What makes NFPs work?

Interim Report on COST Action E19
"National Forest Programmes in a European Context"

Edited by Peter Glück, Américo Carvalho Mendes and Ine Neven

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Vienna, 2003

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Foreword

This interim report is the result of three years work of the COST Action E19 "National Forest Programmes in a European Context". "COST" is the acronym for "Coopération européenne dans le domaine de la recherche scientifique et technique" of the European member states (presently 28, including 15 EU members). The objective of the COST programme of the European Union is to finance "concerted actions" (e.g., meetings, publications) of research projects of common interest to the participating countries which, however, have to be financed nationally. The co-operation of a certain country in a certain project ("action") is voluntary. In COST Action E19 more than 70 researchers from 20 European countries and the United States of America came together in order to contribute to knowledge about the formulation and implementation of national forest programmes (NFPs).

It is typical for COST Actions that the knowledge building process has to be consensus-oriented, and therefore, depends on the interests, capabilities, training, and professional background of the participants. Due to the lack of resources it is not possible to carry out a predetermined sophisticated research programme and to achieve empirically sound results. The strength of COST Actions lies rather in the formation of networks, in the common perception of new ideas, and in the possibility to scrutinize hypotheses from many angles. This is the reason why many interesting questions could not be answered in a scientifically satisfactory way, but only raised or pointed out. A special feature of COST Action E19 is the mutual learning process of participating researchers and civil servants responsible for the NFP process in their countries.

COST Action E19 is not typical for COST Actions in general because it is on the borderline between politics and social science. The concept of NFPs, as well as the proposal to rely on NFPs for ensuring sustainable forest management (SFM), arose from the international forest policy dialogue. The content of SFM as well as that of NFPs remained rather vague due to the multi-level international negotiation process on forests. This situation was challenging for the participating researchers of the Action. They agreed to refrain themselves from normative assertions and to focus on policy relevant propositions on explaining variables of the formulation and implementation of the NFP process. This knowledge should enable the national policy makers to influence the national NFP process in their respective interest. As side-effect of the intensive co-operation of researchers and civil servants, the mystery has been lifted about the content of NFPs. Far reaching consensus has been achieved that an NFP enlarges the conflict resolution capacity of a country by trustful communication of all participants interested in forests.

The editors want to thank each and every one of the participants (see Annex 2) of the COST Action E19 for their invaluable inputs in form of submitted papers (see Annex 3) and discussion contributions. In particular, they acknowledge Karl Hogl and Michael Pregerning for their path breaking proposal on the research design and their untiring efforts to integrate the huge number of contributions. As far as the presented papers are concerned, they can be found in full length in the proceedings of the meetings/seminars in Madrid, Oslo, and Savonlinna (see homepage http://www.metla.fi/eu/cost/e19/index.htm). The COST Action E19 has formed a much promising European network of researchers which will certainly cope with new challenges in socio-economic research in forestry in the future.

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1   Introduction

1.1   International attention to national forest programmes

The international forest policy dialogue since the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) has drawn much attention to national forest programmes (NFPs). Many of the Proposals for Action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests refer to them for their implementation. Having their roots in the Tropical Forestry Action Plan for combating deforestation (Liss 1999: 27), NFPs became a remedy with high expectations for resolving forest issues in the developing world, as well as the developed world. FAO's Guidelines on the formulation and implementation of national forest programmes (FAO 1996) and the Practitioner´s Guide to the Implementation of the IPF Proposals for Action prepared by the Six-Country Initiative (1999) facilitated the understanding of NFPs and prepared their acceptance by European countries as well. The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) also worked towards a common understanding of NFPs in the European context, culminating in the MCPFE approach to NFPs in Europe (MCPFE 2002).

At the European level, it was recognized that NFPs could resolve conflicting economic, ecological and social interests in forests which, in many cases, arise as a consequence of the new understanding of the content of sustainable forest management (SFM). Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe in Helsinki 1993 and Lisbon 1998 both refer to NFPs. At the level of the European Union, the Council recommends NFPs in its Forestry Strategy 1998 for the implementation of international commitments, principles and recommendations. Furthermore, NFPs or equivalent programmes are a prerequisite for acquiring forest subsidies according to the EC Regulation on Support of Rural Areas within Agenda 2000.

1.2   New mode of governance

National forest programmes do not compete with any existing forest policy tool, instead they are meant to supplement them. In its essence, an NFP is a political planning instrument for ensuring SFM in its broad sense, as laid down in the Statement of Forest Principles and Helsinki Resolution H1. "Sustainable forest management" is understood to harmonise the present and future generations' economic, ecological, and social interests in forests. This definition is unavoidably vague due to the high number of public and private actors as well as the relationships between them. In such a complex and dynamic environment, a new mode of governance is needed that relies on a new understanding of policy planning based policy networks.

Policy planning strives to render politics on forests more rational, more oriented to the long-term, and better co-ordinated. In the new understanding of policy planning the rationality of policies will be ensured by policy networks instead of hierarchical governance by the state. Public participation makes sure that all relevant actors are involved in the planning and communication process. The idea of pursuing long-term orientation of policy decisions through scientific forecasts has been replaced by adaptive and iterative learning processes. The co-ordination of political actors should be comprehensive, holistic and inter-sectoral, making sure that all sectors affecting forestry and affected by forestry are considered and externalities are internalised. Though information and persuasion strategies are important, they may fail in co-ordinating various stakeholders. Intra-bureaucratic intermediation processes and capacity building become more important (see Table 1).

Table 1:   Policy planning and principle elements

Objectives	General paradigm	National Forest Programme
Enhancing the rationality of policies	• policy networks and bargaining systems • participation of all relevant actors	• participatory mechanisms • decentralisation • empowerment of regional and local governments • respect for local communities
Ensuring long-term orientation	• fragmentation of the long-term strategy into an iterative planning process • review and assessment of the achieved goals	• long-term iterative process
Improving coordination of political actors	• consensus building processes via information and persuasion strategies • intra-bureaucratic intermediation processes and capacity building	• consistency with national policies and international commitments • integration with the country's sustainable development strategies

Source: Glück (1999:42)

"Networks" are informal institutions with relatively permanent relationships and interactions between public and private actors who strive to realize common gains (Scharpf 1993:72). In the case of NFPs, the common gain is a policy for ensuring SFM. However, the actors disposing of material and immaterial resources pursue distinctive, but interdependent interests and co-ordinate their actions through interdependencies of resources and interests. They form linkages to exchange their resources in order to endorse a certain policy. These linkages constitute the structures and processes of a network (Börzel 1998:259 ff). In an increasingly complex and dynamic environment, where hierarchical co-ordination is impossible and deregulation is limited due to market failures, governance only becomes feasible within policy networks. Thus, governments are well advised to seek the co-operation and joint resource mobilization of policy actors outside of their hierarchical control.

An essential precondition for the success of policy networks are communication and trust among the actors. They provide additional informal linkages by information, persuasion, experience, and so on and thereby help produce the collectively desired outcome. Furthermore, the members agree on specific rules, norms and values for achieving the common goal. With regard to NFPs, there is agreement on 10 basic elements of which a number serve the resolution of specific co-ordination problems (e.g., participation, inter-sectoral co-ordination, adaptive and iterative planning).

In summary, the novelty of NFPs, namely to deal with an enlarged definition of SFM, to promote a new mode of governance focusing on all kinds of co-ordination problems, and the fact that an NFP is not an end in itself, but an open-end process, justified a COST Action. The idea of this Action goes back to the preparation of a conference on NFPs in Freiburg in 1998 (Glück et al. 1999). In June 1999 the 4-year COST Action E19 "National Forest Programmes in a European Context" was launched.

The main objective of COST Action E19 is to provide policy makers in Europe with improved means for formulating and implementing NFPs. Target groups for the results are

European policy makers dealing with NFPs, such as ministries responsible for NFPs, stakeholders in NFP processes and European and international organisations dealing with NFPs. The more detailed objectives to be accomplished by two working groups are the following:

- Formation of a network of European researchers who deal with the socio-economic aspects of SFM and policy planning in forestry.
- Specification of the procedural requirements of formulation and implementation of an NFP.
- Assessment of supporting and impeding factors for the development of substantial NFPs.

The structure of the report follows the conceptual approach that will be developed in Chapter 2. Among other policy means, NFPs aim at the accomplishment of SFM. However, as there is no single model for an NFP, the COST Action focused on its main essential elements, such as participation, inter-sectoral co-ordination, and so on. Figure 1 depicts the effects of NFPs and other policy tools on the programme of SFM which – once implemented – influences actual forest management at the management unit level.

