

(DRAFT)

**Memorandum of Understanding**  
for the implementation of a European Concerted Research  
Action designated as  
COST Action E

**“Protected forest areas in Europe – analysis  
and harmonisation”**

The Signatories to this Memorandum on Understanding, declaring their common intention to participate in the concerted Action referred to above and described in the Technical Annex to the Memorandum, have reached the following understanding:

1. The Action will be carried out in accordance with the provisions of document COST 400/94 “Rules and Procedures for Implementing COST Actions”, the contents of which are fully known to the Signatories.
2. The **main objective** is to *describe, analyse, and harmonise* the wide-range of Protected Forest Area categories used in European countries within the context of existing international systems of protected areas. Furthermore, the reporting of national PFA information will be made transparent and comparable, such that this information can be used in the assessment of forest resources.
3. The overall cost of the activity carried out under the Action has been estimated, at EURO 7<sup>1</sup> million at 1999 prices.
4. The Memorandum of Understanding will take effect on being signed by at least five signatories.
5. The Memorandum of Understanding will remain in force for a period of 4 years, unless the duration of the Action is modified according to the provisions of Chapter 6 of the document referred to in Point 1 above.

# COST Action proposal

## Protected forest areas in Europe – analysis and harmonisation (PROFOR)

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### A. Background

Protected forest areas (PFA's) are of major importance at the national, European and international level. They contribute to the preservation of species and genetic diversity. They are important for scientific research, but are also of high scenic, recreational, cultural and educational value. In addition, protection forests, which may or not be directly under protection, are maintained to fulfil specific functions such as erosion and avalanche control and water-catchment protection.

There are a large number of PFA categories and classification systems at both the international and national level. The terms 'protected', 'unprotected' and 'protection' tend to be inexact and lack consistency between countries and organisations in their interpretation (Kneeland & Waide, 1999). In order to have a common understanding of PFAs it is important to establish a clear overview of national approaches to classification. These approaches differ according to each nations requirements and circumstances. Knowledge of these differences is important in pan-European and international efforts to map, classify, collect and disseminate information on PFAs.

PFAs have become a major issue in the forest policy forum. This is due mainly to international discussions on forest policy, concerns over the environmental impacts of plantation forestry, and developments in forest-product certification. Thus, the following activities proposed in this Action are highly relevant and can be grouped under two main themes:

### 1. Forest policy processes and networks

#### The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forest in Europe

There are urgent information gaps associated with the PFA issue. These have emerged from international initiatives and collection processes concerning protected areas and principally relate to definitions and statistical information. The Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forest in Europe addressed these needs in its Helsinki and Lisbon Ministerial Conferences. In the follow-up process to the Lisbon Conference of 1998, the Working Group on 'Biodiversity, Protected Areas and Related Issues' (Objective 2 of the Work-Programme on the Conservation and Enhancement of Biological and Landscape Diversity in Forest Ecosystems 1997-2000; WP-CEBLDF) was established. The Working Group noted in its 1st session:

*“...the need to further clarify the concept of Protected Forest Areas and to find precise definitions.”*  
(<http://www.minconf-forests.net/>)

## Intergovernmental Forum on Forest (IFF)

**Meeting in Puerto Rico** (<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/iffgs1.htm>)

USA and Brazil organised an expert meeting on protected forest areas for the IFF process in Puerto Rico in March 1999. It was evident from this meeting that the status of protected forests varies widely, from *strictly-protected forests* with relevant legal status and management systems, to the ‘*paper parks*’ without any guaranteed legal protection status or management. The main conclusion of the meeting was that definitions for forests, protected forests and forest management issues needed to be developed. The PFA issue could be integrated with forest resources inventories and the development of locational GIS. The European approach to forest protection differs between countries. Although all countries have various forms of forest protection, in general those with large forest resources have different definitions to those with limited forest areas. So that international forest policy and protection can be harmonised, a concerted approach to European forest protection is urgently required.

**Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, IFF III** (<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/docsiff3.htm>)

Within the third session of the IFF III in Geneva, 3–14 May 1999 under the Programme Element II.d (iii): Forest conservation and protected areas, it was concluded that:

*“...Existing definitions of “protected forest areas” need to be expanded and made more flexible if they are to encompass the wide range of protection regimes existing in various countries. There is a need to develop a conceptual framework, which accommodates protected forest areas, established to achieve a range of objectives and degrees of protection.”*

Further it is referred to Proposals for action in the document:

*“...Urge international organizations, particularly UNEP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Union of Forest-Related Organizations and IUCN, to develop new definitions of protected areas, applicable to all circumstances faced by countries, as well as a global approach for assessing the effectiveness of protected area management in relation to environmental, social, legal and economic objectives, with participation of member countries, NGOs and local.”*

**Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, IFF IV** (<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/docsiff4.htm>)

The issue of forest conservation has been further discussed at the IFF IV Session in New York, 31.1 – 11.2 2000. In addition to the above IFF III conclusions and proposed actions, the Forum encouraged countries to (IFF IV, 2000):

*“...contribute to a global and regional assessment of the current status of protected forest areas, including total number, extent of each area, objectives of establishment, effectiveness of management, IUCN system equivalent category, and basic biological and social information available.”*

## Natura 2000

In the Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora it is stated that:

*“.... the preservation, protection and improvement of the quality of the environment, including the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, are an essential objective of general interest pursued by the Community..”*  
(<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/legis.htm>)

Forests are one of the natural habitat types listed in the Council Directive 92/43/EEC, and are defined as: “(Sub)natural woodland vegetation comprising native species forming forests of tall trees, with typical undergrowth, and meeting the following criteria: rare or residual, and/or hosting species of Community interest”. (Annex I of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/hab-an1en.htm>))

In light of this Directive, the Union’s Council of Ministers is developing a network of protected sites at the Community level. This special protection programme, known as *Natura 2000*, will play

a central role in protecting natural resources. The main aim of the programme is to establish a representative network of rare and vulnerable ecosystems in all characteristic eco-regions within Europe. The *Natura 2000* network will include protected forests as major ecosystems. (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/natura.htm>)

### **The UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre**

The UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) provides information services on conservation and sustainable use of species and ecosystems, and supports others in the development of their own information systems. UNEP-WCMC has compiled, on behalf of IUCN, '*The 1997 United Nations List of Protected Areas*', which is the definitive list of the world's protected areas. It is accessible as an interactive database at the UNEP-WCMC homepage. The 1997 United Nations List of Protected Areas has been published by IUCN in 1998 (IUCN, 1998). (<http://www.unep-wcmc.org>)

## **2. Initiatives for classification and research initiatives**

### **International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**

IUCN has the mission to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. The IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) promotes the establishment and effective management of a world-wide representative network of terrestrial and marine protected areas as an integral contribution to the IUCN mission.

In 1994 IUCN introduced the 'IUCN international system of protected area management categories' (IUCN, 1994). This was intended to improve communication and understanding amongst experts and to provide international standards to help governments raise the quality of protected area management and international data collection, handling and dissemination. With the introduction of the IUCN international it was also intended that governments would be encouraged to develop national and sectoral interpretations of the global IUCN protected area guidelines.

However, it has become evident that there are uncertainties about how to apply the IUCN system in relation to some aspects of forest protection. Governments have found indicated difficulties in reporting to the compilation of the 1997 UN list (UN, 1998). There has also been inconsistency in the way countries distinguished between the protection categories, and irregularities have been found in the data on protected forests reported to WCMC (1997 list) and the FAO Forest Resources Assessment 2000 (Phillips, 1999).

A proposal to develop additional guidance to supplement the 1994 IUCN Protected Areas Management Categories Guidelines was presented by the Chair of the WCPA, Adrian Phillips, at the IFF expert meeting on protected forest areas in Puerto Rico, 1999. It aims to assist countries in the way they interpret the IUCN guidelines and relate them to protected forest areas.

