

**Minutes of the Kick-off meeting**  
**“European Integrate-Network”**  
**Bonn 26/27 June 2017**

The kick-off meeting of the European network “Integrate” took place in Bonn, Germany, on 26-27 June 2017. Hosted by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture of Germany (BMEL) in close cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic and facilitated by EFI’s Bonn office, the event attracted about 50 participants from 15 European countries and the European Commission.

The group agreed that the **issue of an effective and efficient integration of nature conservation into sustainable managed forests** in Europe is a relevant and often controversial topic for many countries. The representatives of the European Commission underlined as well that this topic is high on their agenda and will remain important for the coming years. Relevant points of that debate consider the question of positive or negative impacts of different forest management prac-

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tices and if biodiversity in multi-functional forests can be better enhanced by integrative or segregative approaches.

The group agreed that the debate should rather focus on a **sound scientific basis** and **more practical evidence** gathered by forest practitioners in the field. This is exactly the gap which the European Network INTEGRATE intends to close by means of cross-border, cross-level and cross-sectoral exchange as well as a science policy interface. There was general agreement that the Network should act in the most flexible way within the Terms of Reference and the Working Modalities (see below). Special attention in the discussions should be given to **practical questions**. Therefore it was highlighted that these discussions should also take place on-site in **forests stands presented by network members during excursions**.

In his opening speech, Mr. Schwoerer (BMEL) **recalled that the activities from the German side already started as early as 2011** with financing a project of the European Forest Institute (EFI) on “Integrative approaches as an opportunity for the conservation of forest biodiversity”. A relevant publication is available in French, English and German as a print but also online. A second project of EFI was initiated right after this publication piloting the establishment of demonstration sites (so called Marteloscopes) in several European countries to improve the exchange of scientific and practitioners’ knowledge on the forest. Relevant material can be downloaded from the following website:

<http://www.integrateplus.org/>. To raise awareness for this issue at the high policy level, the German-Czech strategic cooperation was used to organize expert exchanges, to establish further Marteloscope plots and finally to adopt the Prague Forest Declaration at a Conference in October 2016 by both Ministers. Mr. Tomas Krejzar from the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic presented more details on this cooperation. On the initiative of both countries, the Standing Forestry Committee supported the formal establishment of an EU-wide network “INTEGRATE” as an activity under the EU Forest Strategy and adopted the Terms of Reference in Brussels on 6 March 2017.

The **keynote presentations** illustrated some examples of successful integration of nature conservation into sustainable forest management in Germany/Bavaria and Poland. They also provided insights from research regarding the challenges and possibilities to implement integrated forest management and to monitor biodiversity-related results in practice. **Four research projects** conducted by EFI’s Associate Members or the EFI Bonn office on integrated forest management were presented: the ConFoBi project (University of Freiburg), the InFormed project (led by INRA), the oForest project (led by the Swiss WSL) and EFI Bonn’s new project InForMAr (Integrated Forest Management Learning Architecture). The network agreed that the science/policy interphase should continue to be a relevant part of the meetings also in the future.

Participants visited **forest stands near Bonn** to get first-hand experience with a Marteloscope plot in an old-age oak stand and the training and awareness building it offers – both for forest practitioner's and nature protection representatives as well for students or the public. They also discussed that possible conflicts with recreation functions of those forests need to be considered when developing approaches in that region of Germany to integrate nature conservation into sustainable managed forests.

**EFI Bonn** agreed to provide scientific support and to facilitate further activities of the network with its InforMAr project, thus contributing scientific knowledge to an ongoing exchange of European forest policy experts on the integration of nature conservation into sustainable forest management in Europe.

The **Terms of Reference** will remain the basis of the work. However based on interventions by the European Commission on the inclusion of non-EU members into the network, a slight revision to that end might be necessary. The group adopted the **working modalities** which were presented for discussion with the understanding that they could be further developed in the light of experience gained within the Network. Given the interest flagged by colleagues from some non-EU Member States, it was agreed that there is no need to restrict the Network to EU-Member States but leave it open to others as well.

All participants expressed their strong support for the European INTEGRATE Network initiative.

Mr. Tomas Krejzar from the Czech Ministry of Agriculture was appointed as the **new chairman** per acclamation. He offered to arrange the next meeting in spring 2018 in Prague. The representative of Poland, Mrs. Marta Gaworska, offered the willingness of Poland to follow as **next chairing and host country** of the network.

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