



Implementing criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management

Regional Workshop in

Budapest, Hungary 23-24 April 2013

Recommendations

The background and objective of the Budapest workshop (WS) was to define and understand the various aspects of the implementation of criteria and indicators (C&I) for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) at the national level; to share experiences and identify regional issues across the Central, Eastern and part of Northern Europe; as well as to propose recommendations on C&I implementation in these regions. The WS was structured across 2 Working Groups (WG) according to applications listed in the working definition¹ of implementing the pan-European set of C&I of SFM.

- Working Group 1 focused on policy (application 1 and 4),
- Working Group 2 focused on monitoring and reporting (application 2 and 3).

Both groups were also requested to address application 5. Results² from the Budapest WS demonstrate that there is a significantly varied application of C&I throughout the countries represented in the WS, ranging from the Northern (Finland) to the Eastern (Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus) and Central (Austria, Slovenia and Hungary) parts of Europe. The major reasons for the variation in implementing C&I set comes primarily from the different national socio-economic conditions, as well as, legal, policy and institutional frameworks and a varying level of awareness, human capacities and resources available. During both the separate WG sessions and from the final round table discussion (including all participants), the following issues were raised:

WG1 on policy noted that C&I applications ranged from being not applied at all to being utilised as a tool for SFM. The main challenges identified for not applying C&I were recognized as a lack of awareness from the top (policy-makers and ministries) to the bottom (stakeholders and NGOs). Furthermore, the difficulties in finding a common interpretation for C&I as regards to definitions and targets have been strongly emphasised and linked to barriers concerning the legislative adoption of the C&I. Other challenges discussed were complimentary in reporting (at the institutional level and by forest owners), such as the overburdening in reporting duties, and the lack of cross-

¹ The CI-SFM working definition is available [online](#).

² Proceedings are published on the [workshop's website](#).

sectoral communication. These aspects were also connected to emerging issues, such as, support for a common definition of SFM at the national level, finding support for National Forest Inventories (NFIs), stakeholder involvement (with reference to forest owner duties and the democratisation process in Eastern Europe) and financing. To address these challenges and emerging issues it was recommended to address the following areas:

- **Legislation** – in terms of developing policy documents on the implementation of C&I and SFM. This was notably related to complementarity issues and the importance to streamline methods for data collection at the national level (dependent on national priorities) and to address institutional gaps.
- **Communication** – with regard to finding a common interpretation of C&I and SFM as well as the importance to engage in science-policy-stakeholder interactions (both horizontally and vertically).
- **Financing** – which was principally linked to the importance of raising interest (from top to bottom). This would presumably result in increased resources available for implementing C&I.

All these three issues were seen as being interlinked and dependent on each other. It is for example difficult to raise interest amongst policy makers unless there is pressure to change the legislative framework as regards C&I applications at the national level.

WG2 on monitoring and reporting discussed two main issues. The first issue was on monitoring and reporting on the state of the forest and concerned the **assessment towards SFM** and identifying emerging issues. It was noted that the main challenge is that not all indicators are suitable for assessment of SFM. To address these challenges it was recommended to address the following areas:

- **Develop** indicators that **address future challenges**, such as, effects of climate change on forests, increased and/or decreased demand for wood, and effects of forest management on water systems.
- **Leave some indicators out** (ind. 2.3, 3.5, 4.7), because the pan-European level data supply of
 - **Defoliation** (ind. 2.3) has been reduced by ICP Forest and does not allow any longer statistically sound national derivations.
 - **Forests under management plans** (ind. 3.5), focuses on forests with management plans and equivalents and therefore almost all countries have reported 100%. However there is no information on the quality of the plans.
 - **Landscape pattern** (ind. 4.7), which has not yet an agreed methodology and so far only one country (Austria) has made suggestions on how to measure landscape pattern on a national level. On a pan-European scale data is available by the JRC.

To insure timeline assessments, the rest of the C&I set should be kept without methodological changes.

- It should be ensured that data collected by **international organisations** or **national projects** (e.g. ICP FOREST (Ind. 2.3), JRC (Ind. 4.7) and BIOVERSITY (Ind. 4.6), etc) is also integrated and collected in the future.
- **Clarify definitions**, as **some** indicators are too difficult to interpret and/or understand.
- For an assessment of SFM it is **necessary to define targets and thresholds** for the national- and/or sub-national-level, complementing the current pan-European C&I set at the national- and/or sub-national level reflecting the local conditions and stakeholder demands.

The second issue concerned the provision of information **outside the forest sector**. The challenge considered was difficulties (or lack thereof) as regards the communication between sectors. For example, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has its own set of C&I and in some countries the CBD does not request data from the forest section but rather from the environmental sector. To address this challenge it was recommended that:

- Develop **new tools for communication** on C&I. Examples provided were a scenario approach with selected sets of indicators to demonstrate the possible results and consequences of different kind of treatments on medium and long term (e.g. the balance of demand for wood and nature conservation); to demonstrate the complexity of forest ecosystems; or to develop new analytical tools. The ulterior aim would be to present results to specific target and stakeholder groups.

The noted challenges and recommendations provide an overview of the main difficulties in implementing C&I in the Northern, Eastern and Central European regions, including possible solutions in the form of recommendations. However, given that the participating countries represent such a big geographical area (stretching from Finland to Hungary), it is difficult to provide region-specific recommendations, especially because the national conditions for implementing C&I differ so much. The recommendations should therefore be taken as more general suggestions for how the implementation of the C&I set could be improved.