



Pro Silva
European federation of foresters who advocate
forest management based on natural processes

Minutes of Pro Silva Europe Delegate Convent
Meeting, Freudenstadt June 19th 2008

Meeting opened at 0930

Chair: Professor J-P Schütz
Treasurer: Brice de Turckheim
Minutes: Ted Wilson (CCFG, UK)

1. General introduction

Professor Schütz welcomed the delegates from each of the ProSilva nations present for the conference. Of the 23 nations now in ProSilva, 19 were represented at the Freudenstadt conference. He noted the growth and dynamism of the organisation, with new groups being formed in several European nations.

Specific changes in leadership and news highlights include:

- **France** – Alain Givors has been elected the new president of ProSilva France. He replaced the long-time president Brice de Turckheim
- **Britain** – Phil Morgan is the president (from 2007) of the Continuous Cover Forestry Group.
- **Hungary** – Mr. Kondor Istvan is the new president. He is replacing Bela Varga, who was the long-time president of Pro Silva Hungary. Also of note, ProSilva Hungary received the Knight Cross (2007) for its activities, a high distinction and recognition of a significant contribution to forestry in Hungary.
- **Ireland** – Jan Alexander is the new president from Ireland.
- **Netherlands** – Susan Bonekamp is the new president from the Netherlands.
- **Slovenia** – Mr Tone Lesnik is the new president for Slovenia. ProSilva Slovenia will be hosting the 20 year ProSilva meeting in 2009.
- **Spain** – Jesu Garitacelaya is the new president from Spain.

Norway – Ms. Anna Trede Nordal and Mr. Michael Hahn are representing Norway, where a new ProSilva group is being formed this year (see later).

Finally, the primeval forests in Slovakia and Ukraine have been added to the World Heritage List. This is an important event for ProSilva and has been achieved largely through the efforts of Milan Saniga, Stefan Korpel and members of the ProSilva Slovakia group.

2. Minutes from the ProSilva Meeting, Killarney, 2007

The minutes were accepted with no amendments or revisions. Thanks to Donal Ohare

3. President's Report

Professor Schütz summarised his main activities over the past year.

a. EU Presidency, Slovenia

From 4th-6th February 2008, joined Jurij Diaci for meetings in Slovenia on behalf of the EU Presidency. Slovenia is holder of the EU Presidency for six months, until July 2008. "Close-to-nature silviculture" was identified as a topic that Slovenia wanted to highlight during its presidency. Several meetings have taken place with delegates from various EU nature directorates and organisations. Current and future EU countries were represented at these events.

Among the programme of events, a 2-day conference for NGOs was held at Bled and Brdo. ProSilva Europe was represented in the top tier of NGOs and Prof. Schütz was the keynote speaker at the conference. No direct results came from the meeting, but it was an important opportunity to present our ideas to EU officials. There appears to be increasing recognition that ProSilva principles are good for "general biodiversity" and for meeting many nature conservation goals.

It should be noted that not all member states of the EU agree with the ProSilva principles. Sweden and Finland, in particular, have expressed concern that ProSilva approaches are not entirely compatible with the economic priorities in their woodlands. They favour zonation of forest areas according to different management priorities, such as areas for conservation and areas where production and economic factors are dominant. Nonetheless, the representative of the IUCN gave broad support to ProSilva and recognised that these meetings were a "first step" towards new policies for forestry and conservation that embraced "close-to-nature silviculture".

Jurij Diaci pointed out that the Protocol for Mountain Forests within Alpine convention (<http://www.alpenkonvention.org>) is currently the only document ratified by the EU where close to nature silviculture approaches are mentioned. There is a need to identify suitable multi-functional approaches in other regions and forest types. To achieve this objective, a clear priority for ProSilva Europe will be to "build bridges" between nature conservation and forest management. A significant challenge will be overcoming differences between some of the large and small countries (and between those in the north and south) in relation to policies for segregation and integration of forest functions.

b. ProSilva Serbia

In October 2007, three members of the ProSilva Europe board (Schütz, Brice de Turckheim and Jurij Diaci) visited Serbia. This was in response to an invitation from Martin Bobinac to help create a ProSilva Serbia group. The visit lasted 5 days and included a tour of several forests. A report was published on the ProSilva Europe website, but unfortunately was not accepted for the forestry journal in Serbia. Despite acceptance difficulties, we will continue to support the development of a ProSilva group in Serbia.

c. ProSilva Czech Republic

In early June 2008, ProSilva in the Czech Republic organised a meeting that celebrated 150 years of research studies in primeval (virgin) forests Boubin. The main focus was to link natural processes in virgin forests with forest management practices. The meeting was very successful and was attended by scientists, woodland owners and forest practitioners.

d. Portugal

Also in June 2008, a meeting will be held in Portugal on biodiversity of forests managed "close to nature". Both governmental and NGO organisations will be represented. Prof. Schütz has been invited to present an overview of the ProSilva principles. The meeting is important as we need to work in all the forest regions of Europe. Much work needs to be done to adapt ProSilva principles to the climate/environment/ecological conditions of the Mediterranean region. (The same is true for boreal forests.)

