INTEGRATED FOREST POLICY AND ECONOMICS: 
AN INTERNATIONAL MASTERS PROGRAM IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

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FOPER is a project supporting forest policy and economics capacities development in Southeast Europe

- Funded by the Finnish Government
- Phase 1: 2004 – 2009
- Phase 2: 2010 – 2012
- Coordination: European Forest Institute (EFI)
- Geographical focus - faculties of forestry and forest research institutes from:
  - Albania
  - Bosnia-Herzegovina
  - Croatia
  - Macedonia (FYROM)
  - Montenegro
  - Serbia
How did the programme emerge?

• The basic reason for the FOPER Project and MFA funding is that neither Forest Policy nor Forest Economics is sufficiently advanced to meet the future needs of the Southeast Europe (SEE) countries and challenges of transition processes towards market economy.

• Preparing for entrance into the EU requires addressing numerous issues related to forests and nature protection and this will require new expertise in policy and economics.
Why focus only on forest policy and economics?

- SEE countries have a respectable tradition in technical and biological forestry sciences.

- Due to previous political regime there is a significant lack of academic and professional capacity on modern forest policy science and forest economics.

- The role of forest sector in the societies in transition: market economy, integration into Europe and EU?
Objective of FOPER

To strengthen the capacity of modern Forest Policy and Economics Education, training and Research in SEE countries
International Master’s Degree Program in Forest Policy and Economics

- Bologna process compatible
- 120 ECTS, full time studies
- Courses are taught in an integrated approach (forest policy and economics) – Unique in Europe
- Teachers: international experts and regional counterparts (twinning teachers concept)
- The first ever common MSc program (with a single curriculum) in SEE, in forestry, taught in English and post-conflict cooperation program in SEE high education
- Multi-cultural and interdisciplinary

**Achievements:**
- MSc program accredited
- Regional partnership of universities
- Regional teachers trained (twining-teaching)
- 19 graduates in the first generation
  + Regional researchers trained
  + New research on forest conflicts and PFOAs as the basis to develop teaching materials – case studies
  + Awareness on FPE research built
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>ECTS</th>
<th>Course Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Introduction – Science, Theory, Methods (10 ECTS)</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Fundamental Studies in Forest Policy and Forest Economics (20 ECTS)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Advanced Studies in Forest Policy and Forest Economics (30 ECTS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Specialization related to Thesis – Elective courses (28 ECTS)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Master’s Thesis Seminar (2 ECTS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Thesis (30 ECTS)</td>
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Total credits within Master program 120 ECTS
Professional qualification and degree recognition

• The International FOPER MSc students are awarded with the professional title: *Master in Forest Policy and Economics (MSc.)*

• The students obtain two Master Degree Certificates issued in both, English and local language as well as a detailed bilingual Diploma Supplement

• The Diploma Certificate is automatically recognized (without any further procedure) by all partner universities and faculties which accredited the program contents (avoiding a complicated procedure of issuing a double or joint degree diploma)
Costs of FOPER MSc Program

• 700,000 Euro for the development and implementation of MSc Program in 2006-2009

• 500,000 Euro for Implementation for 2010-2012

• Around 10,000 Euro/Year/student
The graduates are employed:

- 19 out of 24 enrolled students have been graduated so far.
- Institutions employing the graduates include: faculties, research forest institutes, private consulting companies and responsible ministries.
- All students after MSc program returned to their respective countries for employment – no ‘brain drain’ effect.
- Alumni activities developed.
## SWOT analysis of FOPER MSc Program

### Strengths
- Has an established reputation as a high quality MSc programme in the Western Balkan Region (WBR).
- High number of graduates found jobs during and after finishing the MSc program.
- Strong regional commitment for continuation of MSc Program by all partner institutions in WBR.
- Very attractive for students from WBR.
- Possibility for students to build a strong international and regional network.
- Unique program in the Europe (Integrated Forest Policy and Economics).

### Weaknesses
- Implementation of Bologna process is in early stage at partner faculties.
- Missing by-laws.
- Lack of English language in administration offices.
- Sustainability of MSc Program currently depends on international funding agency.
- Weak development of forest policy and economics in regional forest faculties.
- No strong EU partner associated with program.

### Opportunities
- Consolidation project funded by same donor secured money for second cycles of Master program.
- Network of MSc students, regional and international teachers can play important role in establishment of new cooperation’s with EU partners.
- Administration staff will develop sufficient capacity for managing next generation of students.
- Regional teachers are more educated in Forest Policy and Economics.

### Threats
- Sustainability of the program after Finnish funds is not longer available.
- Students interest can decrease due to lack of a secure system of scholarships.
- Lack of an EU partner can decrease the possibility for accessing EU funds.
SIGNING THE NEW MASTERS DEGREE PROGRAM AGREEMENT 2010-2013
FOPER II – goals

1. INTEGRATED forest policy and economics in INTEGRATED teaching and research activities
   
   A. In rapid political, economic and social transition in the SEE countries, policy and economics are not separately functioning aspects of society – they are fully integrated to each other: in theory, in disciplinary organization as well as in teaching

   B. Teaching and research are interdependent – research based teaching/learning

   C. Publication in international research journals is critical to strengthening teaching capacities

   D. Creating strong and sustainable research network that will be recognized by research publications and capable to compete for national/international research funds
FOPER II – goals

2. CAPACITY BUILDING:

A. HORIZONTAL – between international/regional universities and research institutes
   a) Courses in MSc and research projects realized by the teams (not the individuals)
   b) Inviting younger and mid-career international teachers/researchers in order to develop long term relationships and partnership
   c) Seek opportunities for regional teachers to teach in other international MSc programs in Europe

B. VERTICAL – within universities and research institutes (teachers/researchers-PhD students-MSc students)
Creating a *Graduate College for Doctoral Students in Forest Policy and Economics*

✓ Doctoral Students link teachers and researchers to each other

✓ Doctoral Students create the pathway for Masters students to be qualified as potential teachers and researchers

✓ Doctoral Students link international universities to regional universities and research institutes

✓ Stops the ‘brain drain’ and focuses research on critical regional issues
Science-policy interface (master thesis and research topics)

- TEV in urban forests
- Forest conflicts and PR in forestry
- Policy and legislative aspects of private forests
- Entrepreneurship in SMEs in forestry
- Forest products marketing and international markets
- Policy and institutional preconditions for implementation of international environmental regimes
- Forest and environmental policy of EU and integration processes
- Integrated forest management plans
- Political instruments to combat forest fires
- Biomass from forest and energy
- Multifunctional management of forest protected areas
- Corporate responsibility, public procurement and forest certification
...
Breaking the circle of deficient research capacities

Training of students, teachers & researchers in SEE countries:

- MSc FPE
- PhD (graduate college)
- hands-on research projects
- tailor-made training workshops

Limited research capacities

Limited applicability of research results

Low funding for research

Low demand for research results
Field trip to NP Sutjeska