

European Forests – Our Cultural Heritage

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Meeting website: <http://www.forstverein.at/de/forstgeschichte/>

Cultural landscapes are considered to be a development factor. Their potential has only partly been investigated so far. There is an increasing interest by forest owners who look for new markets and additional income beside forestry, and by tourism enterprises in utilizing forest areas and beautiful sceneries. Even though there are numerous initiatives, collections and museums, they are often not adequately connected. Therefore, new approaches towards enhancing co-operation between forest and woodland history, including traditional knowledge, and forest and tourist enterprises should be taken, and the growing need to deepen knowledge about forest-related cultural heritage should be met.

On 4–7 December 2018, IUFRO Working Parties 9.03.01 Economic and Social Forest History <https://www.iufro.org/science/divisions/division-9/90000/90300/90301/> and 9.03.02 Forest and Culture <https://www.iufro.org/science/divisions/division-9/90000/90300/90302/> as well as IUFRO Research Group 9.03.00 <https://www.iufro.org/science/divisions/division-9/90000/90300/> Forest History and Traditional Knowledge, were involved in the meeting on “European Forests – Our Cultural Heritage” held in St. Georgen am Längsee, Carinthia, Austria. The event was supported by the Austrian Forest Association, the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, the Estonian State Forest Management Centre Tallinn, and the ‘Österreichischer Walddialog’ and gathered 37 participants from 16 countries.

The conference was unique in so far as it highlighted and discussed the topic of cultural heritage forest from the viewpoints of the most diverse scientific disciplines, including, among others, landscape ecology, archeology, environmental policy, social history, dendrochronology, biology, botany, mapping, forest management, forestry history and tourism. The exploration and representation of cultural sites as well as their current relevance were discussed. As diverse as the research areas and perspectives was the circle of participants, which spanned the whole of Europe; from England to Romania and from Estonia to Italy and Spain.

Discussions focused on:

- Historical land use assessments
- Ancient monuments and other cultural remains in the forest
- Historical sites and artefacts in the forest



Participants in front of the conference venue Monastery St. Georgen am Längsee, Austria. Photo by Walburga Litschauer

- Sharing and improving knowledge concerning the cultural heritage
- Cultural heritage in and of the forest
- Best practices for including traditional knowledge into forest management
- Recognizing the cultural and spiritual values in forest management
- Essential tools in applying cultural and spiritual aspects in practical forestry operations
- History of former utilization practices and techniques applied
- Historical elements as a physical part of cultural heritage
- Immaterial cultural heritage such as knowledge

One of the main conclusions of the meeting is that to maintain and safeguard the cultural heritage of European forests it is necessary to incorporate the knowledge about cultural heritage into today's forest management plans. The integration of this knowledge into tourism concepts can provide valuable assistance here.

Proceedings will be published by the Czech Academy of Sciences in 2019. A demand for further conferences related to the topics discussed has been expressed by several participants.