



1. Context and Mandate

“Confirming our vision for the future, which is of a region that embraces common values of solidarity, equality and mutual respect between people, countries and generations, confirming the importance of the principle of sustainable management of natural resources, poverty eradication, and sustainable consumption and production, and enhances justice and civil rights, gender equality and the rights of children, reaffirming the importance of education for sustainable development as a tool for capacity-building that enables people to make this vision a reality.” (6th UNECE-Ministerial Conference; Belgrade, Oct. 2007)

With this vision, the ministers of education and of the environment underlined the importance of education on the environment and on sustainable development. Because Forestpedagogy has a huge potential to contribute to this vision the **European Forest Action Plan** (FAP, 2007–2011) calls for specific activities particularly through its Key Action No. 10: “Encourage environmental education and information”.

In 2005 the networking-process of raising awareness and developing Forestpedagogy in Europe was started by an austrian-german initiative group. Other states followed and in may 2008 the Forest Communicators Network (FCN) organised the network-group as “**FCN-Subgroup Forestpedagogy**” and mandated this Subgroup to increase awareness of Forestpedagogy and to develop a Common European Strategy on Forestpedagogy.

The **Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe** (Oslo, June 2011) adopted “European Forests 2020” targets and gave a Ministerial Mandate for Negotiating a **Legally Binding Agreement on Forests** in Europe until July 2013. The “**Work Programme 2020**” includes objectives like:

“to enhance the visibility of forests and the forest sectors multiple contributions to global challenges and societal needs”

“to participate in global and regional fora to raise awareness”

“to enhance coordination and cross-sectoral cooperation and to promote sustainable forest management including among the public”

“to address emerging issues forest knowledge improves through research, education, innovation, information sharing and communication”

The **European Commission** adopted on 20th September 2013 a new **EU Forest Strategy** for forests and the forest-based sector. The strategy is pointing out:

“The Commission and the member states should improve their valuing of the benefits that forests give to society and, through sustainable forest management (SFM), should find the right balance between delivering the various goods and services”

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

“The member states should improve public information about forests and wood”

The FCN-Subgroup-Forestpedagogy is convinced, that Forestpedagogy contributes to this objectives and therefore developed this strategy and actionplan.

2. Main Principles of Forestpedagogy in Europe

Forestpedagogy ...

- addresses all social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability
- fosters understanding, interactions and relationships of human-environmental relations in the context of sustainable development
- is based on knowledge about forest ecosystems and experience in sustainable forestry
- promotes understanding, use and application of the concept of sustainable development through the example of sustainable forest management
- demands an holistic approach and it considers world-wide coherences
- contributes to education for sustainable development (ESD)
- contributes to reach the goals of the UN-2030-Agenda for Sustainable Development
- cooperates with other partners engaged in environmental education or ESD
- requires active and cooperative educational methods and approaches
- values, promotes and offers forests as a healthy and excellent learning environment for outdoor education as well as a resource for learning
- encompasses natural and cultural heritage

The “FCN Subgroup Forestpedagogy” agreed upon 12 major objectives of Forestpedagogy, integrating all dimensions of Education for Sustainable Development, by covering educational, social, economical and ecological goals (**Annex 1**).

3. Target groups for the Strategy

For the further development of forestpedagogy in Europe in the sense of the targets of the FCN-Supgroup the main target groups are:

- Forestpedagogues of the national forestry departments and their national and international networks and organisations
- Foresters and Forestowners and their national and international networks and organisations
- Teachers and Pedagogues and their national and international networks and organisations
- Decision makers of the national forestry departments and international forestry organisations and networks
- National and international political decision makers, their networks and organisations

4. Objectives of the strategy

The objectives of the common European strategy are regarding the results networking and cooperation already has reached but they are especially focussing on the main europeanwide challenges Forestpedagogy is still faced with (**Annex 2, strengths and challenges**).

