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Overview

In November 2013, 28 organisations from 11 countries (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom) began the European collaboration FP7 project **SIMWOOD (Sustainable Innovative Mobilisation of Wood)**.

This four-year project seeks to provide solutions on how to mobilise forest owners, promote collaborative forest management and ensure sustainable forest functions in order to mobilise the present unlocked wood resources in Europe.

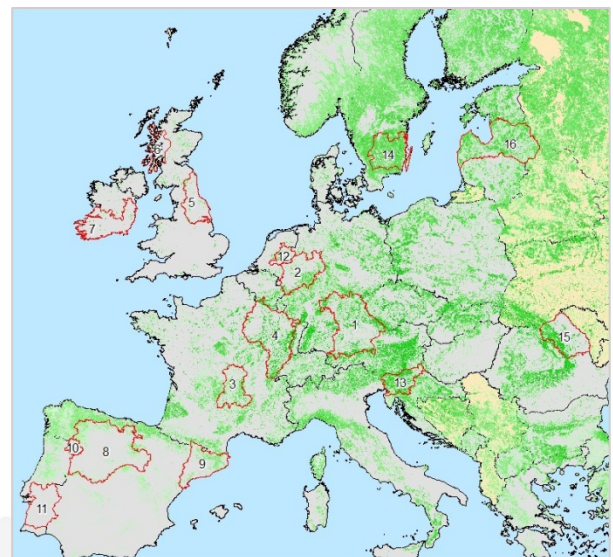


The SIMWOOD partners on a site visit in Northumberland, UK in February 2015. Photo: Irish Wood Producers

We work in **16 regions across Europe**, selected for their high relevance to Europe's wood mobilisation challenge. In each of our model regions, we've made a detailed analysis of the present situation, and the barriers and challenges for wood mobilisation which currently exist. Now we are working on identifying objectives, developing possible tailor-made solutions, and selecting some to be tested in a series of pilot projects.

In each region, we have a Regional Learning Laboratory (RLL) as an integral part of the research process. This is linked to existing initiatives in the region, and is collaborative: teaming up with regional stakeholders to obtain fresh findings on the region's specific status quo, chances and proposed solutions.

In this issue, we focus on our work in two regions: **Nordeste Transmontano** (Portugal) and **Castile and León** (Spain).



1. Bavaria, GER 2. North-Rhine Westphalia, GER 3. Auvergne, FRA 4. Grand-Est, FRA 5. Yorkshire & North East England, UK 6. Lochaber, UK 7. South Eastern Ireland, IRE 8. Castile and León, ESP 9. Catalonia, ESP 10. Nordeste, PRT 11. Alentejo, PRT 12. Overijssel & Gelderland, NLD 13. Slovenia, SVN 14. Småland, SWE 15. North-East Romania, RO 16. Latvia, LV



Focus on Nordeste Transmontano, Portugal

Background

Nordeste is located in northeastern Portugal, and has a total surface area of 527 705 ha. There has been a decrease in population in recent years, due to a reduction in births, and emigration to other countries or the Portuguese coast. Forests cover around 29% of the region, some 150 532 ha (National Forest Inventory, 2005-2006).

There are no public forests (state or local government) in this region, but around 11.5% of forests are in communal areas. Woodlands are often small and dispersed, with an average area of 0.7 ha. The number of forest owners in the region is unknown, but it is likely to be very large given the very small average size of property.



Pyrenean oak (Quercus pyrenaica) woodlands in the Serra da Nogueira. Photo: Carlos Aguiar

Forestry has no tradition in the area since most forests, particularly softwoods, were planted after the 1960's and the sector is not seen as particularly relevant, neither socially nor economically. The level of forest management is low, the only exceptions are sweet chestnut orchards/agroforestry systems.

Sweet chestnut systems are a significant source of income for land owners, based on the

commercialization of chestnuts (fruit) with a relatively high price and high national and international demand.



Mixed woodland in the Vinhais municipality. Photo: Carlos Aguiar

Other forest activities are related to firewood, an important source of energy (for example, more than 45% of households in Bragança use firewood for heating) and with the collection and commercialization of wild mushrooms.

SIMWOOD's work in the region

This involves a number of Regional Learning Laboratory initiatives, including a Regional Forest Council, informal groups of experts, and a community of owners and users involved in forest decision making.