Chapter 3 is the core piece of this report and is composed of propositions on the impact of various internal factors (characteristics of participants, process characteristics, and content characteristics) and external factors (political culture, ownership structure, legal aspects etc.) on NFPs. Lastly, in Chapter 4, conclusions are drawn from the propositions with regard to their possible practical application in the preparation and pursuit of an NFP process.

2 The conceptual approach

The work plan of COST-Action E19 as stipulated in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) assigned the tasks to be dealt with to two working groups:

- The research topic of one working group was *to interpret the basic elements and institutional as well as procedural requirements of NFPs (in particular participatory mechanisms, iterative and adaptive process design, inter-sectoral co-ordination and aspects concerning conflict resolution)*. Furthermore the working group had to *evaluate the effects of these elements and requirements on NFPs*.

- The main aims of the other working group were (1) *to assess supporting and impeding factors for the development of substantive NFPs* and (2) *to evaluate the significance of NFPs in comparison to other policy means*.

Figure 1 portrays the overall approach and gives indications for the distribution of work between the two working groups. By dealing with the basic elements and institutional/procedural requirements of NFPs, the first working group worked – figuratively spoken – "inside the box" which is in the centre of Figure 1 (labelled "NFP"). The second working group looked "outside the box" by examining the influence of supporting and impeding external factors (shown in the upper part of Figure 1) on NFPs. Furthermore, Figure 1 shows that NFPs may result in *policy outputs* and – via implementation – in specific *policy outcomes*, i.e. impacts "in the forests". The question whether NFP processes are "significant" compared to other policy means, i.e. whether "they make a difference" can only be answered by looking at the policy outputs or, finally, at the policy outcomes.

In the following, the conceptual approaches used in the interpretation of the basic elements and procedural requirements of NFPs (Chapter 2.1) and the assessment of supporting and impeding factors of substantive NFPs (Chapter 2.2) are described. Finally, Chapter 2.3 briefly summarises the working procedures as used by the two working groups.

Figure 1:   The Conceptual Approach of COST E19 – an Overview
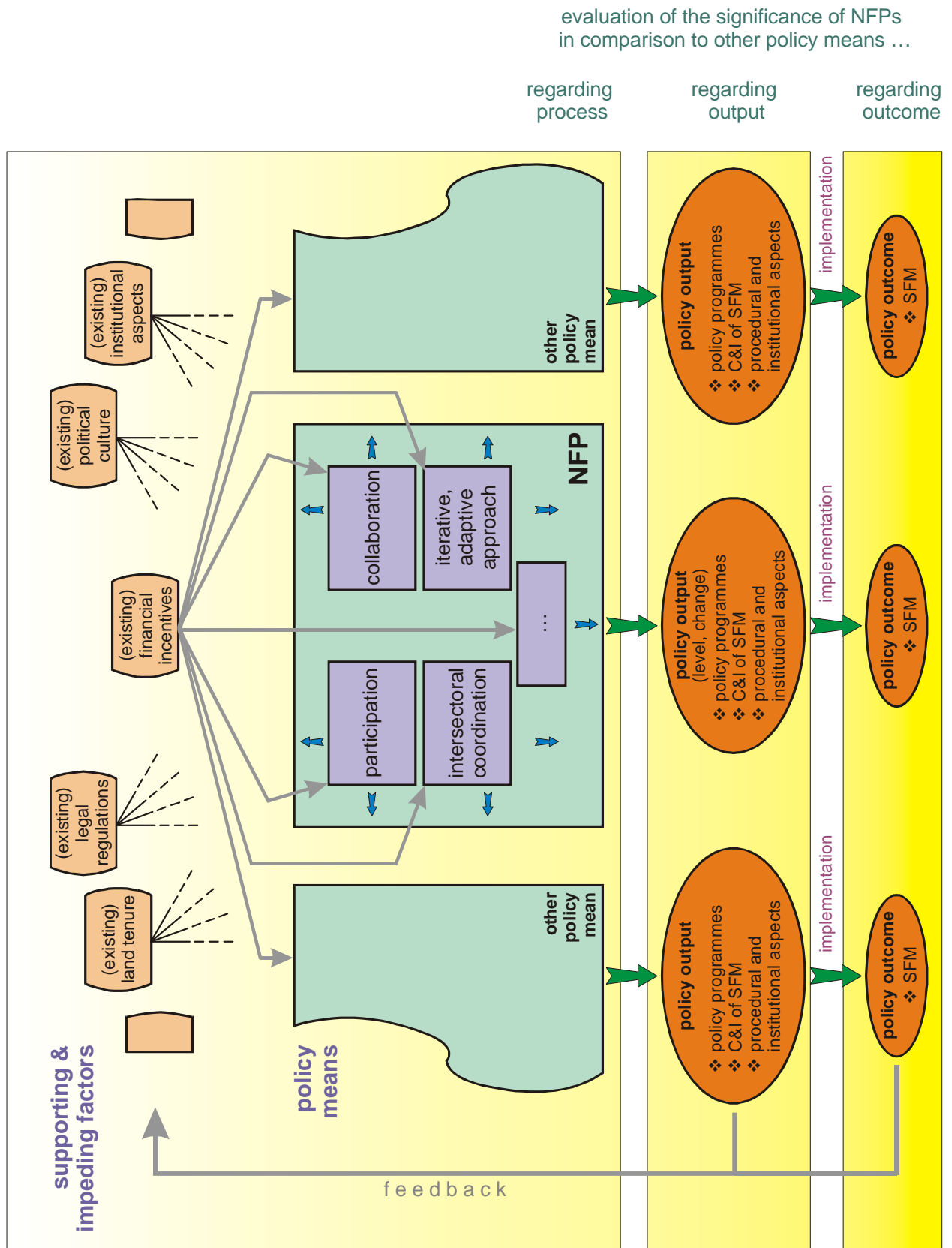
Source: Hogl K., Pregernig, M. 2000, p. 8

2.1 Basic elements and procedural requirements of NFPs

The first major aim of COST Action E19 was to interpret the basic elements and institutional/procedural requirements of NFPs and to evaluate their effects on NFPs. The rationale was to contribute to a common understanding of the aspects that could provide guidance when formulating and implementing NFPs. At the start, the group faced one major problem: a commonly accepted operational definition of NFPs was (and still is) missing. Within the international forest policy dialogue NFPs have been characterised by means of "basic principles", "elements", "key elements" and the like, whereby the terms and the formulations used in different processes and at different times were different and remained vague.

To find a common starting point and to be able to develop a common analytical approach, the COST Action fell back to the modern concept of "policy planning". The group proceeded on the assumption, that at its core the concept of NFPs shares those main characteristics which are postulated for the concept of *modern policy planning*, i.e. long-term iterative and adaptive processes, participatory mechanisms, broad co-ordination of relevant actors and sectors, and so on (see Glück 1999). These characteristics provided a reference for the subsequent work.

As a next step, it had to be decided with which elements/aspects to deal with in particular. Several reports identified key "principles" and "elements" related to NFPs. The Action drew from work done by FAO (1996), and the international forest policy dialogue, the results of the international NFP Seminar held in Freiburg (1998), and the MCPFE workshop on NFPs (1999). The discussions resulted in four "conceptual essentials" to be dealt with in detail, one essential at each meeting:

(1) participatory approaches,
(2) collaborative approaches,
(3) inter-sectoral approaches, and
(4) procedural approaches (iterative, adaptive and learning processes).[1]

These "essentials" must not be mixed up or equated with politically defined "principles" or "elements" (as, for example, formulated by IPF, IFF, or FAO) but rather should be understood as significant "*fields to examine*". Moreover, the term "essential" is *not* to be understood in a normative sense, meaning that these essentials *should* be implemented. Instead, it reflects the group's discussion, pointing out that these aspects are seen as being at the core of the *politically defined* concept of NFPs. These approaches are seen as conceptual essentials of NFP processes and are at the core of modern policy planning (in terms of "policy co-ordination").

To provide common references for the groups' work, the following working definitions were elaborated.[2]

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[1] Due to budget cuts of the COST Programme the meeting on "procedural approaches" had to be cancelled.

[2] The working definitions of "participation", "inter-sectoral co-ordination", and "iterative planning" are taken from *background papers* which were compiled by members of the group (cf. Appelstrand 2002, Hogl 2002, and Barstad 2002). The working definition of "collaboration" is taken from Shannon (2002). In addition to the working definitions, the background papers also provide rationales and operational criteria for the conceptual essentials. Summaries of these background papers can be found in Annex 1. The Annex also includes the summary of a background paper on "decentralisation", an aspect which was especially relevant with regard to the discussions of external factors.

