

Social innovation for sustainable forest management

Operational Groups across Europe find ways to spread solutions and best practices for active forest management



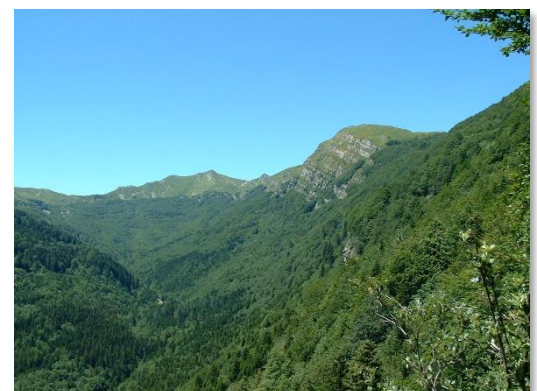
Access to professional advice, cooperation amongst the forest actors, can help improve forest management. This is where 'social innovation' comes into play, focussing on people, fostering innovation by improving cooperation and skills. A series of Operational Groups (OGs) across Europe are finding ways to bring people together to improve the social, economic and environmental performance of forests.

Nearly half of all European forests are privately owned and many of these holdings are small. Forests are very diverse and complex ecosystems, which are difficult to actively manage in a way that allows them to reach their full potential, both economically and environmentally. Well-managed forests can also contribute to jobs, rural livelihoods and prevention of forest fires.

Innovative technical solutions and good practices for sustainable forest management have emerged in recent years supported, for instance, by the EU Forest Strategy, Horizon 2020 and Rural Development Programmes. However, there are several factors which limit the uptake of these innovative solutions, such as the wide range of forest types, owners' profiles and ownership models and also the diverse structure of regional forest-based sectors. So finding ways of spreading these solutions and best practices throughout Europe, in particular to smallholdings, is now crucial, and there are several OGs doing exactly this.

A number of OGs are looking at tools and systems including knowledge exchange, cooperation, education, training and advice to support sustainable forest management and contribute to unlocking the socio-economic and environmental potential of forests for EU rural areas. They are all contributing to the EU achieving its environmental targets set out by the Green Deal. Here are some examples of OGs, and a longer list can be found below this article.

Italian OG ForLEAVEs. In the Pistoia Mountains (Tuscany), woodland ownership is very fragmented, Francesco Benesperi from the OG, says "Smallholders in the area have insufficient information about the market, value chain and alternative uses of forestry resources (touristic, recreational, environmental, educational). We don't have a network of smallholders, agricultural holdings and local stakeholders which could help us share information on forest management based on shared goals of local development and sustainability." This OG will create an inventory of possible uses for each sub-area within the farm land and their potential value (€/ha per year). The partners will also



create a 'Community of the Forest' and a 'Forest School' setting up a network of experts focused on finding practical solutions to common problems.

A Slovenian OG is developing an online system for the electronic management of forest holdings. Matevž Triplat from the OG tells us "We believe that through the use of innovative technologies and a better understanding of the players in the forest value chain, we can develop a practical e-commerce system for everyday use." The system will offer new, simplified options for planning and monitoring processes by digitalising standard business procedures, connecting supply and demand and increasing the forestry services market transparency. Triplat continues, "It will reduce the administrative burden and give tremendous insight into the data on forests and new management possibilities." The main results will be available in an online forestry information system (**MojGozdar**).

French OG RAISON is setting up a demonstration network for the management of Douglas fir in Normandy. "The renewal of Douglas fir stands will present a major challenge, as many of these stands will become mature in the next 30 to 40 years." Says Jean-Baptiste REBOUL from the OG. By adapting the management to the new situation, over the years the trees will be able to cope better with the expected environmental changes - regular droughts in particular - and related threats such as pests and diseases which may be favoured these new conditions. Possible management practices include planting at different stages on the same stand, to have a mix of trees of different ages, and cutting trees later than usual to encourage. "We will create a network of references and demonstration activities on efficient planting techniques and plans for the Normandy region."

Further information

<https://normandie.cnpf.fr/n/projet-raison/n:3803>

<http://wcm.gozdis.si/splosno/eip-agri-elektronsko-poslovanje-kmetijskih-gospodarstev-z-izrazito-gozdarsko-dejavnostjo>

Photos: RAISON and ForLEAVES