

Forest Law Experts Meeting in the Heart of Europe

By Rastislav Sulek, Vice-rector of the Technical University Zvolen, and Peter Herbst, Coordinator of IUFRO [6.13.00](#)

On the occasion of their 11th International Symposium on "Legal Aspects of European Forest Sustainable Development", IUFRO 6.13.00 returned to the heart of Europe, namely to Slovakia. Slovakia with its rich history in forestry education, research and practice, was the ideal place for that meeting of experts active in forest law and environmental legislation eager to review the state of the subject and to set priorities concerning further research and practice.

The meeting focussed on two major issues: Firstly, the development of modern forest legislation and implementation of forest policy tools in different countries with special emphasis on the West Balkan countries, and secondly, the balance between forestry and nature conservation at public and/or private property level including collisions between regulations in forest laws and environment related legislation. Special attention was devoted to the problems of forest management in protected areas, considering actual threats such as bark beetle calamities induced by biotope protection forests, and the processes of harmonization of activities that "have to be done" and those that "are not allowed to be done" under such regimes.

Nowadays, forestry has achieved recognition as a global issue and sustainable multi-purpose forestry has become the government's policy in many countries. Forests are considered as one of the essential and most important components of the environment. However, in many countries, there is still conflict that originates from different objectives of different interest groups. On the one hand, there are forest owners who want to utilize their forests in the sense of their legitimate property rights, originating from the general constitutional rights. On the other hand, there is an interest of the whole society which wants to care for ecological balance and effective environmental policy, including nature protection. In order to solve such conflicts, it is necessary to use different tools of forest and environmental policy and legislation. The consideration of diverse values and interests of various stakeholders by means of multi-professional teamwork of experts, inter-agency co-operation, public participation, and settlement of controversies concerning land-use alternatives through negotiation seem to be the future for research in this field.



Photo by Peter Herbst: Participants in front of the Technical University in Zvolen



Photo by Peter Herbst: Karel Vancura (center), receiving the IUFRO Distinguished Service Award (DSA) during the Zvolen meeting. From left to right: Rastislav Šulek, Heinrich Schmutzenhofer, Karel Vancura, Jan Tuček, Peter Herbst

The symposium took place from 13-15 May 2009 in Zvolen Slovakia and was attended by 24 researchers and practitioners from sixteen different countries including Canada, Japan and Iran. It was kindly hosted by the Technical University of Zvolen, Faculty of Forestry and supported by the host organization as well as the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Switzerland. The meeting was organized by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rastislav Sulek and his staff at the Technical University in Zvolen, including Mariana Krivosikova and Jan Lichy, as well as Peter Herbst (IUFRO 6.13.00). The high relevance of this meeting was emphasized by the continued active participation of the rector of the Technical University in Zvolen, Prof. Dr. Jan Tuček.