### **Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessment 2000**

Activities resulting from the sessions of the Working Group '*Biodiversity, Protected Areas and Related Issues*' of the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forest in Europe have been an open dialogue with the UN-ECE Timber Committee. The aim of the co-operation was to improve the information base on protected areas at the international scale. In the process of its Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessment 2000 (TBFRA, 2000), the UN-ECE Timber Committee prepared an enquiry on PFAs in late 1999. The TBFRA correspondents in close contact with the

participants of the EU COST E4 Action, were asked to assist in the complex, but important task of improving the comparability of international data on PFAs. This work was lead by Dr. Stein Tomter and the first results are expected during the second half of 2000.

### **COST Action E4 “Forest Reserves Research Network”**

The activities and outcomes of the *EU COST Action E4 ‘Forest Reserves Research Network’* provide substantial background to this proposed COST Action. The objective of COST E4 was to create a European network of forest reserves to collect information on on-going research activities, to unify research methodologies, and to have access to a central databank for the exchange of research results (Parviainen *et al.*, 2000). One of the main outputs of the COST E4 was the publication of country reports on *‘Research in Forest Reserves and Natural Forest in European Countries’* (Parviainen *et al.*, 1999). This publication was a first attempt to collect basic information on European PFA. The main focus of COST E4 was on the *strictly-protected forest category*, as defined by the degree of strictness in allowing management measures, with other categories of forest protection being subsidiary. The COST Action E4 established a network of experts and institutes that can serve as a basis for addressing the complex issue of PFAs in Europe. ([http://www.efi.fi/Database\\_Gateway/FRRN/](http://www.efi.fi/Database_Gateway/FRRN/))

## **B. Objectives and benefits**

The main objective of the Action is:

**to describe, analyse, and harmonise the wide-range of Protected Forest Area categories used in European countries within the context of existing international systems of protected areas.**

This approach will make reporting of information on PFAs from national sources to international organisations more transparent. The Action will *enhance the quality and clarity* of information on PFAs at both the national and the European level. The results will allow comparison of data and information on PFAs and serve as basis for international data collection. Such efforts will be direct response to the expressed needs of on-going international processes, such as the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe.

The Action will be achieved by (1) compiling information on the historical background and restrictions applied to different national PFA classifications; (2) analysing feasible options for the integration of data collected by national forest inventories; and (3) seeking the best options for the harmonisation of national data and definitions on PFAs within the context of international data collection processes. The Action will also attempt a tentative description and quantification of the total economic value of PFAs.

To maximise the outputs of the Action, international organisations and national experts involved in forest protection and inventories need to closely co-operate. This approach will permit reliable compilation and dissemination of data on PFAs, and encourage relevant dialogue at the national and international level. Therefore it is proposed that the Action will involve international agencies, e.g. UN-ECE Timber Committee, IUCN, IUCN’s WCPA, UNEP-WCMC, DG Environment, and Natura 2000 Network.

## Dissemination

The dissemination element focuses on compiling, synthesising and exchanging information on PFAs. Dissemination will take place through Working Group meetings, seminars and publications. In addition, the presentation of results at conferences, including the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe in Vienna, likely to take place in 2003, will provide important channels to further the progress and achievements.

## The benefits of the action

The action will deliver a comprehensive overview of European PFAs. This will include (1) an account of their historical background, legal status, management and a tentative description of their total economic value, (2) an analysis of PFA status, (3) a comparison of PFA-definitions and data collection processes, and (4) proposals on the inclusion of PFA-data collection into national forest inventories.

An improved understanding of the different classification systems used at the national and sub-national level will improve the quality of the understanding, products, and statistics at the European level. The Action will focus clearly on the need for clear and unambiguous information to the TBFR process, the initiatives of a European Forest Information and Communication System (EFICS, 1997) and the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe of which PFAs are important areas of interest. The Action will contribute to the planning of protected forest area networks and collation of information on PFAs.

This will provide an unparalleled knowledge base, act as a basis for comparison between European countries, and be of benefit in policy-making by the European Union and to the broader scientific and decision-making community. A clear and unique benefit of this proposal is the level and extent of the co-operation envisaged.

