

A Nordic-Baltic post-graduate research course in forest policy

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The post-graduate Research Course "Forest Policy in the Nordic Countries and in the Central Europe", carried out at the Forest Faculty of the Latvia University of Agriculture (Jelgava), May 6-11, 1996, was the first course arranged within the NOVA-BA network. NOVA-BA is a cooperation program between the Nordic and Baltic Agricultural Universities and is directly linked to the activities of the Nordic Forestry, Veterinary and Agricultural University (NOVA) as one of its priority areas. The aim of the NOVA-BA program is to establish a more systematic and coordinated cooperation to benefit both the Nordic and Baltic countries. The NOVA-BA cooperation scheme was cordially approved in the meeting of the Rectors from both the Nordic and Baltic Agricultural Universities in Kaunas, Lithuania in November 1995. By this cooperation, the Nordic and Baltic Agricultural Universities will attempt to ensure the development of food production, rural and forest areas, environmental protection and a sustainable use of natural resources in the Baltic countries. The Program will identify the scientific fields for cooperation and give Nordic "added value" in supporting the competence within the Baltic Agricultural Universities. The emphasis of cooperation will be to provide assistance for the competence development in teaching, research and extension at the Universities. In the long perspective, the knowledge available in the Baltic countries will be used in the same way as the Nordic knowledge to mutually contribute to the development of the given areas. In this way, the Baltic Universities can be connected in a natural way to the direct cooperation with the Nordic and European countries.

One of the key areas of the NOVA-BA program activities is arranging research courses (M.S. and Ph.D. levels).

Due to the differences in social, economic and ecological conditions, the role of Forest Policy and forms of forest planning vary among the Nordic, Central European and Baltic countries. The process of privatization and land reform has completely changed the general framework of forestry in the Baltic countries. A modern policy research is needed due to the many economic, social and ecological trends affecting forest resource utilization and development in Europe and in the Baltic countries where the former independence was restored only some years ago. International commitments to reformulate and implement sustainable forest management policies are especially important for the Baltic countries in the preparation process for the integration into the EU.

The course "Forest Policy in the Nordic Countries and in the Central Europe" was designed particularly for Ph.D. and M.S. students as well as for young post-doctoral researchers, university teachers and for the persons working in forest administration in the Baltic countries. During the groupwork sessions, the participants addressed the topical forest policy issues in Nordic and Central European as well as in Baltic countries; the initial situation in Forest Policy in each Baltic country was analyzed and the existing policies evaluated. Discussions touched mainly on the reformulation of present policies and the future prospects related to the European Union. The invited lecturers of the Course were Professor Peter Glück, Professor Birger Solberg and Senior Researcher Ilpo Tikkanen from the European Forest Institute and Professor Henn Tuherm from the Latvia University of Agriculture, the latter two being responsible for the Course design.

The contents of the Course emphasized the interdisciplinary nature of modern Forest Policy integrating the contribution of economics, sociology and political sciences such as forest science and ecology. The aim of the Course was to demonstrate the utilization and application of relevant theoretical approaches - combined with advanced methodological tools such as econometrics and qualitative research methods of social sciences in the analysis of topical forest and policy issues in Europe, to improve the multidisciplinary and analytic skills of forest policy researchers.

The Program of the Course included the main topics as following:

- definition of relevant concepts related to forest policies, description of forest policy-making process, participants involved and target groups;
- recent Forest Policy issues and policy research in the Nordic and Central European as well as in the Baltic countries;
- introduction to the modern Forest Policy science: a theoretical model for policy analysis, different theoretical approaches and methodologies used in the research of Forest Policy process, analysis and evaluation of the implemented policy programs, econometric policy models. Main socio-economic driving forces on Forest Policy;
- forest policies for sustainable forest resource management in the European Union - policy analysis of the implementation of Helsinki resolutions;

– contribution of various disciplines to Forest Policy research – policy sciences, sociology, political science, administrative science, economics, forest economics etc.;

– econometric analyses of the effectiveness of existing public policies for private forestry investments and timber markets.

I would like to thank the European Forest Institute and especially the invited lecturers from EFI – Professor Birger Solberg, Professor Peter Glück and Senior Researcher Ilpo

Tikkanen – for the excellent carrying out of the Course. Special thanks go to Dr. Markku Nygren, NOVA-BA coordinator, for efficient work in organizing the Course! Finally, it is my pleasure to inform that – as it was decided during the Second meeting of the NOVA-BA Rectors in Tartu, Estonia, September 1996 – a new course in Forest Policy Implementation will be carried out in the frames of NOVA-BA activities in May-June of 1997 in Jelgava.