

## 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

Bucharest, RO, October 19th, 2015

#### Minutes Summary

**WG 4 Participants:** Gero Becker (DE), Florian Borlea (RO), Peter Buckley (UK), Alexander Feher (SK), Katrin Heinsoo (EE), Paola Mairota (IT), Giorgos Mallinis (EL), Ioannis Mitsopoulos (EL), Victor Pacurar RO, Stefan Vanbeveren (BE).

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

**Rapporteur:** Jennifer Mills

**Welcome:** Peter Buckley welcomed all participants to the meeting and, in particular a new member, Victor Pacurar from Braşov University.

#### Agenda:

#### Clarification of Work Plan Items 1 and 2

PB proposed re-phrasing these work plan items to better focus the memorandum of understanding objectives.

The proposed new wording for each respective work plan was:

- 1. Carry out a literature review on the mechanics of tree stability and rooting on steep terrain, and possible consequences for rockfall, landslide and erosion, with special reference to coppicing practices.*
- 2. Collect information on the legislative framework for safe practices in relation to protection forests (protecting infrastructures such as roads, railways and buildings), particularly in relation to maintained or abandoned coppices. Compare this framework with the technical issues arising in deliverable 1 and make recommendations for best practice.*

The amended wording was approved unanimously by the Group prior to being submitted to the Management Committee.

#### Student thesis on coppice forests and erosion

Caroline Löw, an M.Sc. student of Christian Suchomel (DE), had written review of literature on coppice forests and erosion, which CS had translated and submitted to WG4. PB will add to this. Expertise will also be sought from members in other WGs and researchers working in alpine countries. GM and IM agreed to explore Greek literature on the subject and VP would do the same for Romania. PB will coordinate. Marco Conedera (WG1) of the Swiss Federal Research Institute

had kindly agreed to read through and comment on the review when completed. Deadline December 2015.

### **Study on nature conservation status and management of N2000 sites. Progress of LIFE bid.**

Questionnaire information had been collected from Group members and a paper based on a critical examination of Natura 2000 site management plans in several EU countries had been given at the 10th SISEF National Congress by PM, who gave the Group a Powerpoint presentation based on this. The paper has been submitted for publication in i-Forest. Additional information from RO and SK was now available and would be incorporated as part of the final output. PM hoped to submit a LIFE bid in 2016.

FB mentioned that N2000 was currently under revision, which may give an opportunity to highlight the importance of coppice for biodiversity as well as economic reasons and to influence countries in Eastern Europe, which currently did not allow coppicing or only in exceptional circumstances. For instance, AF said that from 10 SK forest habitats which had been under coppice management in the past, only one: 9180 Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines could now legally be coppiced. VP mentioned the possibility that coppicing could be promoted for slope protection when restoration planting was carried out on landslides. This might allow some coppicing to take place in countries such as RO where it was not allowed at present. FB thought that there might also be scope for allowing coppicing where trees were colonising new areas of neglected agricultural land.

PM reminded members that the EU Guidelines for N2000 and two other EU publications do recommend coppicing where traditionally carried out in the past and economically feasible.

There was a discussion on the lack of management plans in some countries, the aspirational nature of many which had been published but with no detailed management operations and the lack of finance which could prevent management plan operations being carried out.

In EL rural abandonment and economic problems were contributing to the neglect of coppicing, although unofficial coppicing was being carried out in some areas. GM and IM had been researching fire risk and fuel accumulation in coppice vs high forest. The intensity of fires was higher in coppices than in high forest because of the higher volume of fine twigs accumulating under coppice.

### **Progress on Annex II and 'coppice species' in relation to Habitat Directives**

PB gave a Powerpoint presentation on work carried out so far on analysing habitat preferences of Birds Directive Annex I and Habitats Directive Annex II species and also comparing numbers of these with the number of species on the European Red List and at the UK BAP level. He will circulate this to members for comment and also for information on priority and red lists from other countries. It is hoped to present a paper on this topic at the Antwerp conference. Deadline March 2016.

### **Landscape aspects of forest structure and species richness**

This topic concerns the fragmentation of forests and the future survival of those species linked to currently managed or abandoned coppice. Some forms of management may also increase homogeneity, which will decrease biodiversity. There is little evidence so far that high forest promotes optimum biodiversity, but rather that a mosaic of management types would achieve this.

Veteran trees, dead wood and young growth was needed as well as light areas. Coppice-with-standards management can provide some old-growth elements and there could also be variation within coppice management, such as grouping of standards. PM will find the relevant Italian literature and other members were encouraged search for such literature in their own countries and to circulate the references. Deadline March 2016.

#### **Progress on biodiversity benefits/disbenefits of SRC, and invasibility**

FB and AF are working on the topic of invasibility and weed control problems, in particular with *Ailanthus* and *Robinia*. AF has a PhD student working in Portugal on social and economic benefits of *Eucalyptus*.

#### **Progress on logging impact of coppice silviculture on soil micro-arthropods**

Rudolfo Picchio (IT) and Rachele Venanzi (IT) have been investigating the silvicultural and logging impact on soil micro-arthropods and at the meeting in Brno offered to extend this to compare the impacts in high forest compared with active coppice. PB would investigate progress. Deadline March 2016.

#### **Rules and regulations relating to coppice forests**

PB had information on three countries so far and hoped that members would send him information for their own countries as soon as possible.

#### **Possible Task Group meetings**

GB had asked if WGs had any topic on which they could co-operate that needed a meeting. If so, there was some finance for this but meetings must take place before 10th-15th December. It was not thought that WG4 would be able to arrange such a meeting by this date.

#### **International Conference in Antwerp**

SV gave a Powerpoint presentation on the venue for the conference, to be held in Antwerp from June 15th-17th, 2016. It would be held at the Stadcampus in central Antwerp and therefore very convenient for hotels and restaurants, etc. There was no restriction on space and so the conference could be opened to non-COST colleagues. COST meetings will be held on the first day, the conference on the second day and Kris Verheyen had undertaken to organise a full day's field trip on the third. SV has applied for non-COST funding which, if awarded, will finance two speakers. There would also be COST funding for two invited speakers. As Ghent and Wageningen Universities were relatively close, it was hoped that some speakers from there would be able to contribute without needing COST funding.

Some WG4 members hoped to present papers and also gave SV the names of some other possible speakers. When the first call had been agreed and put on the website, members were asked to circulate the link widely to other colleagues and institutions they thought might be interested in contributing or attending. If sufficient papers were accepted, parallel sessions could be held after the initial plenary papers. The Scientific Committee would adjudicate on the acceptability of papers and if they should be presented or given as posters. Topics were discussed and will be based on the WG4 memorandum of understanding but should also include contributions from the other working

groups. The draft topics had been circulated. It was agreed to change the title of C. to 'Coppicing and nature conservation policy and legislation'.

GB gave advice on the timetable. The first call for papers would be sent out as soon as possible, with a second call, if necessary, in January. Abstracts should be submitted by 1st March with the Scientific Committee finishing evaluation by mid-March so that contributors could be told the outcome before Easter (27th March) leaving ample time for making travel arrangements, etc.

### **Publication outputs**

PM thought that as i-Forest will publish papers from the Brno conference, it was unlikely they would undertake to publish those from Antwerp. FB had obtained an interest in principle for a special issue in the journal *Annals of Forest Research*. Further enquiries will also be made to other relevant journals.