

SUSTAINABLE INNOVATIVE MOBILISATION OF WOOD

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D 6.3 – POLICY BRIEF PRESENTING SIMWOOD PILOT PROJECTS		
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PU	<i>Public</i>	x
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NATURE OF THE DELIVERABLE		
R	<i>Report</i>	
P	<i>Prototype</i>	
D	<i>Demonstrator</i>	
O	<i>Other</i>	x

SUMMARY	
Keywords	wood mobilisation; policy support; forest governances; bioeconomy; bioenergy; pilot projects; forest owners
Abstract	<p>The SIMWOOD project aims to increase the mobilisation of wood from forests and woodlands in Europe. The project reaches out to stakeholders and regional initiatives with the aim of ‘waking up’ and mobilising forest owners, promoting collaborative forest management and ensuring sustainable forest functions.</p> <p>This policy brief presents the SIMWOOD pilot projects, and is aimed at policy makers at the local, regional, national and European levels. It will present the flagship initiatives tested, and will synthesise SIMWOOD results, potential impacts and policy.</p>

DEGREE OF PROGRESS	
Scheduled date	Monday 31 st of October 2016 (M36)
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Introduction

This policy brief presents the SIMWOOD pilot projects and other key initiatives of the project (the SIMWOOD Information System and the Handbook of wood mobilisation), and is aimed at policy makers at the local, regional, national and European levels. A synthesis of the SIMWOOD results, potential impacts and policy recommendations will be presented in this policy brief.

Forests, wood markets and unused resource potentials

The Bioeconomy Strategy of the European Union was launched in 2012 and addresses the need for development of “a more innovative, resource efficient and competitive society that reconciles food security with the sustainable use of renewable resources for industrial purposes, while ensuring environmental protection” (Innovating for Sustainable Growth: A Bioeconomy for Europe: EU 2012). European forests and the industries that depend on wood as a raw material are a vital part of the bioeconomy strategy and action plan. The Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC) establishes the overall policy for the production and promotion of energy from renewable sources in the EU and calls for sustainable mobilisation of existing timber and agricultural resources and the development of new forestry and agricultural production systems. There are high penalties if member states do not meet the targets that have been set.

Forests are a major biological resource of Europe and fulfil multiple functions in ecological, economic and social dimensions. Besides preserving diverse landscapes, ecosystems, natural cycles and the biodiversity, they also represent the backbone for production and employment in forestry and numerous industries that all use wood as a primary raw material. The forest-based sector encompasses many material (or 'solid'), energetic and chemical uses of wood, and is a major pillar of the economy that is comparable in size to other large producing sectors. The sector plays a vital role in sustainable growth, rural employment and climate change mitigation.

Forecasts for the sector predict a substantial increase in the demand for wood in the coming decades. 'Solid' uses will grow steadily and novel chemical uses of wood are emerging and gaining momentum. The biggest increase in demand, however, will be for wood energy which will play a critical role in Europe's future renewable energy supply and the achievement of climate protection objectives. Wood is the quintessential renewable raw material, currently accounting for around 65-70% of total renewable energy output, and will continue at this level beyond 2020 until other renewables have reached a comparable scale. These trends are expected to lead to a relative scarcity of wood, stronger competition and dynamic structural shifts in the forest sector, which is bound to a stable and secure supply of the wood.

SIMWOOD project

The aim of the SIMWOOD project is to mobilise the unused potential of European forests in a sustainable way, by activating forest owners and promoting collaborative forest management. The project is comprised of 17 model regions in 12 countries (Figure 1). The regions were selected on the basis that there is a potential to increase wood mobilisation and to represent a broad range of European forest types and also a range of experience in forest governance and wood mobilisation.

The first phase of the project involved describing the specific context for wood mobilisation in each of the regions and identifying knowledge gaps, barriers to wood mobilisation, and potential solutions to overcome the barriers. A next phase involved setting-up, supervising, coordinating and collating feedback from a series of pilot projects undertaken in real conditions. The pilot projects focus on one or more of five domains (i.e. governance, ownership, forest management, forest functions, harvesting) and explore explicit novel solutions, practices or tools, or test improved existing solutions in another regional context under different conditions. Each of the pilot projects portrays a well-adapted solution to the model regions' context with high potential to contribute to an increased and sustainable wood mobilisation.

