

# Extension, advice and knowledge exchange for private forestry: diversity and change across Europe



Anna Lawrence, Philippe Deuffic, Teppo Hujala, Liviu Nichiforel,  
Torgny Lind, Erik Wilhelmsson, Meelis Teder, Lelde Vilkriste,  
Krzysztof Jodlowski, Didier Marchal, Diana Feliciano, Ari Talkkari

# Research questions

- How are forestry advisory systems evolving in Europe and what affects that?
- What trends and patterns do we see and why?



# Why?

Advice, information, training, social learning, extension ...

1. is the link between (government and other) policy and practice, between objectives and behaviour
2. The advisory system consists of the actors, the services provided, and the links between them (including financial, power, cultural, legislative, organisational, access ... )
3. It therefore varies between political systems, and between cultures of forest owners

# Three organising ideas:

## 1. **knowledge stakeholders and processes as a system**

- Agricultural Knowledge and Information System – the information network that links individual farmer with peers and others who can influence behaviour (Pike 2008)
- ‘soft systems’ which acknowledge that in complex human interactions, clear-cut objectives and the unquestioned pursuit of these objectives are the exception rather than the norm (Checkland 2000)

## 2. **distinction between knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange**

- KE as multiple-path process with reciprocity and mutual benefits, maybe with multiple learning, but not necessarily recognition of the equitable value of the different forms of knowledge being exchanged (Fazey et al 2012)

## 3. **choice of instruments in forest policy**

- Sticks, carrots, sermons ... why and how? Need for policy evaluation and policy learning (Böcher 2012; Van Gossum et al 2010)

# Four stages in (agricultural) extension and knowledge systems (adapted from Schut 2014)

Approach	Time period	Scope and innovation flow
Technology transfer	1950s-1980s	Top-down, transfer and adoption of technology
Farming systems approach	1980s-90s	Top down – identify and alleviate farmer constraints
Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems	1990s-2000s	Bottom up – collaborate, integrate different types of knowledge, participatory research
Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems	2000-	Multi-directional – enhance system capacity to innovate

# Contrast with 'extension':

“Traditional forestry education and outreach activities [which] tend to focus on transfer-of-knowledge, often through workshops initiated and led by professionals to "teach" landowners about forest management and conservation.”

Ma et al. 2012

A meeting co-organized by the forest owners' club of Helsinki metropolitan area, with researcher participation. The participants are urban i.e. absentee owners. Finland.



Finnish state advisor presenting and facilitating meeting with urban absentee owners about using services over distance; an invited guest, a forest management service provider also a short talk and took part in group discussions

Forest planning meetings in France



Training with small scale forest owners on the advantages of forest owners association: Romania



Latvia: International seminar about management of private forests. How to get money from forest management - wood for energy

A group of female forest owners in Finland: one owner is presenting. With two state-funded forest advisors, one representing expertise on nature-oriented forest management; and a researcher / observer who trained the advisors to facilitate the group.



Exchange of knowledge among Latvian, Estonian and USA forest owners and forest experts about whether Latvia need changes in legislation related to management of riparian forests? (changes were done 😊 )



A group of rural owners from the same village are brainstorming and discussing about forest-ownership-related issues that might be topics for upcoming meetings; Finland

Peer-to-peer self-help networks: Belgium



Llais y Goedwig (the Welsh community woodland association) shares experiences and celebrates community forestry at its AGM