These initiatives are supporting the development of regional focus studies and a pilot project. The regional focus studies look at:

- the forestry context
- forest logistics
- tools for growth modelling
- forest owners and the role of forest associations
- forest inventory
- analysing trade-offs in forest usage

The **Nordeste Regional Forest Council** gathers together individuals representing the major interest groups related to the forest sector in the region: chestnut producers, forest administration, forest associations, municipalities, forestry research, environmental NGOs and the forest tourism sector. The aim of the Council is to support forest mobilisation and to enhance the role of forestry in local development, and in particular subsectors of activity such as energy, manufacturing industry, and services.

The Council met for the first time in April 2015 (it will meet once a year, on average).



Photos: Fernando Pérez-Rodríguez

Participants were able to learn about and contribute to SIMWOOD's workflow and the plans for regional focus studies and pilot projects. They were able to contribute to the identification of obstacles and opportunities for the sector from their perspectives, and, more importantly, to indicate possible solutions for some of the constraints.

Developing practical tools

Informal groups of experts from the fields of forestry, environmental sciences and social sciences will support several of the practical tools under development by the local team, as and when needed. In particular, it's planned that they will help with the development of software, called 'AppTitude', which looks at the suitability of the landscape for different forest uses.

The regional team has already finished an application to calculate distances, fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions in truck transportation; and is currently working on an

application for forest management. This is a practical application which will allow the estimation of stand growth and production according to particular management schemes, giving you total wood removed (by size class) and value, and the structure of the remaining stand.

Pilot project

The Nordeste Pilot Project involves the establishment of a Decision Support System in the ZIF (Zona de Intervenção Florestal) of Lomba, to integrate stakeholders' perspectives and willingness into forest management. This Decision Support System (DSS) takes into account all possible factors of the complex forest systems and their relationship with the social, economic and environmental domains.

It aims at getting the highest wood mobilisation in the best circumstances, keeping a sustainable balance among ecosystem services, forest functions and wood and non-wood forest products. Work will start on this in mid-2015, and as part of this a Pilot Project Forest Owners Community will be created.

Who to contact in the region

The SIMWOOD local team includes staff from the Instituto Politécnico de Bragança and ARBOREA (Associação Agro-Florestal e Ambiental da Terra Fria Transmontana).

To get involved in SIMWOOD's activities, please contact:

João Azevedo (jazevedo@ipb.pt)

Sara Sarmento (sara.arborea@gmail.com)

Focus on Castile and León, Spain

Background

Castile and León is the largest autonomous region of Spain, with a total surface area of 94,226 km² (INE, 2014). With 2.5 million inhabitants, it is one of the less densely populated regions in Europe.

Forests and other wooded areas cover around 4.8 million hectares (about 51% of the total surface area). During the past 20 years, the forest area has increased by 41%, due to natural regeneration in less pressed grazing areas, and afforestation programmes.

The main tree species are broadleaved (*Quercus ilex* L. and *Quercus pyrenaica* Willd), and conifers (*Pinus pinaster* Ait. and *Pinus sylvestris* L.).

Ownership of forest or wooded land

State/Regional Administration	2.4%
Municipalities	47.9%
Private owners	49.7%

Private forest holdings are small and fragmented, mostly held by private individuals, while public forests are mainly over 100 ha.

In terms of growing stock, this is the most important region in Spain with 153.7 M m³. In the past five years, the average annual felling of wood and firewood was 1.4 M m³. The extraction rate in the region's forests (balance between felling and increment) is about 20%.

SIMWOOD's work in the region

Within the Castile and León region, the SIMWOOD project has been focusing on two very different territories, looking at the barriers and opportunities for mobilisation of wood. One is the area of **Urbion Model Forest**, in the provinces of Burgos and Soria, in the east of the region, and another is the "**Páramos y Valles**" in Palencia, in the north-central area of the region.

Urbion is a forest area with a long history of timber harvesting and a very developed timber

industry, but with difficulties in maintaining the economic activity of traditional enterprises. The Páramos y Valles area has a relatively young forest and recently began to exploit its resources.



