

EU Seventh framework programme – €54 billion for research

The EU seventh Framework Program for Research and Technical Development (FP7) opened for research proposals on 22 December 2006. In the first run, there are calls for some 40 projects which could suit the forestry sector. Most of them need to be submitted by May 2007 or later, but the deadline for some is as early as March. So now is the time to act for those who want to establish a consortium and submit a project application.

– Never before has the forest-based sector had so many options as in FP7, says Gunilla Rodfors at Skogforsk. She is contact person for Swedish forestry in the Swedish Support Office for Forest-based Sector EU-Research (see adjoining article).

– The forest-based sector has raised its profile, to a large extent, through the Forest-based sector Technology Platform. The platform is a valuable mechanism for the entire forest-based industry to communicate with the EU, she says.

Many themes for forests

– FP7 has ten themes. The two most relevant to the forestry sector are Themes 2 (Food, agriculture and biotechnology) and 6 (Environment), says Gunilla Rodfors. However, several other themes may be relevant for some forest organisations.

Each theme includes many sub-themes. A researcher who has an idea and is looking for suitable subthemes in the programme may easily become overwhelmed by the wide range of options and large amounts of informa-



Gunilla Rodfors. Photo: Nils Jerling

tion. This is where national support centers may be of help.

Seven year duration

The duration of the new framework programme is seven years, from 2007 to 2013. The previous programmes, in contrast, were four years long. However, individual projects within FP7 will still usually be expected to last for 3–4 years.

– There will be new opportunities for those who don't make it in the first call, says Gunilla Rodfors.

Smaller projects welcome

– There is a shift towards more, and smaller, projects in FP7, Gunilla continues. Large projects, such as EFORWOOD, have several advantages, such as coverage of many aspects and the involvement of many organisations working towards a common goal. On the other hand, such large projects (EFORWOOD has 38 partners) are difficult to administer.



Support office helps forest industry to find the way to Brussels

– A researcher should not have to reinvent the wheel. The administration involved in EU research project applications is heavy, and there are many pitfalls in the application process. However, it is possible to smooth the process and to increase the chance of a successful result, says Gunilla Rodfors at the new Swedish Support Office for Forest-based Sector EU-Research.

The office opened in July 2006 as the result of an initiative by the forest industry and various institutes in the forest-based sector (STFI-Packforsk, Värmeforsk, SP Trätekt and Skogforsk). The state agency VINNOVA is supporting the office.

The office will provide organisations and researchers in the forest-based sector in Sweden with help and information about EU-research. We can assist in all phases of the project process, she continues. From searching relevant subthemes, to finding partners, to the negotiation and signing of the contract with the EU and also with advice and help during the life of the project. The support will mostly be free of charge.

More information:

www.fbsresearchsupport.se

A joint window on the internet for Nordic–Baltic forest research

– We should stop talking about knowledge transfer and instead start to transfer knowledge. We have a mission to tell the public about research results, says Ari Turunen, head of communication at Metla. He and his colleagues at the Nordic and Baltic institutes will soon launch a new project that will enhance communication from researchers to the public and policy-makers.

SNS has provided a grant for a pilot project with the goal of reinforcing and focusing communications regarding or originating from Nordic/Baltic forest research to relevant target groups. A new website, a newsletter and more robust networking will be the cornerstones of the project, which is being coordinated by the Nordic-Baltic Forum for communicators.

In a contract with the Nordic Council of Ministers, SNS has committed itself to ensuring that the results from Nordic research projects are published in internationally recognised journals and communi-

cated to relevant target groups within forestry, the forest industry and society in general.

The present SNS website has had a low profile to date, being focused on SNS's own activities. With the new project, this website will be revised and updated. The target group will be broadened and the website will highlight research results, communicated in English. The aim of the new website will be to promote boreal forest research and highlight the key results of the research funded by SNS. – We believe that we should aim to produce something similar to the website for alpine forests (www.waldwissen.net), says Ari.

