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Editor's note

Since its inception, the European Union has sought to reduce disparities in development levels within and throughout its regions.

Rural development is one of the main focuses of the [EU2020 Strategy](#) aiming at balancing out territorial development in low density rural areas by promoting sustainable management of natural resources, the improvement of quality of life while simultaneously encouraging competitiveness, innovation and the diversification of traditional economic activities such as agriculture and forestry.

In view of an aging population and the recent socio-economic transformations caused by the contraction of European economies, the rural environment has to be regarded as increasingly promising and it is therefore necessary to convey a message of these areas being engines for opportunities and providers of quality of life. These are in fact, the areas that harbour one of Europe's most important renewable resources: Forests.

Over one third of the EU territory is covered by forests and other wooded land. When thinking about forests, the thought must go beyond the notion of land occupied by trees. Forests are to be conceived as vital ecosystems -the dynamic relations and combinations and of all organisms in and with their environment- able to provide a wide range of goods and services upon which not only nature *per se*, but also economies and communities depend and thrive on.

Goods from forests include not only timber as a direct resource to be transformed into products, but food, water fuel, game and honey as well; services comprise water supply and storage, soil formation, carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, pollination and areas for spiritual enrichment. The delivery of these goods and services implies a complex web of relations, that closely links the state of biodiversity in these ecosystems with the human capacity for sustainably extracting those goods and reaping the benefits from the environmental services.

Forest- IN thus focuses on an important part of this web: **the people who take care** of European forests.

Millions of forest smallholders make up the backbone of rural economies across Europe playing an important role in responding to the challenges the continent is currently facing, such as climate change and the mitigation of its impacts, halting biodiversity loss and contributing



to the greening of the economy. Nevertheless, various socio-economic, demographic and policy trends limit their capacity to adapt to a more efficient way to sustainably exploit forest resources.

Funded by ERASMUS+, FOREST-IN project came about through the engagement of academia (University of Aveiro), with business (Unimadeiras, FSC® and PEFC™) and non-profit organisations (Asociación Forestal de Galicia, Fundación Cesefor and Association Forêt Modèle de Provence). It seeks to find common ground to unite the various forest agents in Portugal, Spain and France. These are countries that, in general, face similar forest problems that undermine Sustainable Forest Management. It is a capacity-building project that strives to overcome constraints associated with forest management based on

the lack of training (not just technical) of those at the forefront of forest management, valorisation and protection.



The project, by means of forest and forestry education for adults aims to improve the intervention capacity of all those concerned by forests: from small forest owners and technicians to all relevant decision makers.

Forest-IN relies heavily on a practical and knowledge transfer component consisting of workshops and international technical visits, tutorials and interactive IT resources to support critical thinking in forest management. The pedagogical techniques adopted are innovative and adapted to the target audience, being based on a horizontal and participatory learning model.

The project already involved hundreds of direct participants in workshops and technical visits in the central region of Portugal, north of Spain and southern France. Around those regions, it was possible for small owners and technical experts to visit reference forest areas, while putting them in touch with different ways of managing, valuing, protecting and safeguarding the forest, and also while sharing the good practices in sustainable forest management employed therein. The forest realities of these territories can also be sharply contrasted, seeking to instil in the participants the need to critically analyse their own context as to broaden the scale of action through associative practices as well as the need to protect values that do not have immediate economic translation.

Once the project is completed, the development and replication of new educational and training strategies with multiplier effects, based on local action, is expected to result in ensuring that the social, environmental and economic benefits of the forest reach all and that the contribution to the valorisation of rural areas in Europe and European forests is effectively a reality.

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Recent meetings: FOREST-IN with French forest private owners at the Provence Model Forest

The Provence Model Forest has hosted the last event to bring together the partners of the FOREST-IN project at the beginning of June, where they held the 5th follow-up project meeting.

The host partner, Provence Model Forest Association, also organized the fourth event that FOREST-IN celebrates open to the public (multiplier event), to show participants -from theory to practice- the existing modes of forest management for the small properties of Provence. Beyond this specific objective, the event aimed to promote the sustainable and multifunctional management of the forest among a wider public (professionals, non-professional forest users, researchers, professors, students, etc.).

During this multiplier event, several complementary activities were also carried out (colloquium, six visits to forest properties and a round table). The program of this multiplier event (4th, 5th, 6th June) is available (in French) [here](#).



These entities have also collaborated in the multiplier event 'Tournée forestière de la Forêt Modèle de Provence: Regional Center for Forest Ownership, Regional Union of Private Foresters Syndicates, Cooperative Provence Forest, The Free Trade Union Association of Forest Management of the Suberaie Varoise.

Forests are not just trees and clean air: forests are also the people who manage and care for them

The June meeting marks one of the central milestones of the project, because we've shown a large part of the results achieved through the collaborative work of FOREST-IN partners.

On the other hand, the purpose of sharing and promoting good practices and forestry education through this project has been materialized on [three previous multiplier events](#). The first of them was the *International Forum 'Healthy forest, benefits for all'*, at the Centro de Operações e Técnicas Florestais (COTF), in Lousã, Portugal, organized by the University of Aveiro.