Professional  
advisors: Belgium

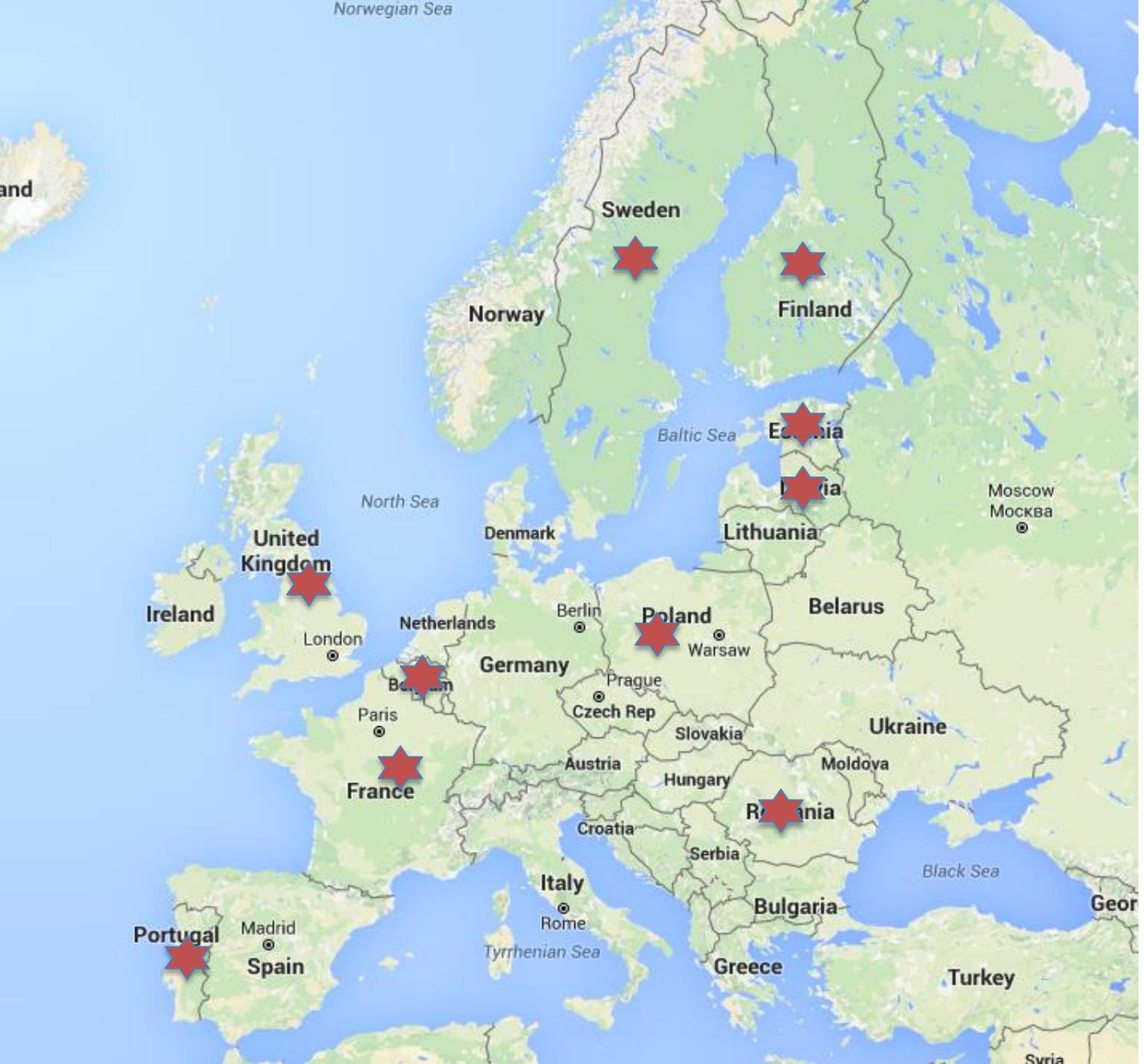


Professional knowledge exchange:  
the Continuous Cover Forestry Group  
meeting in Scotland

Participatory forest planning, UK



Mediation of conflict between owners and custodians of Natura 2000 site: Romania



# Method: steps in the process

1. define the **field of interest**
2. develop **questionnaire** to gather information about country-specific approaches and experiences
3. include questions about advisory processes and information sources, in **meetings** with forest owners and stakeholders
4. conduct **cross-cutting analysis** of information collected by questionnaire: each member of the group analyse 1 or 2 questions, summarising key themes across all countries
5. search for, discuss and share existing **models and literature** to explain our findings
6. select the most helpful factors to describe our systems [**'dimensions'** of the systems]
7. draw out key **themes**
8. summarise the implications for future research

# Dimension 1: owners

Current situation:

- High variation in “pre-knowledge” (from basic notion to quasi-expertise)
- High variation in primary and secondary socialisation (identity, community)

Trends:

- PFOs challenging prevailing management norms
- Some call for information on alternative management approaches; some find their own approaches by themselves

Example: In **France**, demand for basic courses has been stabilizing for the last 6 years (CNPF, 2012). This trend may indicate a transfer of new forest owners’ demands towards mid-high level or a disinterest in forestry education, possibly reflecting a total delegation of the forest management to experts and co-op foresters.