Few COST Actions in the field of forestry have targeted such a broad band of expertise and organisations. That the issues raised by the various international forums are addressed in this Action is a clear and obvious benefit from both scientific and political viewpoints. A benefit emerges from the fact that, urgent as these issues are, and as far as the authors of this proposal are aware, have not, are not, nor will not, be undertaken by any of the alternative initiatives within the Fifth Framework Programme or indeed by any other forum. Hence the value and importance of this proposal as a foundation for the improvement of European forest protection.

## C. Scientific programmes

The scientific programme will cover PFA definitions, national classifications and their historical and legal background, analysis of options for the integration of data collected in national forest inventory programmes, and harmonisation of definitions and reporting processes to international sources. The Action intends to establish a clearinghouse mechanism for PFAs in Europe. The work, which is detailed below, is divided into three, closely linked activities, the first of which can be further sub-divided.

### Scientific area 1. Description and analysis of protected forest areas – national dimension

The main aim of this scientific area is to gather information on PFAs in European countries and in a format relevant for scientific areas 2 and 3. The main activities will be the description of the

historical background of national PFA-classification systems, the collection of national PFA-definitions, the legal status of PFAs and their management, the compilation of basic data of PFAs, and reporting procedures. The tasks of this scientific area are divided into two sub-areas, the first being the compilation of information and the second scientific comparison.

The scientific sub-area 1A "Background Information" will concentrate on:

*Description of the historical background which has led to the development of particular national PFA-networks, including the listing of organisations involved with PFAs, their roles and legal links between those different institutes, departments and ministries, and procedure for designating new protected areas*  
*Collection of national information on definitions for all PFA-categories (including protection forests)*

The scientific sub-area 1B "Protected Forest Area Analysis" will concentrate on:

*Clarification of the concept of naturalness as used for forest protection*  
*Analysis of possibilities of linking PFAs to national forest inventory data collection processes*  
*Investigation of the use and meaning of the terms 'protected', 'unprotected', 'voluntary' and 'protection' to improve the general understanding of PFAs and their classification in different countries.*  
*Compilation of basic statistical data of PFAs using existing information sources and research reports*  
*Tentative description of PFAs various outputs according their total economic value*

## **Scientific area 2. Harmonisation and improvement of information on protected forest areas - international dimension**

The principal aim of this scientific area is to enhance the quality and clarity of information on PFAs at the European level. The work will be implemented in close association with the tasks and findings of scientific area 1, and will focus on:

*Clarifying and presenting options to harmonise 'Protected Forest Area' terms in collaboration with the IUCN international system of protected area management categories*  
*Analysing the current procedure for reporting to international organisations and especially the procedures for PFAs, and identification of problem areas when using international classification systems.*  
*Clarifying the use of the UN-ECE Timber Committee "Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessment (TBFRA)" classification of 'forest' and 'other wooded land' with focus on protected forest areas.*

## **Scientific area 3. Protected forest area - clearing house mechanism**

The description of the Action, its progress, and the preparation and presentation of the results to the user community is of major importance. The World Wide Web allows making information available in a cost-effective and pertinent fashion. Internet technology also allows for the production of interactive databases and discussion forums, which can be made open or closed to public use. A project website will be an essential communication, management and dissemination tool for the proposed Action. A WWW homepage would address the following:

*Development of a centralised, COST Action, WWW-site and interactive database on national categories of PFAs in Europe, including a comprehensive information source on international classification systems for Protected Areas. Such a centralised website compiling and disseminating information on PFAs could be regarded as a European Clearinghouse Mechanism on PFAs.*

*Discussion on the results of the Action and possibilities of providing comprehensive information on PFA-mapping using GIS based systems for various applications/purposes.*

*Collate the wide range of national and international organisations that are involved in PFAs into an accessible database, stating who is responsible for what type of PFA and/or what are their fields of expertise.*

## **D. Organisation and timetable**

### **Organisation**

The Action will be led by a Management Committee (MC), headed by an elected Chairperson, and with Working Group (WG) co-ordinators and representatives appointed by the signatory states of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The signatory states will identify the most relevant organisations/experts in their country. They may need to be selected from the wide range of organisations (e.g. Governmental Ministries for Environment, Countryside, Forestry, Agriculture and Nature Conservation, Regional and local Planning Authorities).