Public participation

Public participation is defined as a set of voluntary processes whereby people, individually or through organized groups, can exchange information, express opinions and articulate interests, and have the potential to influence decisions or the outcome of the matter at hand (cf. FAO/ECE/ILO Team of Specialists on Participation in Forestry 2000). Efficient participation also requires a procedure resting upon transparency and fairness, and this calls for a structured process, a framework, important to facilitate a dialogue based on political equality between the different stakeholders.

Collaboration

Collaboration refers to organising for joint action among individuals, organisations, and processes. Collaboration is a concept that includes both agency and structure elements. In terms of structure, collaboration describes a pattern of cooperation that includes sharing resources – including staff and budgets, working to craft joint decisions, engaging the opposition in designing creative solutions to shared problems, and building new relationships as needs and problems arise. The structural element of collaboration is produced and maintained by the agency of actors to engage in cooperative, supportive, learning, and adaptive behaviour. Facilitating, supporting, and rewarding such behaviour is a necessary characteristic of collaborative institutions.

Inter-sectoral co-ordination

Inter-sectoral co-ordination is about the organisation and reconciliation of different processes and activities. In policy terms, it means reconciling the policies and programmes of different sectors. Sectors are said to be co-ordinated when their respective policies and programmes show minimum *redundancy* (two initiatives doing the same without considering each other), minimum *incoherence* (different goals and requirements), and a minimum of *untackled issues* ("policy gaps").

Iterative planning

Iterative planning refers to planning processes where there is a stepwise movement towards a goal, instead of a "momentary leap" from problem to solution. At intervals, the situation is evaluated and necessary steps are taken to ensure that the process is "on track" towards a solution. In addition, the setting of goals is a revolving process: long-term goals are formulated in a strategic plan, but this plan can be changed through administrative planning, and the daily operational work.

2.2   Supporting and impeding factors of substantive NFPs

The second major aim of the COST Action was to assess supporting and impeding factors for the development of substantive NFPs. To achieve that, the following list of "supporting and impeding external factors" was elaborated in the course of discussions within the group:

- *political culture and social context*
- *legal aspects*
- *financial framework and incentives*
- *advocacy coalitions*
- *institutional aspects*
- *multilevel governance*

- *land tenure*

In its attempt to assess the influence of these factors on substantive NFPs, the group faced two major definitional problems or questions: (1) What is a "substantive" NFP? (2) What is a "supporting or impeding external factor"?

What is a "substantive" NFP?

The effort to make a distinction between a substantive and a non-substantive (i.e. a symbolic) NFP results in the need for an operational definition of an NFP. As mentioned above, the notion of NFPs was quite vague when the action was started. The politically defined elements have been formulated in a very elusive and equivocal way; the descriptions given have been far from an operational definition. But only when the definitional question would have been answered, i.e. when the dependent variable ("substantive NFP") would have been defined and operationalised in an adequate way, one could have gone on to ask the *analytical* question of which factors support or impede the formulation and implementation of such an NFP.

For that reason the group approached the question of substantiveness not at the level of NFPs as such but at the level of the elements that constitute an NFP. By splitting the NFP concept into its constituting elements the definition problem is shifted to another level. The question is no longer "what is a substantive NFP?" but "what is substantive participation?", "what is substantive inter-sectoral co-ordination?" and so on.

Furthermore, the group tried to approach the question of "substantiveness" by differentiating between the different stages of policy processes (policy formulation – policy outputs – policy outcomes). For each stage a specific concept of "substantiveness" was provided:

a. At the *policy formulation stage*, one can assess the substantiveness of an NFP only by means of procedural elements, because the NFP process has not (yet) delivered policy outputs and outcomes. Accordingly, "substantive NFPs" at the policy formulation stage were defined as processes which are characterised by "high" degrees of participation, inter-sectoral co-ordination, iterativeness, and so on.

b. At the *policy output stage* the assessment of an NFP's substantiveness can be based on its procedural elements (as under a.) <u>and</u> on the policy outputs it has produced. The policy outputs of NFP processes are expected to mainly comprise politically agreed sets of policy targets and policy instruments (e.g., forest strategies, guidelines, regulations, subsidy schemes, and a revised definition of SFM). A substantive NFP at the policy output stage (i) defines *targets* which are consistent, consensual among the main stakeholders and which operationalise the dimensions of the SFM concept (ecological, economic, and social) and (ii) defines *policy instruments* which are controllable by policy makers and which appropriately match their targets.

c. When, finally, an NFP process has reached the *policy outcome stage,* the assessment of its substantiveness has to evaluate whether it meets the targets it set forth. Accordingly, a substantive NFP at this stage is characterised by such procedural elements and policy instruments that effectively meet the NFP's targets.[3]

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[3] Since hardly any country represented in the COST Action (except Finland) has had experiences with the formulation and implementation of NFPs, the group had to fall back on experiences gained in the formulation and implementation of other programmes and to apply them to NFPs by analogy. This *ex ante* evaluation was necessarily a fragmentary and more or less hypothetical one.

What is a "supporting or impeding external factor"?

External factors determine how an NFP process works in a particular country (see Figure 1). The definition of *external factors* was simply a "negative" one: an external factor is any factor that is not itself a procedural element of an NFP and is part of the context for developing the NFP.

Furthermore, the group differentiated two kinds of external factors: a) those that are policy instruments and may become a policy output or policy outcome of NFP processes (for example, legal regulations, financial and other economic instruments); and b) those that will remain outside the scope of direct control of the NFP policy makers as exogenous factors, or policy constraints of the NFP process.

Finally, the question had to be answered when an external factor is a supporting one and when it is an impeding one. The only general answer to this question that the group was able to provide is that a supporting (impeding) factor contributes positively (negatively) to "high" degrees of those elements that constitute NFPs and to the achievement of NFP targets and adequate policy instruments. Whether a certain factor supports or impedes the development of a substantive NFP in a certain country depends on the context.

2.3 Working procedures

To practically implement the analytical approaches presented above, the working groups focused their efforts on the elaboration of propositions relevant with regard to the formulation and implementation of NFPs. These propositions are based on the presentations of theory-oriented research papers, on the one hand, and experience reports from the member countries on the other hand.

The rational behind this endeavour can be explained as follows: the COST Action aimed at serving two main audiences: the political community and) the scientific community. Correspondingly, two types of products had to be delivered. For the political community, the Action aimed at providing decision-support, *inter alia*, by means of propositions based on theory and/or empirical evidence.[4] For the scientific community, the COST Action strove to formulate "bold" hypotheses, to point out interesting research questions, and to indicate gaps in the current state of knowledge.

Propositions state the nature of a relationship between relevant variables (e.g. actors, institutions, procedural aspects, external factors, policy outputs). Most usefully to the purpose of the COST Action, they can guide the design of NPF processes by providing insights into how different elements of the process may relate to each other and to the desired product. Some propositions may take the form of testable hypotheses, but often the factors affecting the nature of the relationship are external and too many to actually control. As COST Actions are not research programmes, but rather exchange programmes, it was not possible to come up with complex and consistent theoretical frames and to test hypotheses empirically. Accordingly, the propositions presented in the following chapters have to be seen as products of working group discussions.

The propositions are not presented as incontrovertible truths; indeed, some are at odds with each other. Rather, they are presented as plausible generalizations which might serve to support the development of policies. Their purpose is not only to enlighten, but to stimulate discussions and analysis.

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[4] Of course, all the papers dealing with national experiences and/or theoretical discussion of NFP elements published in the Proceedings and in particular in the book on country reports (to be published in 2003), also provide broad decision-support for actors concerned.

3 Policy-relevant propositions for the formulation and implementation of NFPs

In this section, the conceptual essentials of NFPs and the external supporting and impeding factors of NFPs will be described by means of *general characteristics* (Table 2) and *detailed propositions* (Table 3–6). These lists of characteristics and propositions which have been derived from the documented discussions within the working groups can be seen as possible "ingredients" which political actors are most likely to come across in their efforts to formulate and to implement national forest programmes in Europe.

Like with recipes, the dose of the ingredients determines the taste, the success or failure. However, "taste" as well as success is context-dependent (some have a tradition of cooking hot, others mild…). As a consequence, the COST Action is not capable of providing a general blueprint that would define exact amounts of necessary ingredients. Scientists can only refer to possible "ingredients" which political actors should consider when "preparing" – i.e., formulating and implementing – a national forest programme. In addition to accepting this lack of normative directives, policy makers have to be satisfied with a relatively "weak" form of scientific utterances, namely the form of *propositions.*

Table 2 summarises important general characteristics of NFPs and their environment. This enumeration can be taken as a kind of a "check list" pointing out (not all but) a number of important aspects that policy makers should consider and think about before starting an NFP process.[5] After indicating a number of important characteristics of participants, Table 2 follows the logic of the COST Action's overall conception as depicted in Figure 1, thus, starting from the top, continuing with the characteristics of external factors, followed by characteristics of NFP processes and, finally, followed by important aspects related to the content of NFP outputs.