Map of location of study areas in Castilla y León region

We carried out a stakeholder analysis in each area to identify key stakeholders and analyse their roles and responsibilities in the mobilisation of wood. We then held the first two meetings of our Regional Learning Laboratory to interact with stakeholders and understand their perspectives on each area's situation, obstacles and potential solutions (including measures or suggestions to address social, economic, technical, political and ecological issues).

Regional Learning Labs

We had the first Regional Learning Lab - an "analysis day" - in Urbion Model Forest on 10 March at the Casa de la Madera in the province of Burgos, and another in Páramos y Valles on 24 March in Saldaña in the province of Palencia.

Participants included representatives of public organizations, private companies and individuals who deal with forest management, rural development, environmental conservation and harvesting activities on forest resources. The discussions enabled the project to step from the regional level to the local reality, and find out what was happening on the ground.

Urbion Model Forest

There are strong roots and involvement of the surrounding communities with forests, this can play for but often against various forestry activities (i.e, early thinning in pinewoods, use of machinery), especially when there is lack of knowledge, poorly defined competitions and lack of consensus among different stakeholders.



Photo: Pilar Valbuena

The forest has high potential for generation of direct and indirect benefits such as timber (with various types of quality), fuelwood, mushrooms, tourism, hunting, jobs, etc. but it is necessary to provide facilities and create appropriate spaces to achieve better use of this resource.

Laws, regulations and ordinances should be better adapted to the current local situation of the forest sector, as they often prove to be excessive and in other cases correspond to royal mandates (often obsolete) hampering harvesting processes, disposal of property, etc.

Páramos y Valles

Some conditions in the area favour the use and/or management of the forest such as few slopes and wide surface, as well as easy access and proximity to towns and production centres.

There is a lack of adequate technical support in both qualifications and numbers for forest management.

Given the lack of involvement of local people with the forest, it is important to promote awareness (from schools to industry) regarding

the role of forests for local development.



Photo: Pilar Valbuena

In both areas, stakeholders pointed out the importance of environmental education and better communication, as well as revaluation and the potential of the forest to provide various benefits. There is a need for coordinated sustainable management.

Pilot projects

We envisage two pilot projects for Castile and León. One concentrates on thinning operations in mixed stands (*Pinus sylvestris* and *Quercus pyrenaica*) to obtain knowledge on the impact of thinning in mixed forests and to transfer the results to operational forestry. The second focuses on enhancing wood mobilisation in young pine forests by trying to convert non-commercial silvicultural operations (pre-commercial thinnings) into commercial thinnings.

A study will also be conducted by the end of 2015, consisting of a social experiment regarding tree selection during thinning operations and the impact of tree selection criteria on timber production and quality.

Who to contact in the region

The SIMWOOD local team includes staff from the Universidad de Valladolid.

To get involved in SIMWOOD's activities, please contact:

Felipe Bravo (fbravo@pvs.uva.es)

Fátima Cruz (fcruz@psi.uva.es)

The Forestry Sector Mobilisation Programme of Castilla y León, 2014-2022 (Spain)

Castilla y León is one of the largest autonomous regions in the UE context, and its forestry sector is one of the most important in Spain. This relevance is remarkable in several items: as ecological value, macroeconomic magnitudes, different stakeholders balance, productive area, variety of wood and non-wood products, and current and potential production. The main production is related to coniferous and poplar woods (mainly for building, furniture and packaging industries), pine nuts, rosin and mushrooms.

The Forest Plan of Castilla y León, approved in 2002, already indicated the need for mobilizing forest resources, but it did not specify a comprehensive programme of detailed actions.

Globalization and economic depression (2010-2014) have impacted on the Spanish economy and particularly on the forestry sector; it affected it in terms of shortage of resources, business difficulties and changes in the current management model. Moved by the need to fight against recession and explore new ways to revitalize the socioeconomic tissue and industrial fabric, the Regional Government of Castilla y León has elaborated and approved in 2014 a mobilisation programme for the entire forestry sector. This programme puts forward an instrument to stimulate employment and economic growth and the forest management in the new economic context. Simultaneously, forestry was declared to be one of three strategic sectors in the long-term to contribute firmly to the socioeconomic development of the region.

The programme implemented a process of stakeholder participation that aims to detect the changes or measures that are required, and its viability from the point of view of the beneficiaries and from the decision-making levels. The main objective is to create employment in the region, both in forestry rural

areas as in the primary and secondary processing industry.