4. Treasurer's Report

Brice de Turckheim (Treasurer) outlined the financial position of ProSilva Europe. Please refer to the preliminary statement of accounts presented at the meeting.

There will be a small adjustment to the accounts in relation to the 2007 meeting in Killarney.

Membership fees were revised at the ProSilva meeting in 2006. The rates are based on the size of member countries and are in three bands: small, medium and large. There may be a need to increase the fees in the future, to cover increased costs for services such as translation and web-site management, but this will not happen this year.

The accounts were unanimously accepted.
The current fee structure was unanimously accepted.

Note: The final statement of accounts will be circulated to member organisations once the adjustment has been finalised.

5. New Members of ProSilva

In total, there are currently 23 national groups in the ProSilva Europe federation. Among those countries not represented are Norway, Sweden, Finland and Portugal. Several contacts have been made to promote the formation of new groups.

In Norway, contact has been made with Professor Axel Hugo (Norwegian University of Agricultural Science, Ås) and there are now several colleagues interested in organising a ProSilva Norway group. It is hoped that the group will be fully functioning by 2009 and that members will include both academics and practitioners. Anna Trede Nordal and Michael Hahn outlined plans for a seminar in September that aims to attract interest from across the forestry community in Norway.

It is hoped that ProSilva Europe will send representatives to support this venture and that the new group will be in a position to apply for membership of ProSilva Europe, in 2009.

In Finland, the Ecoforestry Union has expressed interest in joining ProSilva Europe. This group promotes continuous cover forestry principles that are similar to those of ProSilva. Prof. Erkki Lähde is a leading figure in this group. It is anticipated that a full application for membership can be considered in 2009.

In Portugal, it is hoped that a group will be formed after a meeting in June 2008.

A priority for ProSilva Europe is to “find” and support people interested in forming new national groups. Priority countries include Greece, Poland and Sweden. Poland is especially important due to the large areas of virgin forest and other areas already managed under continuous cover silvicultural systems. In May 2009, Prof. Schütz will visit Poland and this represents an opportunity to promote the formation of a ProSilva group there.

ProSilva Europe must work harder to convince people across Europe of the benefits of multi-functional forests. Exemplary forests (managed under ProSilva principles) are important if we are to achieve our objectives.

6. Current Activities

a. ProSilva Europe website

Our website is vital for promoting the work of ProSilva. The website has three major objectives:

1. It serves as a platform for communication between member groups
2. It provides information for policy-makers
3. It serves as a resource for those interested in the ProSilva approach to forest management

To achieve all these objectives the site needs to be continually updated and improved.

The current website manager is Christian Rosset. He has been working on a part-time basis but recently has been appointed Professor of Forest Management at the Swiss University of Applied Science, in Zollikofen. He no longer has enough time to develop the site.

The best way forward is to develop the website with assistance from professional designers and a dedicated website manager (webmaster). A basic requirement is that the site functions in the major EU languages (English, French and German), has regular updates and news items, includes exemplary examples of ProSilva forests, and can host large file sizes. Jan Alexander (Ireland) pointed out that “blogging” was another important website feature that should be considered.

Proposals:

- Phil Morgan (UK) proposed that a sub-committee be formed to undertake a website review and to explore the cost of engaging professional web-site management services.

Agreed Actions:

1. All member groups should send regular news items and information to the ProSilva Europe webmaster.
2. A new webmaster is required to take on the task of managing updates and serving the needs of the member organisations.
3. A translation service needs to be developed for key ProSilva documents.
4. The layout of the website needs to be reviewed (possibly re-designed) and made more "user-friendly".

b. Exemplary Forests

1. Exemplary Forests are excellent examples of woodlands managed according to ProSilva principles. They help us convince others about the merits of the ProSilva philosophy, and demonstrate how close-to-nature forestry works in practice.

ProSilva Europe has produced a set of criteria to assist in the selection of Exemplary Forests. Several forests have already been identified and information is being uploaded to the website, specifically from Switzerland (2), France (4) and Germany (4). The Czech Republic is actively identifying candidate Exemplary Forests and Portugal is developing a list of candidate forests in consultation with the Portuguese Forest Service.

Couvet was mentioned as a good example of what we hope to present on the website for each Exemplary Forest. However, the information presented should also reflect social, economic and ecological differences between countries.

Our major challenges in developing the Exemplary Forest network include:

1. Input is required from all member organisations in ProSilva Europe.
2. The presentation of information should be harmonised across all member organisations.
3. Translation is required for reports and other information to be presented on the website.
4. Criteria for the selection of candidate Exemplary Forests needs to reflect regional differences. For example, in some countries there are exemplary examples that have a history of management stretching back 120 years or more (e.g., Couvet) while in other areas the transformation process is still not highly advanced (e.g., in the UK and Ireland).

Agreed Actions:

1. Decisions on candidate forests should remain with each country. The key consideration is that Exemplary Forests should be the best examples in each country or region.