Table 2:   General characteristics of NFPs and their environment

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Characteristics of participants

- **Boundaries**: The rules which determine whether an actor is included in or excluded from an NFP process

- **Number** of actors participating in the process

- **Status:** The formal or informal position of the participants; e.g. the type of actors (public administration, interest group, enterprise, …), their level of representation (local, regional, national, international), their authority, etc.

- **Mandate:** The authorisation of the participants to act on behalf of their organisations or clientele

- **Qualification**: The participants' level of knowledge and professional experience

- **Actors' expectations**: The participants' expectations as regards their capacity to influence the output of the NFP process

Characteristics of external factors

- **Political culture:** System of norms and values guiding actions and interactions of political actors (e.g. participatory tradition, conflict/consensus culture)

- **Leadership tradition:** Importance and type of leadership in policy processes, role of the state/government

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[5] The characteristics presented in Table 2 have been defined by means of content analysis from the complete list of propositions brought forward in the course of the COST Action.

Table 2 - continued

- **Sector tradition:** Degree of exclusiveness/inclusiveness of actor networks (e.g., strength of professional fraternities, sectoral "pillars")

- **Property rights tradition:** Actual style of designing and sustaining property rights

- **Ownership structure:** Degree to which ownership of forest areas is fragmented over different types of ownership and size classes

- **Regional differentiation:** Degree of distinction in physical, economical, social, etc. characteristics between regions within a country

- **Decentralisation:** Degree to which central government functions have been transferred or delegated to lower state agencies or to local governments

- **Legislative tradition:** Actual style of policy co-ordination through legislation and applied legal instruments

- **Regulatory flexibility:** Potential capacity to accept and to cope with changes in laws and regulations

- **International commitments:** Role, relevance and awareness of international agreements in the respective national context

Characteristics of the process

- **Relevance and awareness:** The attention given to the process in relation to the surrounding political context (e.g., public and media attention, political commitment and support etc.)

- **Resources:** The total means available for the process in itself as well as for the participating actors

- **Rules:** The principles and procedures governing and framing the process (e.g. code of conduct, voting rules etc.)

- **Facilitation:** Moderation of the process by an independent, non-biased person

- **Input:** Documents, papers, inputs of advisory bodies etc. forming the working basis of the NFP process

- **Information:** Access to relevant background materials for the participating actors

- **Communication:** The transmission of information between the participating actors themselves as well as from the participants to their clientele and to the general public

- **Stage of the policy process:** The phase within the policy cycle (e.g., agenda setting, formulation, implementation, evaluation) where a policy issue is located

- **Institutionalisation:** Embedding the behaviour of actors and NFP processes in a structured system by establishing co-ordination forums, rules, and procedures

- **Differentiation:** Splitting complex, multi-level co-ordination processes into more simple settings (e.g., by sequential ordering or regional differentiation)

- **International co-ordination:** The modes of co-operation between independent nations, e.g. by mutual adjustment, intergovernmental negotiations, or joint decision-making, for achieving a common approach

Content characteristics

- **"SMARTness":** The degree to which the topics discussed are **s**pecified, **m**easurable, **a**ccepted, **r**ealistic, and **t**ime-limited

- **Expected output:** The degree to which the output of the NFP process promises to correspond with the interests of the participants

- **Mix of policy instruments:** The combination of regulatory, financial, and informational policy means to achieve politically defined goals

In the course of the five working group meetings, a great number of propositions have been elaborated. The most important ones are summarised in Table 3–6.[6] For selection purposes, the following criteria have been used:

- relevance for policy makers
- controllability by policy makers
- empirical evidence
- theoretical value
- „boldness" (= not obvious or banal)

For policy makers the criterion of "*controllability*" should be of special interest. In the following tables, the right-hand column "Controllability" indicates the degree to which a policy variable can – in the short and medium term – be controlled or influenced by the relevant policy makers (i.e., by public authorities and influential interest groups). The assessment of the degree of controllability is based on preliminary expert judgements and differentiates between three different levels depending on whether a parameter is fully controllable by policy makers, whether it is partly controllable or whether it is not controllable at all (see legend following Table 3).

3.1 Characteristics of actors

The sequence of the following tables follows the overall approach of the COST Action (cf. Figure 1). After going into likely implications of the participant's characteristics (Table 3), a number of propositions on the impact of external factors are listed (Table 4), followed by others referring to characteristics of NFP processes (Table 5), and then those that address characteristics of potential NFP outputs (Table 6).[7] The most important propositions referring to the actor's characteristics are listed below.

Table 3: Propositions discussed with regard to characteristics of participants

Character-istics	Propositions		Controll-ability
Number & boundaries	1.	In an NFP process the probability of failure increases with a growing number of participants with different interests (because the probability of veto positions increases).	🔧
	2.	Small actor-networks facilitate tight informal relationships (social control) and make it easier to achieve high degrees of representativity, thus supporting NFP processes.	(🔧)
Status	3.	Hierarchical organisations tend to excessively veto bargaining solutions if these solutions don't comply with their interests.	✕
	4.	"Protest groups" will tend not to join an NFP process if this alienates the organisation's members.	✕
	5.	The more forest owners are collectively organised, the more they are likely to participate in the NFP process.	✕

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[6] The complete list of propositions as elaborated at the meetings can be found in the minutes of the respective Working Group meetings (see http://www.metla.fi/eu/cost/e19)

[7] The propositions are assigned to characteristics (left column) based on the independent variable, i.e. according to the explanatory factor within the proposition.

| Table 3 - continued		
	6. In NFP processes, it is difficult to involve local communities if they are not associated / organised at the regional or national level.	✗
	7. At lower levels of government the effects of policy means on the clients come to the fore, whereas at higher levels of governments more political dimensions come to the fore. Therefore, the readiness for inter-sectoral co-ordination is often higher at the lower levels of government.	✗
	8. Successful co-operation within an NFP process requires clearly identified roles of the participating actors to have higher probability of success.	(🔧)
	9. If multi-level, multi-arena processes not only involve actors who are primarily oriented towards party competition or specific group interests, but also persons or groups who act as "policy brokers", i.e., actors who mediate between conflicting parties and/or introduce new policy ideas, then situations of decision-making deadlock are less likely.	🔧
Mandate	10. Successful co-operation within an NFP process requires an optimal representation in relation to mandate and tasks. If the participating actors or groups have a clear mandate the probability of agreement increases; if some of the groups have no clear mandate the probability of agreement decreases.	🔧
Qualifi-cation	11. If the qualifications of the participants in an NFP process are mutually recognised and accepted by the group as a whole, then the possibility of reaching agreement increases.	(🔧)
Actors' expec-tations	12. The parties participating in an NFP process must have an influence on the outcome (political steering, democratic control) otherwise they are less likely to take part in the process in the long run.	🔧
	13. If central politicians and bureaucrats believe a particular NFP principle is important, they probably will tend to choose one of the three following options to strengthen it: a) if bureaucrats and politicians control an instrument believed to institute a form of the principle fitting into the existing bureaucratic procedures they are likely to apply it; b) if bureaucrats and politicians believe the principle is well instituted they are likely to signal support to it by a symbolical act; c) if bureaucrats and politicians do not have any means to institute a form of the principle fitting into the existing bureaucratic procedures they will not apply the respective principle.	🔧

Table 3 - continued		
14.	If central politicians and bureaucrats believe a particular NFP principle may threaten the growth of resources and competencies of the bureaucracy, they are likely to shape their proposal in ways minimising the threats for their interests.	🔧
15.	If central politicians and bureaucrats believe that the implementation of a particular NFP principle will be difficult to defend in public discourse, they will try either to frame or reformulate it to fit the prevailing world view of the relevant opinion makers, or to argue that it is already well taken care of and that there is no need for additional efforts.	🔧

Degree of controllability:
The column "Controllability" indicates the degree to which a policy variable can – in principle – be controlled/influenced by the relevant policy makers in the short or medium term (i.e., by public authorities and influential interest groups).