Focus on themes

Scattered information is more difficult to assimilate than coordinated communication. The idea of the project is to focus on themes, with the aim of influencing the social, political and economic agenda, providing information regarding key findings, trends, statistics and interviews with specialists in the field. There should also be key stories – good examples and industrial perspectives related to the field. The joint production of good stories and press material will make it easier for each country's communicators to participate in drawing attention to relevant themes.

– We should tell the public about the forest area and biomass increases in Europe, says Ari Turunen: that boreal forests are among the healthiest in Europe, that forests are not dying in central Europe and that the most efficient biofuels come from forests. Greenpeace should not be the only PR-agency that disseminates forest information.

Photo: Mats Hannerz

If the project continues after the pilot phase, SNS intends to choose a new theme each year. The first will be bioenergy. Nordic forest organisations are leading researchers in this field, but bioenergy research does not currently have a dedicated platform on the web.

Country editors

Each country will have a co-editor who will supply the website with popularised versions of research results translated into English. Nordic and Baltic media releases and research results published by each organisation and relevant to the international audience will also appear on the SNS web site.

Newsletter

A newsletter can be an efficient way of attracting interested readers to the website. The project will produce a newsletter, actively search for key people in the relevant target groups and encourage them to subscribe to it. The form and future of the current newsletter News and Views will naturally be considered when the new newsletter takes shape.

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Bioenergy will be the first theme of the project. Photo: Areca



Giant reshuffle of Denmark's academies

Twenty-five research organisations have been merged into five large universities in a rapid, massive rearrangement of Danish academic institutions, and Forest Research is now under the aegis of Copenhagen University.

Forest & Landscape Denmark is the institute that conducts most of the forest research in Denmark. It is now a subdivision of the Faculty of Life Sciences, which is the new name for the former KVL (Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University). The full name of the institute will be the Danish Centre for Forest, Landscape

and Planning, University of Copenhagen.

The Agricultural university, which hosts forest seedling research in Aarslev, has become a part of the University of Aarhus.

More information can be found on the website www.sl.life.ku.dk

Mergers – a challenge to communication

One of the major mergers was the one between KVL and Copenhagen university. The Danish government decided in December 2005 that an extensive merger of universities was needed. A year later, the new arrangements were up and running.

– The quick process from decision to implementation has been a challenge for all involved, says Jacob Søby Bang. He is the head of communication at the former KVL, now the Faculty of Life Sciences, Copenhagen University.

– Rapid changes in an organisation impose stress on all its employees and the communication department plays a key role during any process of change, according to Jacob Søby Bang.

– Communicators need to work closely with the decisionmakers, he continues. Up-to-date and frequent information is essential. The communicator, therefore, needs a constant dialogue with the board-executives. This close link with top management has an impact on the reliability of the communicators. Do they present the whole story? Or simply act as a conduit for the managers to convey their perspective to the employees?

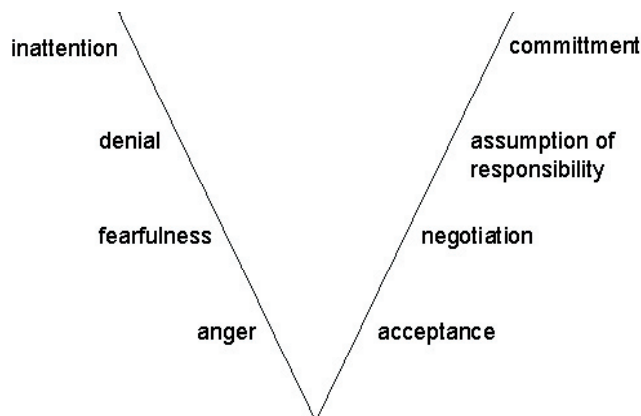
'Involve'

– There is one mantra that the communicator needs to repeat, Jacob Søby Bang says – Involve, involve, involve. Communication must involve all members of an organisation. Unless everybody changes, the organisation won't change, he stresses.