2. Forests in transformation should be included in the Exemplary Forest network, especially in regions where these represent the best available examples of forests managed according to the ProSilva principles.
3. Good examples of transformation should be considered from all regions, as these demonstrate how the ProSilva approach can be initiated.
4. A priority should be examples from a diversity of forest and species types across Europe. A reasonable target should be to have

Proposal:

- Jan Alexander (Ireland) proposed that the President of ProSilva Europe should write to each member country to formally request participation in the Exemplary Forest project and to establish targets for the number of candidate forests.

c. Climate Change

Climate change is an important issue that is closely connected with discussions about future energy requirements in Europe. Most media coverage concentrates on the negative aspects of climate change. However, ProSilva may be in a position to promote pro-active approaches in forest management, especially in relation to species choice and diversity, risk management, reaction to natural disturbance (storm) events, etc. In all these areas we can demonstrate the advantage of adopting close to nature silvicultural systems.

The ProSilva principles (developed by Professor Otto) have been enhanced to acknowledge the importance of climate change. Our continuing discussions should consider new problems, such as increased storm effects, prolonged periods of drought and regional climate effects, including those influencing Mediterranean forests.

d. Energy

Energy is another important and emerging issue for Europe and ProSilva. Bio-energy is increasingly been seen as one of the best ways of balancing energy inputs and outputs. Timber production is regarded as "ecologically clean" due to minimal energy inputs (fertiliser, etc). Fuelwood production is rapidly increasing as an alternative to fossil fuels, but there are still many uncertainties in relation to land-use and agriculture. ProSilva currently has no stated position on bio-energy/fuelwood production, the expansion of coppice systems or wider environmental impacts. Currently there is insufficient research on the relative benefits of alternative silvicultural approaches to meeting future fuel requirements.

Proposal

- Prof. Schütz proposed that ProSilva should develop a position statement on energy and fuelwood issues and that this could be prepared for the next meeting, in Slovenia (2009).

Agreed Action:

- A working group is to be formed comprising those members who are interested in fuelwood and energy issues. The discussions will be coordinated by Prof. Schütz.

e. Mediterranean Forests

Jesu Garitacelaya has prepared a paper (2007) on how ProSilva approaches might be applied in Mediterranean forests. This is the first theoretical work in this area. The paper has been circulated for discussion within each ProSilva group.

The key points of this paper are:

- The Mediterranean forest region encompasses a wide diversity of conditions and site types.
- A small number of people from the Mediterranean region are currently represented in the ProSilva organisation.
- A first attempt at discussing the issues has been made among representatives from Spain, France and Portugal.
- The best examples of demonstration forests, so far, are located in Northern Spain.
- The thrust of the project is to develop ProSilva approaches for Mediterranean forests, but it must be recognised that Spain and Portugal are mostly composed of temperate (Atlantic) forests. These may not serve as good examples for other regions in the Mediterranean basin.
- There are several special forest types of interest – examples include stone pine, cork oak.
- Features of forestry in the region include: the role of cattle farming/grazing in forests; timber is not necessarily the main output of forests; forest fires are the major natural disturbance. These need to be taken into account in applying the ProSilva principles.

Proposal

- In order to make a presentation at the next ProSilva meeting, it is proposed that a small working group be formed (perhaps 5-6 people from different Mediterranean countries) to explore the issues in more detail and undertake some forest visits. Jesu Garitacelaya is the leader for this Working Group.

7. Next Meeting

The next ProSilva meeting will be held in Ljubljana, Slovenia. This will mark the 20th Anniversary of ProSilva Europe. Prof. Juri Diaci, President of ProSilva Slovenia, is chairing the organising committee.

The proposed dates are Thursday to Saturday in Week 39, (24-29 September 2009). Numbers will be limited to approximately 100 delegates (4-5 per country).

The preliminary programme is as follows:

- Thursday – main meeting of the management committee
- Friday – conference presentations.

- The focus will be on **linking scientists and practitioners**.
- 4-5 keynote speakers will be invited to address historical, scientific, practitioner and educational/outreach aspects of close-to-nature forestry.
- Saturday – several excursions are being planned, including:
 - Alpine forests - nature conservation and close-to-nature silviculture
 - Transformation of spruce plantations
 - Traditional plenterforest
 - Urban forestry adopting ProSilva management principles
 - Virgin forests
 - Free-style silviculture

Comments:

- Jan Alexander (Ireland) suggested that a special lecture be included in the programme aimed at a wider audience within the host country. This was a successful feature of the Ireland 2007 meeting. The aim is to “touch the country”.
- Several working groups are now active within the organisation, and it is hoped they will come forward with proposals, papers and recommendations for the 2009 meeting.
- There had been an invitation from ProSilva Netherlands to host the 2010 meeting.

8. Any Other Business

Delegates were invited to attend the ProSilva event in Norway (September 2008).

Jan Alexander (ProSilva Ireland) suggested that we could increase the profile of ProSilva by engaging the services of journalists to write articles for influential magazines or newspapers. This has been successfully piloted in Ireland with a major article in the leading farming journal.

M. Alain Givors (ProSilva France) thanked Brice de Turkheim for his fantastic contribution to ProSilva France and ProSilva Europe.

Prof. Schütz thanked everyone for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 11.50 (duration: 2 hours, 20 minutes)