The MC will manage the Action in accordance with the existing COST regulations and establish its course of action in the first formal meeting. The MC will organise biannual meetings to monitor the progress of the COST Action.

Three Working groups are proposed. Each will elect a leader and they will assist the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson in ensuring that the groups' progress as stated in the MoU and to a high standard. The WG will hold separate meetings, once or twice per year, as agreed by the leaders. Wherever possible the MC, WG and other meetings associated with COST will be held at the same time and venue.

The following Working Groups for the Action proposal are proposed:

*WG 1. Description and analysis of European Protected Forest Areas*

*WG 2. Harmonisation and improvement of information on European Protected Forest Areas*

*WG 3. A clearing house mechanism for European Protected Forest Areas*

The possibility of including a Masters or Doctorate Thesis will be explored, though this will depend on financial support from some or all participating countries. The scientist would assist by identifying, collecting, compiling and analysing relevant information. This would mean (1) that all participants would need to deliver necessary information according to an agreed timetable, (2) that the information can be made available for the meetings in a standardised format.

## Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM)

The Action would encourage the exchange of scientists between the participating research organisations and especially international institutions active in the field of PFAs through short-term scientific missions.

Not all experts in the field of PFAs may be able to attend the MC -and WG meetings. The possibility of Short-term Scientific Missions (STSM) could be utilised in this context. STSMs could stimulate the involvement of an extended number of experts to partake in the Action supplementing to its progress and outputs. This could be achieved e.g. through small, topic oriented workshops, supplementary papers and documents.

## Scientific Seminars

Two scientific seminars are planned. They will open a dialogue between appointed country representatives, international bodies dealing with mapping, compiling and disseminating statistics on PFAs, and international experts on protected areas. This dialogue and interaction will be of importance in the progress of the Action.

## Timetable

The Action will run over a period of four years. A preliminary project timetable and presentation of activities is shown in figure 1a and figure 1b. The preparation of a detailed schedule will be the subject of the first MC meeting.

## E. Economic dimension

In the final meeting of the COST Action E4 in November of 1999 the intention of submitting a COST Action on “Protected Forest Areas in Europe” was presented. The delegates of the countries listed below supported this initiative as for the importance of the issue of protected forest areas both at national and international scale. It was seen important to widen further the collaboration of European experts the field of protected forest areas. The list of potential participants from the named countries in the PROFOR activities, however, would differ considerably from the COST E4 participants due to the scope and aims of the proposed action. A list of contributors in preparing the proposal is attached as Annex 1.

Austria	Hungary	Slovak Republic
Belgium	Iceland	Slovenia
Czech Republic	Ireland	Spain
Denmark	Italy	Sweden
Finland	The Netherlands	Switzerland
France	Norway	United Kingdom
Germany	Poland	
Greece	Portugal	

## Costs

The costs of the Action are based on national estimates and take into account the co-ordination costs to be covered by the COST budget of the European Commission. The amount is based on 1999 values. The overall cost of the nationally funded research is approximately 7 million Euro or less than 2 million Euro per annum. This is based on the participation of all countries listed above but no others. Any departure will change the cost accordingly.

It is proposed that a limited amount of funds is made available for the overall co-ordination (Action Chairman) and the establishment and maintenance of the Internet Website. This will allow high quality results and guarantee the progress of the Action over the four-year period.

## **F. Dissemination of results**

The MC will seek appropriate dissemination mechanisms at the start of the Action. Figure 1a shows that the MC will organise two major seminars where experts from national and international organisations will be invited to contribute to the activities of the Action. It is planned that one of the seminars will be linked to the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Vienna 2003. The MC will organise one annual meeting and the Working Groups will hold 1-2 meetings per year (figure 1b).

The dissemination of results to related conferences will be encouraged. Individual Working Groups will be encouraged to submit results to scientific journals and reviews

The promotion of the value of forests will be achieved through press releases addressed towards forest policy discussions e.g. the European forest forum. Results from the Action may serve as a base for the declaration of forest goods (certification).