🔧 .... fully controllable by policy makers

(🔧) .... partly controllable by policy makers

✖ .... not controllable by policy makers

3.2 External factors of NFP
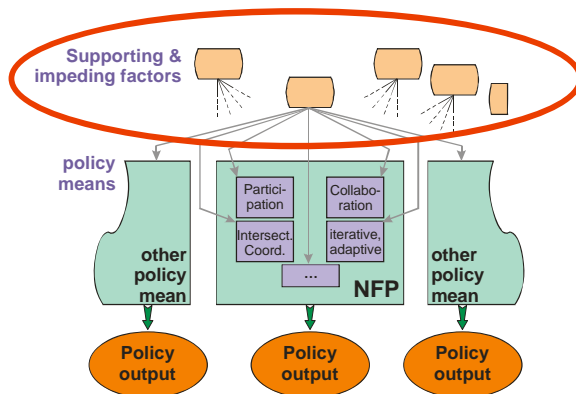
One of the main research tasks of the COST Action has been to assess supporting and impeding factors for the development of substantive NFPs. The conceptual model presented in Figure 1 depicts some of these external factors (highlighted in the schematic on the left). It is assumed that "external factors" such as political culture and land tenure determine how an NFP is developed and works in a particular country. Table 4 presents the most important policy-relevant propositions discussed in this regard. They shed some light on the influence that "external factors" might have on NFP processes and their likely outcome. Although many of these factors are not controllable for policy makers in the short- or medium-term, their impact has to be taken into account. They determine the basic frame conditions for NFP processes as well as for subsequent implementation.

Table 4:   Propositions discussed with regard to characteristics of external factors

Character-istics	Propositions	Controll-ability
Political culture	16. If the social and political culture of the country secures rights of participation, conflict resolution and adaptiveness, then it is more likely that the NFP process will succeed.	✖
	17. Government's anticipatory and active approach to problem solving and its tendency to make decisions through achieving agreement between interested parties is a supporting factor for NFPs.	✖

Table 4 - continued		
	18. Close co-operation between government and a selected number of employers' and employees' interest groups is an impeding factor of participation, co-ordination and conflict resolution capacities in NFP processes with regard to involving actors outside such a neo-corporatistic policy network.	✕
Leadership tradition	19. If, as it is most frequently found, the leadership for steering the NFP process is the forest administration and participation is focused on the traditional clientele (forestry and forest industry), then this impedes inter-sectoral co-ordination in an NFP process.	(🔧)
	20. If the political culture of a country is such as to deliver government driven forest programmes, then this likely leads to moderate or low participation, low inter-sectoral co-ordination and low conflict resolution capacities as well as to the predominance of "command and control" policy instruments.	✕
Sector tradition	21. The more rigid the distribution between formal authorities (e.g. ministries, departments), the less likely inter-sectoral co-ordination will occur.	🔧
Property rights tradition	22. Common property regimes on forests have much in common with an NFP process. Thus, members of forest common property regimes may contribute positively to an NFP process.	✕
Ownership structure	23. A diversity of forest property regimes reflecting different interests calls for more co-ordination and more participation in an NFP process.	✕
	24. The more private forest ownership is fragmented, the less is the owners' interest in SFM and the less likely they will participate in an NFP process.	✕
Regional differen-tiation	25. Forest owners' participation in NFP processes is more difficult if there is a significant regional differentiation of land tenure regimes that entails a deficit with regard to the unified representation of the forest owners at the national level.	✕
Decentra-lisation	26. If a number of policy areas that directly or indirectly relate to forests or forestry are under the responsibility of decentralised administrations (such as regional planning, agriculture, nature conservation and hunting), then this supports the development of sub-national forest programme processes.	✕
Legislative tradition	27. A legally binding framework of an NFP may support continuing, long term, iterative and adaptive planning processes independent from changes in the government.	🔧
Regulatory flexibility	28. If the implementation of the conceptual essentials of an NFP and its outputs (policy targets and instruments) call for fundamental changes in legal regulations, then it is likely that a lengthy and difficult process will evolve.	🔧
Internatio-nal commit-ments	29. If a country has political commitments in the international forest policy dialogue, then this is likely to trigger an NFP process.	🔧

Legend see Table 3.

3.3   Characteristics of the NFP processes
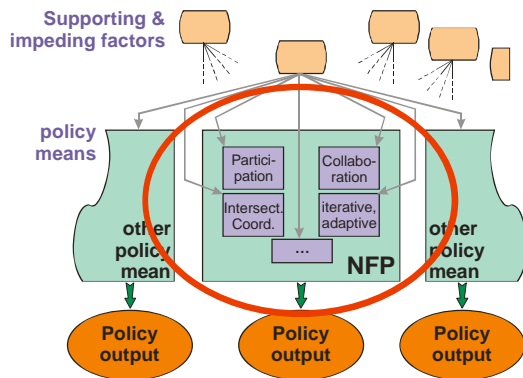
Another main research task of the COST Action is to interpret and discuss the institutional and the procedural requirements of NFPs and to evaluate their effects. The procedural essentials of NFPs, i.e. participatory, collaborative and inter-sectoral approaches as well as adaptive, iterative approaches, are located at the centre of Figure 1. This is not by accident. Taken together, they form the core of the NFP concept as far as the process dimension is concerned. In the course of the NFP process the procedural elements combined with the external factors and the actor's characteristics shape the NFP policy output. Within the actions overall conception the process can be seen as the connective element. Consequently, the following list of propositions is quite extensive. It deals with the characteristics of the NFP process and with their likely impacts (Table 5).

Table 5:   Propositions discussed with regard to characteristics of the NFP process

Character-istics	Propositions	Controll-ability
Relevance & awareness	30. The motivation of stakeholders to participate and actively involve themselves in the collaboration process rises with the relevance of the theme in society.	✗
	31. The higher the level of political attention in terms of political commitment and support, the more likely it is that an NFP will be accepted by the actors and that it will be successful.	(🔧)
	32. Politicisation of an issue in the NFP process may activate those actors who are less worried about the consequences of non-agreement, thus reducing the likelihood of consensual outputs.	(🔧)
	33. Political recognition and support makes the implementation of a non-legally binding NFP easier.	(🔧)
	34. The more an NFP is accepted by the public and by the authorities at the local and regional level (where implementation takes place), the more likely it is that it will be successful.	(🔧)
	35. In situations where the political agenda is dominated by few or even one issue, for example forest fires, it is hard for an NFP process to focus attention on the larger problem context (e.g. forest structures, extension).	✗
Resources	36. In order to achieve inter-sectoral linkages the empowerment of all key-stakeholders (also civil society) is needed.	(🔧)
	37. Lack of resources, both on the side of the process management and on the side of the actors to be involved, can undermine proactive participation and the potential commitment to an NFP process.	(🔧)
	38. The task of participating in decision-making on multiple levels favours those actors with the resources to finance such participation.	(🔧)

Table 5 – continued		
Rules	39. Adaptive collaboration and planning which is based on an iterative learning process between multiple stakeholders requires clear procedural rules.	🔧
	40. Missing or vague negotiation rules lead to trivial results.	🔧
	41. Actors will step out of the NFP process when there is no clear code of conduct of how to deal with minority-votes.	🔧
Facilitation	42. When an external consultant or moderator is in charge of a participation process, there will be more stakeholders integrated into the process.	🔧
	43. The NFP process will be more broadly accepted by the actors, when there is an independent and non-biased moderation of the process.	🔧
Input	44. Pre-prepared inputs (e.g. discussion papers on specific issues) delivered by one (powerful) actor makes open, visionary discussion more difficult.	🔧
	45. Independent scientific institutions can ensure that choices made in an NFP process correspond with the current state of scientific knowledge.	(🔧)
Information	46. The participants in an NFP process need balanced background information and possibilities for gathering new information.	🔧
	47. Access to knowledge about the relevant sectors facilitates cross-sectoral co-ordination by making arguments transparent and comprehensible.	🔧
Commun-ication	48. To achieve proactive behaviour in an NFP process, some stakeholders have to be activated through the media or personal contacts.	(🔧)
	49. Collaboration through deliberative processes can strengthen social capital (institutions, relationships, trust, civic norms etc.) and organisational capacity (leadership, management, physical and financial assets etc.) for joint action.	(🔧)
	50. When interests are diffuse, collaborative processes can generate learning through deliberation leading to visions of desired future conditions and joint action.	(🔧)
	51. The more the communication is directive, the less the chance for learning to occur.	(🔧)
	52. Participation can help to solve the problem of the process of "alienation" between people and their natural resources that is happening particularly in urbanized societies by engaging them in issues referring to it.	(🔧)
Stages of policy cycle	53. Early participation, when more options are still open, enhances the influence on decision-making.	🔧
	54. An effective participation process requires that the actors which are involved in the process of problem definition are involved in the implementation process as well. Otherwise resistance against implementation is more likely to arise.	🔧
	55. When the groups that are presumably affected by the outcomes of an NFP process get a chance to participate in the policy formulation process, the legitimacy and acceptance of the policies increase.	🔧