A great deal has been learnt during

the merger of KVL and Copenhagen University. Jacob Søby Bang used a variety of forums to disseminate information quickly; including bulletin boards, newsletters, e-mail and weekly meetings. It was also necessary to establish forums where all involved could voice their own opinions and questions – and receive answers. It must also be legitimate to complain, he says. But in specific ways and within specific limits!

Different groups of employees tend to be affected at different times. Administrative and communication staff are affected immediately, while researchers and students can mostly work as they did before the merger. But in five years time, changes will also affect these groups. So, communication and involvement need to be maintained for a long time.



– There are some typical reactions to change, which all those involved experience – from ignoring it, through denial, fearfulness and anger, then a more positive attitude including acceptance and commitment. Every person goes through the same reaction pattern, says Jacob Søby Bang. However, five minutes or five years may be required to progress fully through the sequence, and will start at different times for different people. Therefore, communicators need to consider where along the reaction curve people are, since their susceptibility to information varies depending on their reaction phase. Photo: Mats Hamnerz



A new network in Nordic forest research:

Physically-based Remote Sensing of Forests (PHYSENSE)

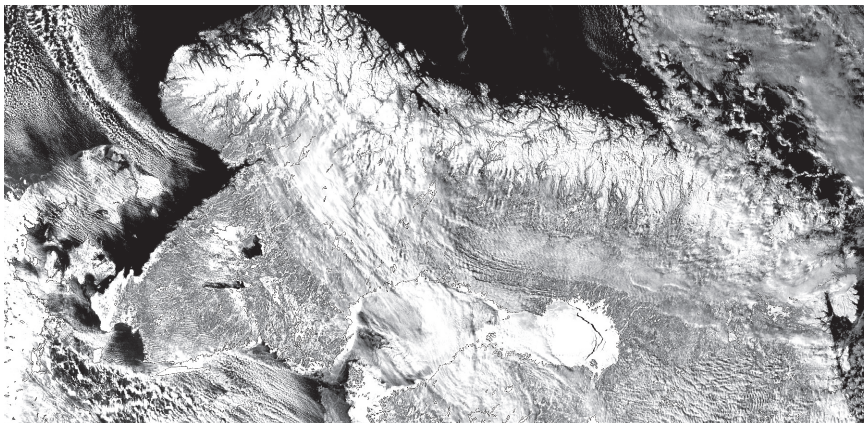
A new Nordic forest remote sensing network, PHYSENSE, was established in January 2007 with support from SNS.

A distinctive feature of the network is that its founder members are young postdoctoral researchers and PhD students who wish to exchange knowledge and know-how, and to increase collaboration between research groups in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

PHYSENSE focuses on the theoretical aspects of remote sensing – the development, validation and application of physically-based approaches in the interpretation of remotely sensed data from forest ecosystems.

The network will hold its inaugural seminar in autumn 2007 in Tartu, Estonia.

*Winter in Scandinavia from the satellite
Envisat. Copyright: ESA*



Background

Understanding environmental trends in forest ecosystems requires extensive geographical data sets, which are difficult to collect by means of field measurements.

Remotely sensed data provide the only cost-effective option and are used to characterize many ecological variables for monitoring, such as changes in land use, vegetation cover and structure.

During the past decade there have been rapid technological and methodological advances in the acquisition and use of satellite-derived data. Thus, a range of new possibilities has opened up for global and regional monitoring and assessment of forest and vegetation status using remotely sensed data and physically-based image interpretation techniques.

In physically-based approaches, radiation patterns in forest canopies are mathematically interpreted, using reflectance models that relate the spectral signature of the forest to a set of forest structural parameters.

Physical reflectance models play a key role in the design of new earth observation missions and satellite instruments. They are also used for estimating ecosystem balances and biophysical variables at regional and global scales. In addition, physical reflectance models are needed, for example, in calibrating and correcting radiometric problems associated with aerial and satellite images.

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