- **A: Develop the social and political awareness (forestry sector and other sectors)**
- **B: Improve Communication (internal/external) and strengthen Networking**
- **C: Establish Forestpedagogy as a recognised part of ESD**
- **D: Improve the quality of all aspects of Forestpedagogy**

5. Action Plan – Objectives (A–D), concrete actions (1–4) and *implementing measures*

The actions No. A3, B1 and D1 are of high priority. In 2015/2016 the FCN-Subgroup-Forestpedagogy will mainly focus on implementing measures referring to these actions.

A: Develop the social and political awareness (forestry sector and other sectors)

A1: The annual congress (designed by FCN-subgroup) is recognized as an important social and political issue, which is interesting for politicians, decision makers and the media
The congress takes place annually; the congress is organized, held and evaluated according to the guidelines; the congress is communicated and participants from a lot of different countries attended

A2: Forestpedagogy activities are contributing to reach the objectives of the European Forestry Strategy
The topic Forestpedagogy is integrated to international forestry meetings and congresses (presentations, posters, side events, ...)

A3: Political awareness of Forestpedagogy in EU educational and cultural sector has increased

*Contributions to the EU Directorate General Education and Culture to show possibilities for cooperation between the forest- and the educational-sector are given
(f. e. FP can improve basic and social skills, health, motivation for children as active citizens)*

A4: Forest owners, forest administrations and forest enterprises are communicating about the management of their forests through Forestpedagogy activities
Within the Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF) the awareness for FP is risen, e. g. by contributions to their annual congress (f. e. FP has high relevance for the management or value of private forests and the the support of the idea of “family forestry”)

B: Establish Forestpedagogy as a recognised part of ESD

B1: Forestpedagogy is an educational process to reach environmental maturity and Forestpedagogy is a prime example for ESD

*Development and dissemination of the concept “6 pedagogic steps in environmental maturity” into the Forestpedagogy practices (“still working in the lower steps, need to develop and to go on to the higher steps”)
Discussion in the Subgroup and elaboration (publication) of an overview (synopsis) of the different concepts*

B2: Forestpedagogues are cooperating well with Cooperation with the schools, pre-schools and kindergardens as well as with teachers and pedagogues

C: Improve Communication (internal/external) and strengthen Networking

C1: The FCN-Subgroup-Forestpedagogy is working more and more constantly and structured as well as based on agreed-upon principles and statutes

The FCN-Subgroup meets twice a year, is communicating important news on their internet-contact- and information-platform (www.forestpedagogics.eu) and has elaborated a definition, common principles and objectives for Forestpedagogy

C2: Networking between the subgroup-member-states has increased

The number of subgroup-member-states is growing

The FCN-Subgroup planned and carried out an international project

The FCN-Subgroup is able to finance coordinative work to run its network with funding or from EU-projects

C3: Communication and Cooperation with other international initiatives dealing with the development of Forestpedagogy (for example PAWS, YPEF) has increased

C4: Communication and Cooperation with international initiatives which are responsible for Education for sustainable development or with initiatives from the educational sector has increased

D: Improve the quality of all aspects of Forestpedagogy

D1: Common quality standards of Forestpedagogy programmes are elaborated

D2: Various best practice examples are collected and shared in the programmes of the annual congresses, they are implemented on www.forestpedagogics.eu

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Annex 1: Objectives and target groups for Forestpedagogy

A: Educational goals and added values for education:

- **communicate values like** respect for nature, consideration to fellow-being and life-being, responsibility, tolerance, solidarity between generations as well as global and long-term thinking and acting
- **improve** creativity and imagination, cooperative- and action-competences, interdisciplinary thinking, curiosity and concentration and social behaviour
- **offer** free space for self-discovering-learning, nature-near living spaces, natural habitats and rich biodiversity
- **stimulate** contemplation and reflection about the results of acting, the own role in the context of nature or society and the possibilities to change acting and attitudes in the everyday life

B: Social and economical goals, objectives for sustainable forestry:

- **raise awareness** for the benefits of sustainable forestry, for the value of non-wood forest products and services (benefits for society – mental, practical, emotional), for the places of employment in the forest sector and the forest-based industry
- **provide added values** to rural development (employment, tourism, income, etc.)
- **foster** interactions and exchanges between rural and urban areas/people
- **improve** relationships with environment at local level
- **promote** the continuing use of wood as renewable material (to gain social acceptance for timber harvesting and forest management)

C: Environmental objectives, forest-related objectives:

- **develop** awareness, sense of responsibility and interaction for the role of forests and forestry (risks and potentials) ahead climate change
- **foster** interests and cooperations to make forests, their products and their management fit for other challenges and risks ahead (as: water resources, energy, biodiversity, protection of soil)
- **improve** understanding of forest management and forests multifunctional benefits

D: Target groups

The practical Forestpedagogy-work in the different states, done by forestpedagogues from all the different existing institutions and organisations, is done for a huge variety of target groups. A lot of programmes are conceived for younger children (school, kindergarden), but there are also offers for teenagers, families, teachers, people with special needs, seniors, migrants, managers, forest owners and so on. Decision makers, politicians and the media are also important target groups for forestpedagogues to recognize their work and to raise the awareness of Forestpedagogy.

Annex 2: Forestpedagogy in Europe: Strengths and Challenges

Strengths

- Forestpedagogy is founded on a lot of good pedagogical concepts, experienced methods and a huge variety of players
- Proofs (results of surveys and scientific research) show, that Forestpedagogy has a lot of beneficial impacts on education and for the whole society
- Forestpedagogy is dealing with the future of the sector because sustainable forest management as a task in duty of the society needs more acceptance and understanding
- Forestpedagogy can show that forestry is important for the needs and the future life of people
- Forestpedagogy programmes can apply to all the spheres of sustainability (economical, ecological, social, cultural) Forests and the management of all their functions are an excellent model for sustainability
- Forestpedagogy provides interactions to the environment and livelihood of the participants. This allows transfers to other dimensions of their life and environment (e.g. mobility, consumption, householding)
- Learning in the forests makes fun and it is holistic
- Forestpedagogues have started to work together in networks with other players from the forest-timber-sector, but also with stakeholders and NGOs from other sectors
- Forestpedagogues experienced that they can learn from each other (especially when coming from different cultural backgrounds, and/or different countries or continents)
- Forestpedagogues can think and act global in activities or projects. This can be done by implementing the criteria of ESD (f. e. competences of acting, global fairness, ...) and by focussing on worldwide-relevant topics (forests and: climate change, biodiversity, water, energy)
- A european process of cooperation and experience exchange, coordinated by the subgroup-FP-FCN (annual congress, common objectives, quality standards and concept) is existing and developing

Challenges

- Forestpedagogues are faced with an increasing nature deficit syndrome
- People are not sure about the role of forestry or sustainable forest management
- More and more people do not know what a forester does
- There is a lack of financial and personal resources for Forestpedagogy-initiatives
- The position and the meaning of Forestpedagogy in the context of ESD is not clearly defined
- Foresters/forestpedagogs are not experienced about how to integrate aspects of ESD
- There is a lack of qualified forestpedagogues
- It is not clearly defined: What/Who is a forestpedagogue?
- The teachers (pedagogues) are not enough included
- More research data is required and it needs especially more evidence to show the contributions of Forestpedagogy for ESD
- More knowledge about evaluation-methods and more evaluation-results is necessary
- Forestpedagogy still needs more awareness in society, media and policy
- The internal (in the forest sector) awareness and ranking often is not sufficient
- Networking with all stakeholders and actors especially with actors coming from other spheres of sustainability must be intensified
- A lot of programmes and actors need more long-term thinking and acting concepts
- Global aspects, crosslinks and interactions to other aspects and topics of ESD (e.g. equity/fairness, mobility, consumption, resilience) very often can not be found in Forestpedagogy-concepts
- There is still a lack of pedagogy skills and methods to facilitate participation and to enable participants in taking over responsibility within the programmes as well as for further learning processes