Table 5 – continued			
	56.	Involving a collaborative group in the implementation (including the evaluation) of an NFP will increase their motivation and the probability of the implementation.	🔧
	57.	To be able to assess the effects of an NFP, a defined system of monitoring, evaluation and feed-back in the process is needed.	🔧
Institutionalisation	58.	Once participation becomes accepted and practiced, it will be institutionalised.	(🔧)
	59.	Successful co-operation within an NFP process requires a commitment to stable relations over time.	🔧
	60.	If actors in charge of actual decision-making and implementation are actively involved in vertical co-ordination efforts, information flows in both directions are enhanced. With that, policy formulation at upper levels (e.g. the national level) takes into account constraints and opportunities at the lower levels, and decision-makers at the lower levels are committed to proper implementation.	🔧
	61.	In a multi-level setting, if one specific sector dominates at every level, tight relations within this sector usually facilitate vertical co-ordination but may often hamper inter-sectoral co-ordination.	✕
	62.	In order to promote inter-sectoral co-ordination, one must use or create inter-sectoral institutions, e.g. inter-ministerial committees and inter-sectoral platforms of interest groups.	🔧
	63.	Iterative voluntary negotiation processes only work when there is a "shadow of hierarchy", i.e. when the participants have to assume that a legitimate authority will take a decision anyway, if the process does not reach common agreement.	🔧
	64.	Policy-oriented learning in an NFP-process is most likely when there is a forum that is (i) prestigious enough to force professionals from conflicting groups to participate; and (ii) dominated by professional norms.	(🔧)
Differentiation	65.	The likelihood of deadlock of co-ordination processes in which many actors and levels are involved (e.g. the European, the national and the regional) can be reduced by differentiating co-ordination arenas with regard to the sequence of political decision-making (e.g. deciding about basic goals and principles in one arena, and about budgets, regional programmes and projects in others).	🔧
	66.	The likelihood of deadlock of co-ordination processes in which many actors and levels are involved can also be reduced by differentiating between arenas dealing with *distributive* issues (i.e. about the distribution of costs and benefits between groups or regions) and those dealing with the *substantive* issues (e.g. which instruments to apply).	🔧
	67.	The likelihood of deadlock of co-ordination processes in which many actors and levels are involved can also be reduced by territorial differentiation of arenas and therewith by applying bi- or tri-lateral modes of co-ordination rather than multi-lateral settings. This means, for example, that a forum established at the national level does not co-ordinate with numerous of regional arenas (e.g. at the level of provinces and districts) simultaneously, but with one region at a time.	🔧

Table 5 – continued			
	68.	Overall co-ordination among differentiated arenas can be facilitated by patterns of "loose coupling" , i.e. co-ordination by means of communication, information and persuasion but not by command-and-control relations among arenas.	🔧
International Co-ordination	69.	With regard to the comparability of NFPs in different countries, co-ordination between countries based on "mutual adjustment" that is just reacting to actions taken by other countries without deliberate co-ordination may lead to competition of systems, often entailing a "pressure to lower standards".	✕
	70.	The chances of *cross-border policy learning* are increased if it is not only the international liaison officials but the actors in charge of national forest policy formulation and implementation who are actively involved in international co-ordination and exchange.	(🔧)
	71.	If a common approach towards NFPs is under discussion at the international level, co-ordination by pure intergovernmental negotiations runs the risk of excluding highly relevant but conflicting issues and ending up in agreements reflecting the lowest common denominator and/or vague terms. Since all participating countries have a veto, agreements are limited to solutions that are preferable to the status quo from the perspective of all of them.	✕

Legend see Table 3.

3.4   Characteristics of NFP outputs
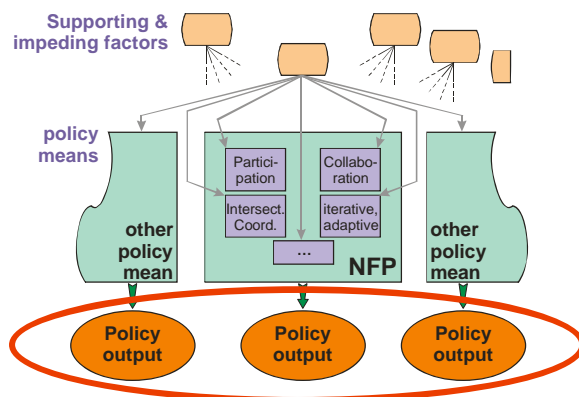
Finally, NFP processes will develop policy outputs, comprising more or less explicitly defined goals and the means to achieve them. This stage of the policy process is depicted at the bottom of Figure 1. However, already before policy outputs are achieved, the actors' expectations concerning the likely results of an NFP process are important. Table 6 deals with these aspects. It comprises a number of propositions that refer to characteristics of the content of NFP outputs.

Table 6: Propositions discussed with regard to characteristics of the content of NFP outputs

Character-istics	Propositions	Controll-ability
SMARTness	72. An NFP is more likely to have a long-term impact and lead to changes in forest policy, when it contains clear directives for action (aims, measures, time-frames).	🔧
Expected Output	73. The willingness to enter into a participatory planning process increases if the relevant actors believe that there will be a win-win solution.	✕
	74. The more actors expect to be affected by the output of an NFP, the more they are likely to participate.	(🔧)
	75. Identifying "common goals", which can be either common interests or common problems that should be tackled, are important to bring and keep actors at the table for negotiations.	(🔧)
	76. The readiness of actors to take part in an NFP process is likely to be considerably increased when a clear financial commitment is integrated in the NFP formulation, e.g. when forest subsidies are to be based on NFP outputs.	🔧
	77. The willingness to co-operate at decentralised levels often strongly depends on financial "stimulating effects" from the central levels, i.e. when future funding for the decentralised levels is tied to the NFP.	🔧
Mix of policy instruments	78. Because of the heterogeneity of the stakeholders, it is more likely to motivate active participation if an NFP process addresses an integrated set of policy instruments, for example informational instruments, public financial instruments combined with support for extension services and collective organisation (e.g. of small scale forest owners).	🔧
	79. If an NFP process/output does not address appropriate support for knowledge creation (research) and management activities (extension, training) complementary to other instruments, then implementation failures are more likely.	🔧

Legend see Table 3.

4   Conclusions: exemplifying some propositions on NFPs

The members of COST Action E19 "National Forest Programmes in a European Context" agreed on the investigation of the procedural requirements as well as the impeding and supporting factors of NFPs for ensuring sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of European forests. On the basis of existing hypotheses and empirical observations, they formulated a series of propositions on the influence of factors that are elements of an NFP and on the influence of external factors. The former comprise characteristics of participants, characteristics of the NFP process, and characteristics of the content of NFP outputs. The latter represent the environment outside the NFP process. Some of these factors can be modified by the intervention of relevant policy makers in the short or the medium term (e.g., the number of participants in the NFP process), others can not (e.g., the fragmentation of forest ownership or the organisation of forest owners). The degree of "controllability" is indicated in the right-hand column of Table 3–6. This kind of information is meant to enable actors of NFP processes to assess which "screws" can be moved in order to influence NFP processes in the desired direction, e.g. to achieve substantive NFPs instead of solely "symbolic" processes and outputs.

Due to the characteristics of COST Actions, the propositions on NFPs are neither complete nor sufficiently scrutinized, but they provide a basis for achieving a better understanding of NFP processes. This final chapter is meant to shown how the propositions presented in Table 3–6 are to be understood for practical application, how they point to certain aspects that might be crucial in the initiation and the implementation of NFPs. It aims to stimulate thinking about the propositions against the background of the respective national context.

Actors of NFP processes

At its core, NFPs have been seen in the COST Action as policy processes that are characterised by certain procedural characteristics, namely by the so-called "conceptual essentials", i.e., participatory, inter-sectoral and collaborative approaches that aim at co-ordination of political actors in an iterative and adaptive process that facilitates policy oriented learning. It is the actors who would have to bear such a process. They have to decide individually whether to engage or not to engage in such a collective endeavour that will often be quite uncertain as regards its outputs and at the same time entails significant efforts and expenses for the individual actors.

Before an NFP process is started, one of the basic questions is *"who participates?"*. The answer depends on several factors, among other things, on the potential actors' abilities and willingness. Both aspects are addressed by propositions in Table 3. At the national level, it is not the individual (e.g. a forest owner or an hotelier) who participates – except on the occasion of public hearings or via the media – but individuals have to be represented by organized actors (interest groups). This presupposes collective organisations. Groups affected but not organised appropriately run the risk of being unheard (cf. propositions 5. and 6.). Therefore, those who are responsible for initiating NFP processes might consider spending resources for facilitating capacity building for collective organisations; however, capacity building usually takes time and is therefore hardly "controllable", i.e. influenceable in the short or medium term.

