



“Sustainable forestry needs competent and viable contractors”

The mission statement of the European Network of Forest Entrepreneurs summarises the rationale for the recently launched project ConCert¹, which aims at the development of curricula for entrepreneurial competences of forestry contractors.

Today, more than 50,000 mainly small or micro enterprises are responsible for carrying out the majority of forest operations in Europe. These forestry contractors are on the move to becoming a highly professional sector. Further development is crucially required to ensure the

further availability of a workforce which is needed both in number and competence to provide forest owners and the forest based industry with services in forest operations and management. To this end forestry work has to become more attractive to workers, and the business has to be profitable to attract keen and competent people to run and maintain forest service enterprises.

A key to success is qualification and training. While there are numerous training schemes for workers in most European countries, ConCert focuses on contractors and on attendants of vocational education who consider to become contractors.

Under leadership of the Centre Forestier de la région Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (France) ConCert has drawn together a project group consisting of the Kuratorium für Waldarbeit und Forsttechnik (KWF, Germany), Tampere College (Finland) and the European Network of Forest Entrepreneurs (ENFE).

Competences and skills are a key for running an enterprise successfully

The requirements for the quality of services are steadily increasing, and the forest operation and logistics processes become more and more complex. Legal requirements for employment and social security have to be met, and certification of forest management goes along with a full range of requirements for the quality of performance, and with demands particularly for the protection of stands and biodiversity.

Until now there are virtually no training measures available which are addressed at the training demand for contractors' management skills. Education and training is assigned to impart technical skills to operators and workers. Higher academic level training still seems to relate to the knowledge and skills for managing a forest property, but rather rarely to manage a service enterprise. So there is an obvious gap in training in most European countries.

¹ ConCert is a Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation project which is partly funded by the European Commission in the Lifelong Learning Programme. Project Number: 2009-1-FR1-LEO05-06968.

ConCert – European Certificate of Competence for Forestry Contractors – Outline





An obstacle to further education of contractors is that time and resources allocated to training are rather limited due to the high economic pressure contractors face in their day to day business. Many contractors who already are in business have a keen practical knowledge of their operations and a high level of technical skills, either obtained in vocational training or in training on the job, but they rarely achieved training or education for managerial tasks.

The competence requirements need to be met with training offers on vocational training level, and in further education schemes which need to be designed in a way that they really meet the actual training needs of contractors who are already in business.

A Certificate of Competence must be European

The prove of competences of contractors and forestry workers more and more becomes a requirement in the technical specifications of tenders for forest operations, and it is one of the core requirements in the criteria of the major forest management certification schemes. The ConCert training and certification shall be designed in a way, that a certificate for the successful attendance in ConCert training can deliver this evidence.

The reasons are obvious, that the training standards and the training content must be developed and certified on European level. Free movement of services within the European Union already is the order of the day, particularly when one observes the high number of enterprises which work outside their own country when a storm has hit a forest area, and at the latest in 2014 the free movement of workers will be reality for all citizens of the European Union. It needs to be ensured, that a certificate obtained in one country will be understood and acknowledged in the second country. Therefore, ConCert aims at a training curriculum which will be implemented in all European countries, and which will be certified according to European standards.

A Curriculum based on knowledge of good practice and actual training demand

ConCert will deliver a curriculum for managerial tasks in small and medium forest enterprises that will be based on the knowledge of good practice in forest operations which has been compiled in the "Guide to Good Practice in Forest Contracting"². This guide offers a wide range of examples for enterprise and competence development which can be used as learning content in ConCert training.

However, we start the process with defining the competences of contractors which are required to cope with the future demands for managing an enterprise successfully. A lot of work has already been done in the past with developing tools for skills assessment, both of contractors and workers, starting in our project ENQuaFor³ and further refined in COMFOR⁴. The skills assessment tool will be used to achieve a solid knowledge about education needs

² This guide is published by the FAO and can be downloaded from the ENFE Website.

³ www.enquafor.com

⁴ <http://www.enfe.net/comforopen/comfor.htm>



for contractors. Based on this knowledge, a curriculum will be designed, and it will be tested in at least three training centres to ensure its practical applicability.

The project ConCert has a duration of just two year, so by October 2011 the curriculum shall be ready to be provided to all European countries via the ENFE and its membership, and by the wider Eduforest Network.

A certificate which will be managed by a competent agency

Of course any certificate that attempts to be credible and reliable needs to be managed and governed competently. The ideal body for this purpose will be the European Forestry and Environmental Skills Council (EFESC) which is in the process of founding. EFESC is an entity that will be established to manage the European Chainsaw Standard (ECS) which equally is in the process of development and supported by a Leonardo da Vinci grant⁵. EFESC is the initiative of experts from forestry training centres and industry and shall become the umbrella organisation which manages European forestry and environmental skills certificates.

ConCert: An important pillar in the contractor development strategy

Like said in the introduction, enterprise development and competence development are crucially needed to prepare the forestry contracting sector for the future demands from forest management and forest based industries. Therefore ENFE, the European Network of Forest Entrepreneurs follows a strategy of research and development which serves its membership with tools for continuous development.

Management competences form a basis of entrepreneurship and successful businesses. Therefore ConCert has an outstanding importance in the development strategy.

A number of recent and actual projects under leadership or participation of, and contribute to the overall goal of viable forest enterprises ENFE established the networks to implement results.

Training and Competence Development

- ENQuaFor
- Innovawood EDU
- EFESC
- **ConCert**

Health and Safety

- Ergowood
- COMFOR
- Safety and Forestry Training

⁵ reference to project website to be added as soon as website is online.

- Quality Management and Certification
- Good Practice in Forest Contracting
 - CeFCo⁶
 - EFECT

All these projects and initiatives are closely bound into a enterprise development strategy. They build upon each other and are assigned to form complementary elements in the European Forest Entrepreneurs Certificate EFECT which is under construction and shall become the European Standard for good performance of forestry contractors.



Forest Enterprise Development Strategy



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⁶ reference to project website to be added as soon as website is online.



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