# Dimension 2: policy objectives

Current situation:

- Influencing PFOs' forestry practices/behaviour and values
- Increasing awareness of options and innovations
- Ensuring compliance with regulation
- Making PFOs more autonomous in their decision making

Trends:

- More emphasis on specific aims and targets rather than general awareness raising; e.g. profitability, biodiversity, afforestation, cooperation ...

Example: In **Finland**, specific programs, projects and campaigns have been launched to focus advising to generational transfers of private forest estates (with a further aim to increase wood supply and promote active and more diverse use of forests)



# Dimension 3: providers

Current situation:

- Government training bodies (generally centrally organised)
- Professional advisors and consultants (often very diverse and more or less specialized on specific topics), in some countries accredited by the State or within the organization
- Peer-to peer self-help networks (within forest owners' associations or in even less informal ways)

Trends:

- Weakening/disappearance of public advisory services, including in Eastern European countries where the forest advisory system becomes less and less centralized
- Emergence of private forest advisors and NGOs providing advice to PFOs

In **Romania**, most of the trainings for PFOs have been organized with the involvement of ENGOs (notably the regional office of WWF). They have focused on the need to respect the forestry regime and the long term benefits of forest uses compared with short term economic benefits.



# Dimension 4: approaches and tools

Current situation:

- Wide variety of communication channels:
  - Agent-based tools (e.g. education and training sessions)
  - Traditional publications (magazines, leaflets, journals...)
  - New communication and information tools (web, smartphones, e-newsletters, virtual communities)
- Cost-sharing varies between Government, forest owner & NGOs

Trends:

- From agent-based support to technical-devices support
- Reliance on owners' cooperatives, clubs and associations as platforms for peer-to-peer advice is increasing

In **UK (Scotland)**, the increase in community woodlands since the 1980s has led to and been supported by the Community Woodland Association, established in 2003. It provides advice, assistance and information; facilitates networking and training, and represents and promotes community woodlands to the wider world, particularly the Scottish Government.



# Discussion points: trends

- From policy tools imposing regulatory control to incentive and persuasion
- from top-down to inclusive, bottom up and horizontal communication (such as peer networks)
- from a silo approach to a joined-up approach
- from a focus on timber production to include ecosystem services such as biodiversity and recreation
- from public to private sector funding, and an expectation that owners will pay for services
- From personal to virtual

# Discussion points: overall trend

Diversification and liberalisation of information;  
open market for advice

- raises new questions of expertise, reliability and accuracy of information, and trust.
- owners have common-sense and practice-based knowledge, experience in their own
- advisory system need stability and skilful educated personnel
- Need to adapt to diversity of forest owner profiles in order to adapt advisory offer and demand (but providers of advice do not always know the owners and their objectives very well)

# Discussion points: the bigger picture

## Patterns of variation:

- no consistent pattern that matches any existing geopolitical classification of Europe (including MCPFE)
- tendency for post-socialist countries to have a stronger regulatory approach and focus on accreditation / qualification of advisors
- tendency for harvesting companies to provide advice to owners in the Nordic/Baltic states

## Need for evaluation:

- low proportion of forest owners attend forestry education programmes
- forest owner perspective would increase the chance for success





# Some final reflections

- “Past experiences clearly show that importing standardized models of extension to a new context is not a promising strategy, even when the imported models are viewed as ‘best practice.’” Birner et al 2006
- current approaches to knowledge exchange ignore the complexity of translating different types of knowledge and the constraints (Hulme 2014)
- The notion of ‘expertise’ can be threatened by political change and / or by the idealisation of knowledge exchange (e.g. Lawrence 2009)

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# Dimension 3 Trends and patterns among providers

	Topical focus	Trend	Geographical focus
Government services	Compliance Incentives	↓	Throughout Stronger in former-socialist Europe
Forest owner associations	Economic	↑	Everywhere except NW Europe?
Forest management companies	Economic Paid services	↑	Widespread in N and W Increasing (but more foreign owned) in S and E
Forest contractors / harvesters	Harvesting	?	?more in Nordic states?
NGOs	Environmental	↑	More in W Europe?
Professional associations	Adaptation	?	? (significant in UK)

# Dimension 3 Diversification of providers' roles

	Admin / approval / control	Information (descriptive)	Guidance (normative)
regulation	✓	✓	
incentives	✓	✓✓✓ ✓✓	✓✓
advice		✓✓✓ ✓✓	✓✓

✓ ...public sector

✓... NGOs

✓... private sector

✓ ... forest owners associations

✓ ... universities / research