

Joensuu, 27 March 2006

Continuously strengthening EFI's network

Dear Colleagues at EFI Project Centres,

The new status of EFI as an international organization opens the door to exciting and innovative possibilities for further development. EFI is now an institute under international law and as such, has taken increased responsibility for forestry and forest research in Europe. Ten States have already ratified the EFI convention, which had been signed by 20 States, and 136 institutions are presently Associate or Affiliate Members of EFI. EFI is the most important network in forest research at the pan-European level.

The core tasks of EFI are to

- conduct research on topics of European importance,
- improve access to a comprehensive data on European forests and forestry, as well as to
- facilitate networking among European forest research organizations, and
- represent the forest research community i.a. in the European policy processes.

Over the past 13 years, EFI has built up a pan-European network of institutions, a well established headquarters in Joensuu, Finland, and seven Project Centers dealing with issues of European scope. The Project Centres, in particular, have given to EFI, a truly European research dimension.

With the new international status of the institute, interest of Member countries has emerged in favour of further development of EFI. An important element for the future of the Institute is found in strengthening the EFI network by establishing “**Regional Offices**” in various locations in Europe **as integral parts of the Institute**.

Such Regional Offices would obtain their budget from financing institutions (countries, states, regions, industries, other organizations) via EFI Headquarters in Joensuu. The annual work program of Regional Offices would be approved by the EFI organs, in accordance with EFI's strategies and processes. Thus, the coordination of the Regional Office with the activities of EFI as a whole would be secured while fulfilling the expectations of the funding institutions in the respective regions.

As a first step in this direction, and after various consultations with the Spanish Government and the Catalan Region as well as the EFI Council, EFI Board has decided to establish a Regional Office – tentatively called EFIMED (EFI Mediterranean Regional Office) – based in Barcelona, Spain. The activities of MEDFOREX Project Centre will continue under the auspices of the EFI Regional Office. This change will not have any impact to the other six Project Centers.

The financing agreement with the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science and the Catalan Region, which is yet at its draft phase, will be made for five years with a possibility of continuation. According to current plans, the agreement should be signed in fall 2006. Co-operation with Forest Technology Centre of Catalonia (CTFC) the former host of

MEDFOREX, will continue as before, and CTFC will, inter alia , provide administrative services to the new Regional Office.

In this process the Board sees the potential for EFI to promote forest research and research networking in Europe. EFI will support and coordinate further development of Regional Offices in other European regions provided they are in full compliance with EFI's vision and mission.

The Board of EFI looks forward to open discussion on this vision of forest research in Europe with all Member States, Associate Member institutions, Project Centres, staff members and various other partners.

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François Houllier
Chairman of the Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Risto Päivinen', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Risto Päivinen
Director