Fig. 1a. Organisation and timetable

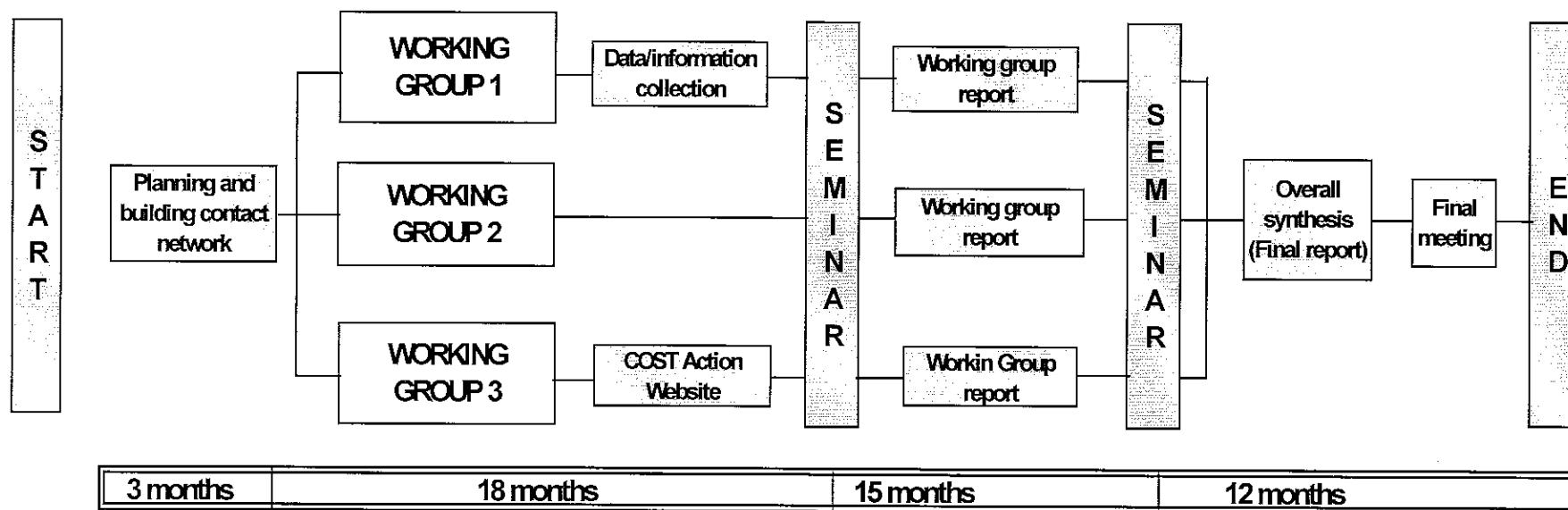


Fig. 1b. Number and type of meetings during the running time of the project

Duration	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
MC meetings	2	2	2	2
WG meetings	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
Joint seminars/ conferences		1		1
Final meeting				1

In addition to the conventional means of dissemination, the outcomes from the Action will be made available through the Internet. A Website will be constructed including all relevant documentation of the Action, and this will act as a “clearinghouse mechanism” on PFAs in Europe. Scientific field visits to the most important protected forests in Europe will be organised within the annual meetings of the MC.

The MC will also maintain an active contact to the COST Forestry and Forest Products Technical Committee by:

- Attendance of the chairman or his representative at the meetings of the Forestry Sector Group
- Establishing close contact with the Technical Committee through its appointed liaison officer
- Submitting annual progress report to Forestry Sector Group
- Contributing to the COST Forestry and Forest products Technical Committee Activity report

## G. References and web links

### References

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### Links to relevant Internet websites

- 1) International Union for the Conservation of Nature  
<http://www.iucn.org/>
- 2) Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe  
<http://www.minconf-forests.net/>

- 3) COST Action E4 WebPages at the European Forest Institute  
[http://www.efi.fi/Database\\_Gateway/FRRN/](http://www.efi.fi/Database_Gateway/FRRN/)
- 4) Intergovernmental Process (Intergovernmental Panel of Forests, Intergovernmental Forum on Forests  
<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/forests.htm>
- 5) UNEP- World Conservation Monitoring Centre  
<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/>

## H. Appendices

### Annex 1. Proposal preparation

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