More than 120 people came to this forum, an event with an important support from the Portuguese government. The State Secretary for Forests, Eng. Amândio Torres, from Ministry of Agriculture, was at the opening panel of this technical event in were addressed the main problems of forest management in some territories of the partner countries: predominance of private forest property with very small areas, and in many of the cases under the management of smallholders without technical training.

The forum (carried out on March 2017) was useful to gather information about the needs and concerns of these forest owners in their day to day, and explain some of the actions that the FOREST-IN project will undertake to help them make decisions for sustainable forest management.



BIOFORUM: a multiplier event to talk about sustainable forest management, and the challenges and opportunities of the Portuguese forests

Last autumn we met again in Albergaria-a-Velha, Portugal and held the multiplier event as well as the BIOFORUM, about sustainable forest management and the challenges and opportunities of this sector in Portugal. The approached new proposals -and review of traditional practices- was necessary after the tragic forest fires in Portugal last summer that claimed over a hundred human lives.



At BIOFORUM were proposed not only alternatives and scenarios for the future, but also experiences on research, management, environmental education and awareness, multifunctional uses of forests and use of non-wood forest products, among other aspects.

This event was aimed at all publics and entities interested in valorizing and safeguarding forest areas, presenting a program dedicated to both (emerging, unusual, traditional) alternatives for exploring the territory and resources and creating a forest culture for all.



Galicia (Spain) hosted the first 'get-in-touch' meeting in 2018



More than fifty professionals related to the forestry sector (smallholders, forests managers, technicians, associations) met in Galicia and took part last January in a new meeting of FOREST-IN. On this occasion Galicia Forestry Association hosted the multiplier event.

Under the title *From theory to practice: Hands on sustainable forest management*, a broad program of activities was carried out to show the forestry reality of that Community and its industries associated, including meetings with other owners of private forests, producers of quality timber, entrepreneurs of forestry and timber companies, and representatives of associations that ensure the conservation of natural heritage, among other agents of the sector.

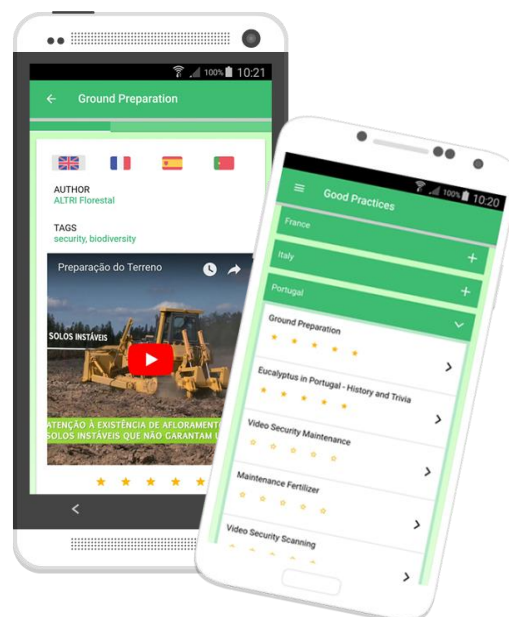


FOREST-IN action: some of our outcomes

FOREST-IN App: a new approach to forest management

We have developed a mobile application -available soon for free for Android and IOS operating systems- with which we intend to help in the application of good practices to private forest owners in the sustainable management of their forest.

The main functionality of this app is a service of short-video tutorials, in different languages, which represent a map of small training pills for any private owner in the countries represented in the project (France, Portugal and Spain). The service is also available for consultation through the project website (<http://www.forest-in.eu>), and will accept in the future any training proposal that a private forest owner wants to suggest.



We've also collaborated with... / Special thanks to...

Vacaloura Project (Conservation of Nature and Environmental Education); Associação BioLiving; Auranca Branca, Município de Albergaria-a-Velha; Centro de Operações e Técnicas Florestais (COTF); l'Observatoire de la Forêt Méditerranéenne; Associação Cultural e Recreativa Projecto Jovem de Fermentelos; BioLousada 2018; II Feira Nacional da Floresta at Pombal (Portugal); Regional Center for Forest Ownership, Regional Union of Private Foresters Syndicates, Cooperative Provence Forest, The Free Trade Union Association of Forest Management of the Suberaie Varoise.



About FOREST-IN Project

INovative and Educational INformation for the Sustainable FOREST Management by Smallholders (FOREST-IN) project aims to promote good practices and forestry education through the realization of workshops and international technical visits, tutorials and a mobile app aimed at helping the decision making process for sustainable forest management. All embedded in a concerted strategy involving the forestry community and the general public. The pedagogical techniques will be innovative and customized to the target audience, based on a horizontal and participatory learning model.

Who we are

FOREST-IN is an international strategic partnership for forest education. Funding was submitted to the Erasmus+ Programme, the main financial mechanism of the European Commission for Education. The coordinator of this project is the University of Aveiro (Portugal), with these partners: Cesefor Foundation (Spain), PEFC Spain, FSC International, Unimadeiras (Portugal), The Galicia Forestry Association (Spain) and the Provence Model Forest Association (France).

Keep in touch in...

