 2000 plans – conservation, forestry, planning, engineering or architecture bodies?
- PM, CS and PB to draw up a simple questionnaire template for general circulation (deadline - beginning of May); results to be coordinated by September 2015.

### **‘Coppice species’**

If coppice is necessary for some endangered species to survive there is a need to start (re)coppicing. Two approaches towards identifying these ‘true coppice’ species of importance were discussed:

- a) those listed in the Habitats Directive Annexes II, IV & V
- b) broader lists of species known to respond to coppice management or those which tend to occur in lighter forests.

PB to tackle (a) and CS to undertake an analysis of (b) for Germany; all other Group members to list (b) species commonly cited in Natura 2000 plans for their country (deadline - March 2016).

Are the endangered ‘coppice species’ able to navigate to other sites in a broader, fragmented landscape structure or are they restricted to patches where coppicing is still practised? Group members were encouraged to review examples of case studies where species populations were able to survive (or become extinct) as the coppices become over-aged (all - deadline March 2016).

As well as conventional coppice, the group felt that biodiversity benefits/disbenefits of short-rotation coppice should be explored. This would require brief comparisons of species present in arable situations vs. coppice crops grown on agricultural land, whether these were always common and cosmopolitan species, or whether species of light woodlands were able use and spread to the SRC habitat. FB and CS volunteered to collect and summarise the most important studies for each country (Deadline - December 2015).

To extend the previous investigation on silvicultural and logging impact on soil microarthropods, it was agreed that a study on high forest, compared with active coppice, was desirable. RP and RV would look for suitable sites on comparable soil types to carry out this investigation (deadline – March 2016).

### **Work Plan 1 and 2 – protection functions of coppice forests**

These are plans to compile knowledge on the potential role of coppice forests in stabilising and protecting slopes, mainly in alpine areas of France, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, and watercourses and riverbanks. PB/JJM will initiate an overview of recent literature specifically referring to the role of coppice: CS will look at the German literature on protection forests (deadline - December 2015). These accounts will be circulated to Group 3 members and other individuals with known engineering expertise for comment.

Feedback about legislation concerning the special treatment of coppice protecting infrastructures will be incorporated in the review, with recommendations for treatments for future protection (deadline – March 2016). The group had little expertise in this area and would have to rely on feedback from other group members and experts.

Some coppices are easily invaded by species such as *Ailanthus* and *Robinia*, particularly in eastern Europe. FB agreed to review the subject with support from AF. Factors influencing this invasibility would be investigated and methods of control would be covered (deadline – March 2016).

#### **Work Plan 4 – rules and regulation relating to coppice forests**

All group members agreed to compile/evaluate laws relating to coppicing/felling in their respective countries. For some countries like Italy, where rules vary according to region, one or two regions could be compared. Details such as coupe size, felling volume limits, number of standards to be retained, distribution of standards and maximum basal area of coppice stems should be recorded. The influence of certification schemes such as FSC and PEFC should be noted.

For some eastern European countries there is no coppice management allowed by law, although the 2003 guidelines '*Natura 2000 & Forests; challenges and opportunities*' specifically mention coppice. However FB and AF will identify site types in Romania and Slovakia that may be favourable for coppice. For example, there are places where illegal coppicing is helping some endangered species. Deadline – September 2015.

#### **Work Plan 5 – International conference on services, protection and nature conservation**

It was too early to specify a host institution. Possibilities are being explored for a meeting in either spring or summer of 2016. This would most likely take the form of a short meeting of one day, followed by a one-day site visit. Speakers would be drawn from group members but would include other ecologists, for example experts on birds, animals and butterflies.

#### **Other items**

PB would write to the two Greek members of Group 4 to ask whether the research on dead wood accumulation and fire risks in coppice vs. high forest is continuing.

A discussion was held about publication of the Group 4 outputs. Two possibilities were mentioned: the Romanian Journal of Forestry or an iForest special edition. PM would investigate the latter before a decision is taken.

A possible application for a LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity grant was considered briefly. These EU funds, for 5 years, support projects that contribute to the implementation of the EU's Birds and Habitats Directives, the Natura 2000 network and to the EU's goal of halting the loss of biodiversity. PM to investigate.

Working Group 2 are putting together short accounts on *Coppice forests in Europe – past, present and future*. DB and PB agreed to supply 500 words on the UK situation by June 1<sup>st</sup> 2015.

Other nominations for Group 4 could be drawn from Czech members hosting the *Coppice forest: past, present and future* conference. PB and other group members to suggest individuals when the rules for nomination are clarified.