Having access and being equipped with capacities to contribute to NFP processes are necessary preconditions for an actor's involvement. But they are not sufficient. Since, by definition, NFPs are voluntary processes, actors also have to be *willing* to get involved. This, in turn, depends on both the relevance of the topics to be dealt with (prop. 30. – 35.) and on

the actors' expectations with regard to the likely outcomes. An evident assumption is that actors will only invest time and efforts if they can assume to have an adequate influence on the outcomes to be expected (prop. 12.). But even then, some group representatives may have reasons not to join such a process, for instance, if they must consider their clienteles' reluctance against taking part in a collaborative process (prop. 4.).

At any rate, whether actors can expect to influence a policy process and its outcomes also depends on the stage of the policy cycle in which they can participate. As a rule, early participation, when the issues, the goals and principles are still under discussion and when all options are still open, enhances the influence on decision-making (prop. 53.). Moreover, the legitimacy and acceptance of policies resulting from NFP processes will usually benefit from having the groups that will be affected participating at the policy formulation stage (prop. 55.). Beyond that, the potential resistance against implementation can be decreased by involving those actors who participated in policy formulation at the stage of implementation (prop. 54.).

Groups willing to take part and to actively contribute to an NFP process will have to delegate representatives that act on their behalf. This is, as it turned out from a number of country experiences, another critical step. The likelihood of substantive agreements seems to increase with an adequate representation of the affected actors, both with regard to the tasks to be dealt with and with regard to their *mandate* in the NFP process. If some of the participants have no clear mandate, the probability of substantive agreements decreases (prop. 10.).

Whether and how the actors can deploy their expertise and mandate is primarily determined by the characteristics of the NFP process (cf. Table 5). The latter, in turn, is embedded in the broader national political environment, hence determined by the "external factors" (e.g. political culture).

The influence of "external factors"

External factors constitute the political environment of an NFP. If an NFP process is launched one faces the specific characteristics of the political system of that country; their influence on NFP processes is exemplified in Table 4.

Generally speaking, the more a country's political culture corresponds to the conceptual essentials of NFPs, e.g. as regards securing rights of participation and having traditions in adaptive long-term planning and in cross-sectoral policy co-ordination, the more likely an NFP process will succeed (prop. 16.). A neo-corporatistic mode of governance, i.e., a tradition of close co-operation between the government and a small number of selected interest groups, is rather an impeding factor (prop. 18.), whereas a proactive and consensus-seeking policy style (prop. 17.) can be seen as a supporting factor of NFPs.

Whatever political culture actually exists, it can hardly be influenced in the short or medium term. By contrast, clientele capture of forest administration often impedes inter-sectoral co-ordination (prop. 19.), but must not be taken as unchangeable. Also, at least in the medium and in the long term, a legally binding framework of an NFP could be enacted and could support the institutionalisation of an adaptive, continuous co-ordination process (prop.27.).

Forest owners are both central clients for and actors in NFPs. Accordingly, the current structures of forest ownership and property rights are an important external factor. Common property regimes, for example, have much in common with the NFP concept. For instance, they imply the need for participatory decision-making and for conflict resolution mechanisms. Hence, it is assumed that representatives of forest common property regimes who are used to these procedural elements may contribute positively to NFP processes (prop. 22.).

Furthermore, both the diversity of existing forest property regimes and the fragmentation of forest ownership are seen as influential factors. First, the more diverse existing property regimes, the more diverse ownership interests will be, hence increasing the need for co-ordination in NFP processes (prop. 23.). Second, it can be assumed that the more forest ownership is fragmented, the lower will be the owner's interests in SFM (at least from an economic point of view) and the less likely that they will participate in an NFP process (prop. 24.).

Procedural aspects of NFP processes

However, an actor's motivation depends not only on the relevance of the topics,   expectations concerning the likely outputs, and on external factors (like the political culture of a country and the existing ownership structure), but also equally depends upon the characteristics of the process.

As already emphasised, NFP processes will normally be time- and resource-consuming. This implies that actors who are well endowed with resources are likely to be favoured in a long and intensive participatory processes, in particular if such processes entail the need to participate in several forums at the national, regional and local levels (prop. 38.). Furthermore, process management and facilitation also require adequate resources (prop. 37.). Particularly, using external consultants and/or moderators to manage and to facilitate an NFP process might help to integrate more stakeholders in the process (prop. 42.), thus leading to wider acceptance of the NFP and its policy outputs and outcomes. (prop. 43.). In addition, recognizing the importance of information from independent scientific institutions helps to comply with the state of knowledge (prop. 45.) and to build trust among actors by developing an agreed upon base of information. Similarly, providing balanced background information and access to knowledge about the relevant sectors serves the same end and helps to facilitate improved cross-sectoral co-ordination (prop. 46. and 47.).

All the aspects discussed in the paragraph above, e.g. whether to mandate external moderators, whether to provide a budgets, and many more (e.g. about goals, principles and decision rules) can be agreed among the participants and constitute a "code of conduct", a "process guidebook". It is important to note that a number of propositions elaborated in this COST Action emphasise the importance of clear rules. They state that long-term, iterative collaboration processes between multiple stakeholders require clear procedural rules, probably stipulated in "procedural agreements", "codes of conduct" or the like (prop. 39.). Otherwise such processes are likely to result in trivial results (prop. 40.), or in discontent leading actors to withdraw from the process (prop. 41.).

One of the main goals of NFPs that is strongly emphasised in political rhetoric and in theory but that, at the same time, seems to be broadly neglected in practice, is "inter-sectoral co-ordination". In some cases this may be due to the dominance of one sector that enjoys a central position at every level within a multi-level decision-making structure. Such a situation may well facilitate vertical co-ordination, but at the expense of inter-sectoral co-ordination (prop. 61.). In particular, in such situations inter-sectoral institutions might have to be created to promote cross-sector exchange and co-ordination (e.g. inter-ministerial committees, inter-sectoral platforms of interest groups; cf. prop. 62.).

In general, co-ordination processes that comprise multiple sectors and multiple levels of political decision making generate quite complex interaction patterns, decision-making structures and procedures which go along with an increasing likelihood of decision-making deadlock. Empirical evidence, both from the field of forest policy but in particular from other policy domains point to different forms of arena differentiation, i.e. to institutional designs promising to make the overall structures and procedures less complex and thus more efficient

and effective (cf. prop. 65. – 67.). The complexity can be reduced by differentiating arenas of co-ordination according to regions (e.g., differentiation among provinces, cf. prop. 67.), by differentiating between arenas according to steps of the overall decision-making process (e.g., differentiating arenas which decide on basic goals, principles and overall budgets from others which deal with regional programmes and concrete projects; cf. prop. 65.), or by differentiating arenas that deal with the distributive issues (i.e., the distribution of costs and costs and benefits) from arenas that deal with the more substantive issues (cf. prop. 66.). In either case, overall co-ordination among differentiated arenas has to be ensured, e.g. by facilitating communication and by institutionalising possibilities for mutual persuasion (cf. prop. 68.).

The (expected) content of NFP outputs

It has been emphasised that the actor's expectations as regards the likely output of NFPs are decisive in terms of their willingness to participate. Their willingness basically depends on whether they expect to be affected by the NFP at all (prop. 74.) and it may increase if the actors expect NFPs to result in win-win solutions, i.e. that the results will be advantageous for all participants (prop. 73.). Another key for keeping actors at the table and contributing actively to collaborative NFP processes might be to identify "common issues" (common goals, common interests, and common conflicts) to be dealt with at the outset (prop. 75.).

Another motivational factor is "financial commitment" that is linked to an NFP. In general it can be assumed that the readiness of actors to participate and to contribute to NFP processes increases when an NFP process is connected to a clear financial commitment (prop. 76.). It can be reasoned from the experiences of other policy domains, that particularly the willingness of actors from decentralised levels (e.g. from the regional level) to co-operate in an NFP may largely depend on the financial "stimulating effect" from the central levels, if, for example, regional funding from central budgets is tied to NFP outputs (prop. 77.).

