

EFICEEC: Regional Office of the European Forest Institute launched

Laura Bouriaud, Marian Dragoi, Bernhard Wolfslehner

On April 12th, 2010 EFICEEC, the new Central-East European Regional Office of the European Forest Institute (EFI) was launched at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences (BOKU) in Vienna. The Regional Office shall become a centre for forest-related research and development and form a link to forest policy and practice in the region.

EFICEEC is part of the implementation of the EFI strategy 2022 to foster forest-related networking, research, information exchange, and capacity building by installing regional offices in different regions throughout Europe. Following the establishment of EFI branches in the Mediterranean area, Central Europe, and the Atlantic region, the centre for Central-East Europe has now been launched in Vienna.

EFICEEC comprises a research network of 28 organisations from 16 different countries. Base funding for the first period until 2013 is provided by the Federal Austrian Ministries for Forestry, Agriculture, Environment, and Water Management as well as Science and Research, and the City of Vienna. In addition, a number of core partners contribute by means of personnel and infrastructure to the wealth of EFICEEC. In Romania these are the National Forest Research and Management Plannign Institute (ICAS) and University Stefan cel Mare of Suceava that are active as core partners.

Background

EFICEEC can be seen as follow-up of the EFI project centre INNOFORCE that has become an important focus point for innovation research and forest policy under the guidance of Dr. Ewald Rametsteiner from 2000-2009. Against this background, the main objectives of EFICEEC are fostering of institutional networks among forest research units (universities, forest research centres) and contributing to the core competencies according to the EFI strategy. It is expected to serve as a catalyst to the acquisition of new joint projects in research, education, capacity building, and exchange in the CEE region.

Work Areas

Future activities in EFICEEC are foreseen in 3 Work Areas:

- Work Area 1 „Forest policy and Economics“ builds on recent work performed in INNOFORCE which is to be proceeded in the topics (a) Forest Policy Analysis, (b) Innovation Research, (c) Sustainability Research.
- Work Area 2 is based on land use change modelling and applying these approaches on topics such as climate change and bio-energy for the CEE region
- Work Area 3 addresses forest ecosystem management with special focus on mountain forests. Research results shall be prepared and transported in inter- and transdisciplinary approaches for decision support in forest policy and practice.

Opening Ceremony

More than 60 international participants from EFICEEC partner countries attended the opening ceremony at BOKU University in Vienna. Rector Prof. Martin Gerzabek said in his welcome address that the establishment of EFICEEC builds a strong congruence with the internationalisation strategy of BOKU and confirmed his strong support for the regional office. Prof. Karl Hogl and Prof. Hubert Hasenauer explained their motivation to support EFICEEC and led through the following programme.

As first key note speaker, Dr. Risto Päivinen, Director of EFI, highlighted the importance of regional offices and their role in implementing the EFI strategy. He expects approaches to forest-related issues on a more regional level, and a stronger visibility of EFI in its partner countries and institutions.

Gerhard Mannsberger, Head of Forestry Section in Austria, expressed Austria's strong commitment towards sustainable forest management in the international context. He is optimistic that EFICEEC will have a crucial role in supporting important forest policy processes in the CEE region.

Prof. Julius Novotny, Head of Forestry Section in Slovakia, commended the idea and topics to be addressed by EFICEEC and stated that future activities have to be strongly oriented to the needs of forest policy and practice in order to fulfil the high expectation towards EFICEEC in the forest community.

Finally, the current representatives of EFICEEC work areas, Dr. Bernhard Wolfslehner, Dr. Gerhard Weiss, Florian Kraxner gave insight into structure and workplan of EFICEEC. The crucial role of partners was highlighted, and the representatives of partner institutions were presented on the podium.

Pic 1: Speakers



Speakers (left to right): Weiss, Hasenauer, Novotny, Wolfslehner, Päivinen, Mannsberger, Kraxner, Gerzabek, Hogl

Pic 2: Representatives of the partner institutions

