

8th Congress of Forestpedagogy, Bilbao, Spain, 23rd - 25th of October 2013

Opening speech 3

On behalf of the “Subgroup Forestpedagogy” of the “Forest Communicator Network” (FCN): Anna Pikus, Poland

Greetings

Distinguished Mr. Peli Manterola, the president,
Distinguished Mr. Kepa Olabarrieta
distinguished Mr. Joseba Arrieta, The President of Basque Forest Owners
dear friends of Forestpedagogy in Europe

Introduction

On behalf of all the members of the FCN – Forestpedagogy Subgroup I’m very honoured to welcome you here in Bilbao. My name is Anna Pikus, I represent Poland in the Subgroup, where – as a forest pedagogue - I’m working at the State Forests National Forest Holding

In 2013 the Forestpedagogy Subgroup as part of the Forest Communicators Network is able to carry out the 8th European Congress of Forestpedagogy here in Bilbao and we are grateful and pleased to be here.

This congress would not have been possible without the great support of:

- The Union de Silvicultura del Sur de Europa (USSE)
- The European Forest Institute (EFI) and
- The Asociacion de Forestales de Espana (PROFOR).

I would like to express our great appreciation to all present representatives of these organisations .

Our particular thanks goes to Mr. Inazio **Martinez de Arano** without whom this event would not be possible.

Subgroup / Annual Congress

The European-Forestpedagogy-Network was affiliated as “Forestpedagogy Subgroup” and included in the Forest Communicators Network. Its main objectives are, ...

- to develop the awareness of Forestpedagogy particularly among the national and European Forestry policy and forestry departments
- to improve internal and external Communication about Forestpedagogy
- to strengthen Networking and Cooperation between the different stakeholders
- to establish Forestpedagogy as a recognised part of Education for Sustainable Development
and
- to improve the quality of all aspects of Forestpedagogy

This European Forestpedagogy-networking-process started in 2005 as an initiative between Austria and Germany. The network has developed rapidly and we are proud to say that now there are seventeen European states in this initiative.

We are proud and pleased with the results we have achieved this far.

- since 2006 we managed to organize an annual Europeanwide congress. The 8th Congress starts today here in Bilbao! This is the first time *we are in the Mediterranean country! So we hope that this congress can also be the first step to deeper integration of Mediterranean states into our networking-process*
- we developed an internet-information and network-platform and
- we implemented the Forestpedagogy objectives in the “European Forest Action Plan” and the consideration within the agenda of the Standing Forestry Committee of the European Commission.

Why do these matter? Why is Forestpedagogy useful but most of all necessary? Necessary not only for the future of forestry but the forest itself.

Forestpedagogy – why?

A lot of studies show that people lack knowledge and understanding about the importance of forests. So foresters and pedagogues in Europe are faced with the challenge of explaining sustainable forest management. We need to raise awareness - especially among children. We need new and innovative approaches which show how forests and forestry matters in the lives of people. Forests offer various services and numerous benefits to people.

Just one month ago, on Sept. 20th 2013, the European Commission adapted the new European Union “Forest Strategy” . The strategy is still to be discussed in the European Parliament, but the concept is already pointing out that:

“Communication is a particular challenge for the sector, as the public is generally not aware of how significant Sustainable Forest Management is, or of the various ways in which the forest sector contributes to the green economy”.

So, we as foresters and forestpedagogues are convinced that Forestpedagogy has a key role realizing these goals. Why? ... Because Forestpedagogy in Europe ...

- has advanced pedagogical methodology and tools as well as huge variety of actors, to bring especially children into closer contact with the forests (nature)
- there is sufficient evidence from scientific research, showing many beneficial impacts on educational deficits and on competences in a sense of education for sustainable development (ESD)
- started to work together in networks with other forest-related-actors including forest owners and forest-timber-sector as well as with actors in the education, environment and resource-management fields.

So – of course – Forestpedagogy is more than just forestry-related public relations! Forestpedagogy makes important contributions to the Education for Sustainable Development! It ..

- **communicates values like** respect for nature, animals and fellow human beings.
- **It also develops** curiosity, responsibility, tolerance, a shared cultures as well as long-term global thinking and acting,
- **improves** competence such as creativity, imagination, cooperation - interdisciplinary thinking and social behaviour,
- **thanks to forest pedagogy children are brought to** the place that is perfect for self-discovery-learning, nature-near living experience, natural habitats and rich biodiversity.
- **It inspires** contemplation and reflection about the consequences of our decisions, about men role in nature or society and our ability to change our attitude in the everyday life.

Future

But beneath a lot of strengths there are still big challenges ahead and goals to be realised. Therefore the European Forestpedagogy Network (Subgroup-Forestpedagogy of the Forest Communicators Network, FCN) is developing an europeanwide strategy for Forestpedagogy.

A lot of European Forest administrations and enterprises already recognized that forespedagogy helps to shape the future of forestry that encapsulates the three spheres of sustainability: economic, environmental and social. This way by using forests and the management of all their functions we show an excellent model for sustainability.

With its proposal for a Joint European strategy for Forestpedagogy the FCN-Subgroup is offering an Action Plan, containing a bundle of possible future measures which should be implemented to develop Forestpedagogy further. This is an ongoing process so we hope to receive your valuable feedback that will result from our discussions here on the 8th Forestpedagogy-Congress in Bilbao.

Closing

As we start the congress I want to wish you three inspiring days here in Bilbao. I want to encourage you to take the opportunity of sharing your experience with others participants. Coming from so many different countries, professions and background we have an unique opportunity to learn, discover an inspire.

Now I would like to personally and together with all of you at the same time welcome the representatives of each state. Please when you here the name of your country stand up for few seconds so we can see you and give an aplouse.

Now dear participants of the 8th Congress of Forestpedagogy, please look to your right and say hi to the person sitting next to you. Now look to your left and do the same...

Thank you very much for your attention and enjoy the rest of the day and congress.