Ten resource areas were detected to be analyzed in terms of current and potential production, problems and bottlenecks for its development, and attempts to solve them. These subsectors are: timber extraction, pine wood and sewing industry, bioenergy, poplar wood, high quality hardwoods, carpentry and furniture industry, pine nut, chestnut, rosin gums, and mushrooms. Five strategic measures were identified in order to solve the main structural limitations of each subsector, and other five general measures were pointed out to strengthen the whole sector. As a result, 55 measures involving administrative agreements were detailed for the period 2014-2022.

Javier Ezquerro Boticario, Regional Government of Castilla y León

>> Download the complete document:

[Programa de Movilización de Recursos Forestales 2014-2022](#)

Regional news

SIMWOOD workshop on wood mobilisation

A SIMWOOD workshop on forest cooperatives was organised by EFI's Atlantic European Regional Office (EFIATLANTIC) on 6 May in Waterford, Ireland, in collaboration with Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT).

The workshop on wood mobilisation explored different cooperative systems in Europe - with a special focus on Ireland - revealing the diversity of these systems, and giving an overview of the overall impact of cooperatives in France.

After a general introduction to the SIMWOOD project (Margot Régolini, EFIATLANTIC), representatives from different organisations involved in wood mobilisation of private forest owners presented the context of their region and their activities.



Photo: EFIATLANTIC

These included:

- Wood mobilisation by forest owners in the Basque Country (Leire Salaberria, USSE and Alejandro Cantero, HAZI)
- Forest cooperation initiatives in Galicia (Ramón Reimunde, PROMAGAL)
- A focus on cooperative groups in France (Cyrille Pupin, Forêts et Bois de l'Est and Gaylord Doirat, Alliance)

- Cooperatives and wood mobilisation in Ireland (Marina Conway, Western Forestry Co-operative Society, Alex Kelly, Irish Wood Producers Ltd and Michael Ryan, Limerick and Tipperary Woodland Owners Ltd)

Find out more about the event on the SIMWOOD website:

>>[Read the full event report](#)

>>[Download the presentations from the event](#)

>>[Download the programme](#)

New report: Mobilising Ireland's forest resource



COFORD has published a report on wood mobilisation in Ireland. The recommendations are at a national level, looking at issues like streamlining the bureaucracy around forest road entrances, technical standards for roads, transparency in timber prices, transport technology to protect poor public roads, forest owner advice/knowledge.

SIMWOOD is referenced in the report; and the issues the report addresses were reflected in the SE Ireland Regional Learning Lab meeting held in autumn 2014.

>>[Download the report: Mobilising Ireland's forest resource](#)

Swedish seminar focuses on fuels in the energy sector

Linnaeus University and Energikontor Sydost organised a regional seminar in Växjö in April 2015 on fuels in the energy sector. The seminar had a special focus on burning household waste versus bioenergy, as waste was identified as one

significant barrier for increased mobilisation of biomass.



Photo: ESS

The event was attended by around 85 people, representing different parts of the regional value chain for bioenergy.

>> [Download the presentations from the event](#)

>> [Download the programme](#)

SIMWOOD presented at ExpoFlorestal

ForestFin presented the SIMWOOD project at ExpoFlorestal 2015, in Albergaria-a-Velha, Portugal in May. The event is the biggest forest exhibition in Portugal and Spain.

Most discussions related to wood mobilisation in general in Portugal. The concerns of forest owners were related to the small dimensions of properties, the lack of market for some species and the risks associated with forests in Portugal (fire and diseases).

>> [Read more about the event](#)

>> [Download the programme](#)

Regional events

16-17 October, KWF-Focus Days 2015

Verden, Niedersachsen, Germany

Small scale forestry – What to do? Sustainable management in small forest land.

A 'bring your boots conference', giving practical demonstrations and neutral assistance for the management of small forest areas.

>> [Download more information](#)

Who to contact for more information

If you would like to become involved in our Regional Learning Labs, please contact the coordinator for your region. You can find them on the SIMWOOD website: www.simwood-project.eu/contacts.html

Project coordinator: Roland Schreiber
Bavarian State Institute of Forestry (LWF)
Email: Roland.Schreiber@lwf.bayern.de

Project manager: Astrid Oelsner
Bavarian Research Alliance (BayFOR)
Email: simwood@bayfor.org