NFP processes will result in outputs. According to Figure 1 the NFP output may comprise, for instance, revised definitions of SFM, changes in procedural and institutional aspects of forest policy-making and – more generally speaking - all kinds of policy instruments. As regards the actor's motivations to participate, it was argued that if a diverse set of different policy instruments is addressed in forest policy processes, it may facilitate the actor's commitments, due to their heterogeneity as clients of the policies (prop. 78.). What is still open then is whether such policies will finally have an impact. Since hardly any NFP in European countries has reached the implementation stage, propositions about that "stage" are necessarily quite general. Anyway, it is assumed that an NFP is more likely to result in long-term impacts if the outputs define clear directives for action, i.e. aims, measures and time-frames for implementation (prop. 72.). For being able to assess the effects of an NFP and its outputs and to learn from its success and failures, a well-defined system of monitoring, evaluation and feed-back in the process is an essential component of an NFP (prop. 57.).

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ANNEX 1

Summary of Background Papers

For providing common references on central conceptual aspects of NFP processes so-called *background papers* have been prepared.[8] These background papers dealt with the four conceptual essentials (participation and collaboration, inter-sectoral co-ordination, and iterative planning) plus the aspect of decentralisation. These papers are briefly summarized in the following by outlining *definitions*, *rationales* and approaches towards measurement (*operational criteria*).

Public Participation and Collaboration

Definition

Public participation is defined as a set of voluntary processes whereby people, individually or through organized groups, can exchange information, express opinions and articulate interests, and have the potential to influence decisions or the outcome of the matter at hand (cf. FAO/ECE/ILO Team of Specialists on Participation in Forestry 2000). Efficient participation also requires a procedure resting upon transparency and fairness, and this calls for a structured process, a framework, not least important in facilitating a dialogue based on equality between the different stakeholders.

Rationale

Participation is a pro-active approach to create more understanding for objectives and problems and possible ways to solve them. It is a set of procedures and methods for collaborating and learning, a means to increase knowledge of the factual situation, bring forward possible options to be studied, and given this, be a help in deciding what to do and a base for discussions and negotiations.

The increased belief in public participation also reflects an enlightened aspect of democracy, providing a basis for thinking in alternatives. Participation can contribute to the formulation as well as the implementation of environmental policy and law. It is as relevant in decision-making processes concerning general plans and programmes (for example National Forest Programmes) as in specific projects.

Advantages expected from participatory approaches are:

- to avoid and anticipate possible conflicts;
- to resolve ongoing conflicts;
- to predict the impact of proposed actions (reactions and concerns);
- to pass on and gather information;
- (for the authorities) to learn about new ideas and alternatives to proposed plans and actions;
- to induce the development and use of 'local expertise'.

But participation can, in many cases, be time-consuming, costly, and obstructive ("Let sleeping dogs lie.").

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[8] Appelstrand (2002), Barstad (2002), Hogl (2002), Neven (2002)

<u>Operational criteria</u>

For a high degree of participation the following preconditions are to be recognized:

- early participation, when all options are open;
- true opportunity to take part in the process;
- sufficient financial resources to support participation;
- use of an independent moderator/facilitator;
- transparency and openness;
- access to all relevant information;
- authority to take part in developing the actual plan or decision (having a decisional, not just a consultative role);
- political commitment to use the outcome;
- right to legal review and right to appeal;
- procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the process;
- recognition that it is a long-term, adaptive and iterative process.

Inter-sectoral co-ordination

<u>Definition</u>

Inter-sectoral co-ordination is about the organisation and reconciliation of different processes and activities. In policy terms, it means reconciling the policies and programmes of different sectors. Sectors are said to be co-ordinated when their respective policies and programmes show minimum *redundancy* (two initiatives doing the same without considering each other), minimum *incoherence* (different goals and requirements), and a minimum of *untackled issues* ("policy gaps").

<u>Rationale</u>

Co-ordination becomes relevant whenever the decisions of two or more units (actors, policy networks etc.) are *interdependent*. Inter-sectoral co-ordination is likely to lead to more effective public policies due to enhanced governance knowledge, mutual learning, reduced risk of deadlock in decision-making, avoidance of unintended side-effects, and the prevention of implementation resistance. Furthermore, inter-sectoral co-ordination may gain from transparent and participatory procedures in terms of more obvious legitimacy.

The benefits expected from inter-sectoral co-ordination are:

- to achieve goals which cannot be achieved alone;
- to increase the chance that those policy alternatives are chosen which are most likely to result in the highest overall gains;
- to help to prevent overall losses because of policies that entail positive effects for individual actors, but disadvantages from an overall point of view;
- to provide legitimacy and acceptance to public policy.

<u>Operational criteria</u>

Inter-sectoral co-ordination can be characterized by the following features:
- the number of integrated sectors (one = intra-sectoral, some, ..., all sectors affected);
- the time-frame of co-ordination (short-term, medium-term, long-term);
- the reiterativeness (one-shot event, ..., open-ended iterative);

- the stage(s) of the policy cycle concerned (formulation, implementation, evaluation or the whole cycle);
- the interaction patterns applied (hierarchical direction without considering other sectors, …, negative co-ordination, …, positive co-ordination among all involved);
- the way power is exercised to constrain co-ordinated sectors (top-down imposition, …, negotiation on an equal basis, …., bottom-up approach to influence decisions of co-ordinated sectors);
- the degree of institutionalisation (non-legally/legally; informal/formal, amount of resources devoted to a co-ordinating institution).

Iterative planning processes

Definition

Iterative planning refers to planning processes where there is a stepwise movement towards a goal, instead of a "momentary leap" from problem to solution. At intervals, the situation is evaluated and necessary steps are taken to ensure that the process is "on track" towards a solution. In addition, the setting of goals is a revolving process also: long-term goals are formulated in a strategic plan; this plan can be adapted through administrative planning, and the daily operative work.

Rationale

Policy problems can rarely be solved by means of an instrumental (rational) planning model, i.e. by finding the best solution to precise and limited questions. Policy problems are normally found to show quite a different character: Instead of a single issue, several issues arise at the same time; instead of limitations regarding time, scope, themes, stakeholders etc, we have inter-connections between them. Generally, this leads to situations where policy makers have to choose between marginally different changes within the existing set of values; a series of small steps based on dialogue and argumentation ("piecemeal engineering", "muddling through").

Operational criteria

Processes with a high degree of iterativity are characterized by the following features:

- applicability in situations with a high degree of uncertainty;
- low degree of strictly defined goals;
- goals with a low to a medium degree of measurability;
- more continuous time-scopes (e.g. not fiscal years but more "natural intervals");
- continuous process of stakeholder-mobilisation;
- equal power to stakeholders;
- continuous evaluation.

Decentralisation[9]

Definition

Decentralisation refers to a process or situation of transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to intermediate and local governments or quasi-independent government organizations and/or the private sector.[10]

Rationale

In the last decade, there has been a manifest trend toward decentralisation. This trend is driven by a range of "push and pull" factors, including efforts – frequently the need – to reduce central bureaucracies and cut budgets, a history of government forest management failures (often due to poor information and lack of incentives), increased economic liberalization and market orientation, and growing commitment to more socially just and equitable forest management.

Decentralisation can …
- help alleviate the bottlenecks in decision making that are often caused by central government planning and control of important economic and social activities;
- help cut complex bureaucratic procedures and increase government official's sensitivity to local conditions and needs;
- help national government ministries reach larger numbers of local areas with services;
- allow greater political representation for diverse political, ethnic, religious, and cultural groups in decision-making;
- relieve top managers in central ministries of "routine" tasks;
- provide better opportunities for participation by local residents in decision making;
- lead to more creative, innovative and responsive programmes by allowing local "experimentation";
- increase political stability and national unity by allowing citizens to better control public programmes at the local level.

But *decentralisation* is not a panacea, and it does have potential disadvantages. *Decentralisation* can …
- result in the loss of economies of scale;
- result in inefficiencies due to weak administrative or technical capacity at local levels;
- make coordination of national policies more complex;
- allow functions to be captured by local elites.

In most countries an appropriate balance of centralization and decentralisation is essential to the effective and efficient functioning of government.

Operational criteria

A high degree of decentralisation is characterized by the following features:

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[9] This aspect was not dealt with as a „conceptual essential" of NFPs as defined by the group but it was an element which was especially relevant with regard to the discussions of external factors.

[10] Different types of decentralisation should be distinguished because they have different characteristics, policy implications, and conditions for success: political decentralisation; administrative decentralisation; fiscal decentralisation; economic or market decentralisation.

- Powers and responsibilities in policy formulation and implementation are transferred from a central authority to autonomous sub-systems.
- The degree of free decision-making of the sub-systems is regulated by a wide choice-set.
- The sub-systems are financially independent from the central authority.
- The central authority cannot enforce policies without affirmation of the sub-systems.
- The sub-systems participate in decision-making of the central authority.
- Sub-national levels have flexibility to determine some of their own priorities.

ANNEX 2

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