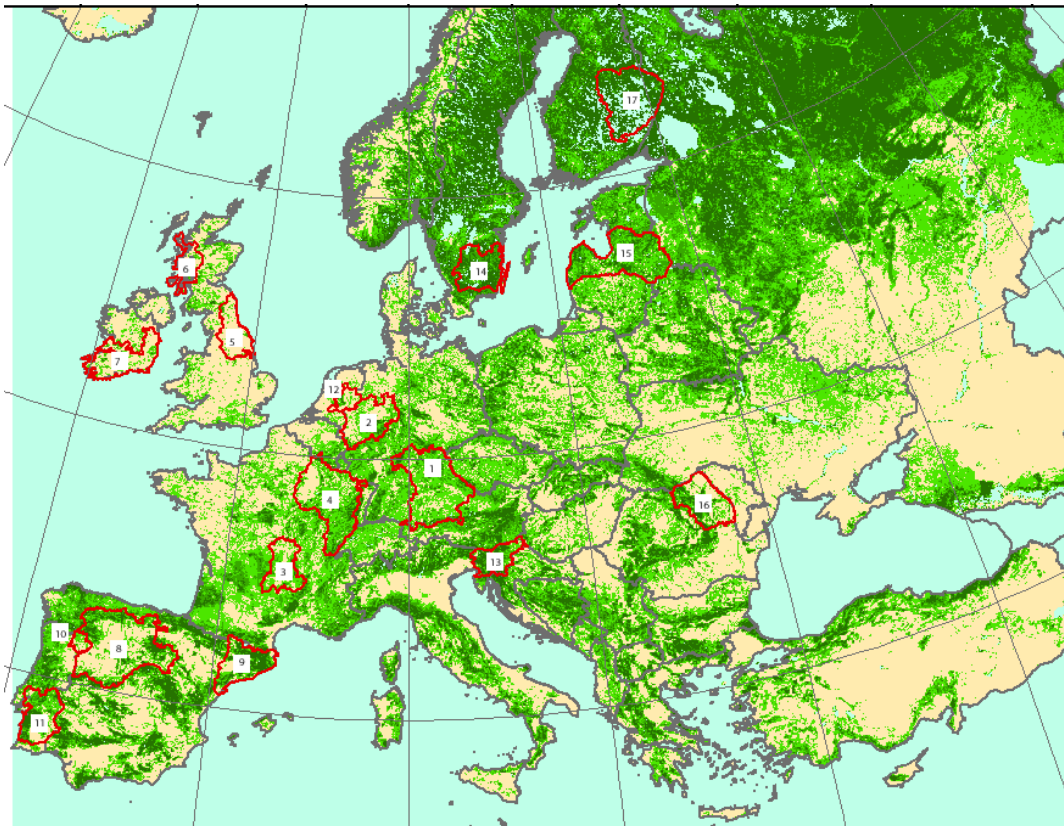


Figure 1. SIMWOOD model regions. 1. Bavaria (Germany); 2. North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany); 3. Auvergne (France); 4. Grand Est (France); 5. Yorkshire and North East England (UK); 6. Lochaber, Scotland (UK); 7. Southern/Eastern Region Ireland; 8. Castile and León (Spain); 9. Catalonia (Spain); 10. Nordeste Transmontano (Portugal); 11. Alentejo (Portugal); 12. Overijssel & Gelderland (the Netherlands); 13. Slovenia; 14. Småland (Sweden); 15. Latvia; 16. Northeast Romania; 17. Eastern Finland. The background image is the forest map of Europe (Gunia et al. 2011).

Wood mobilisation in different countries represented in SIMWOOD

The situation with regard to wood mobilisation varies across the countries represented in the SIMWOOD project. Figure 2 shows the ratio of fellings to annual increment for each of the SIMWOOD countries (data from the State of Europe's Forests 2015).

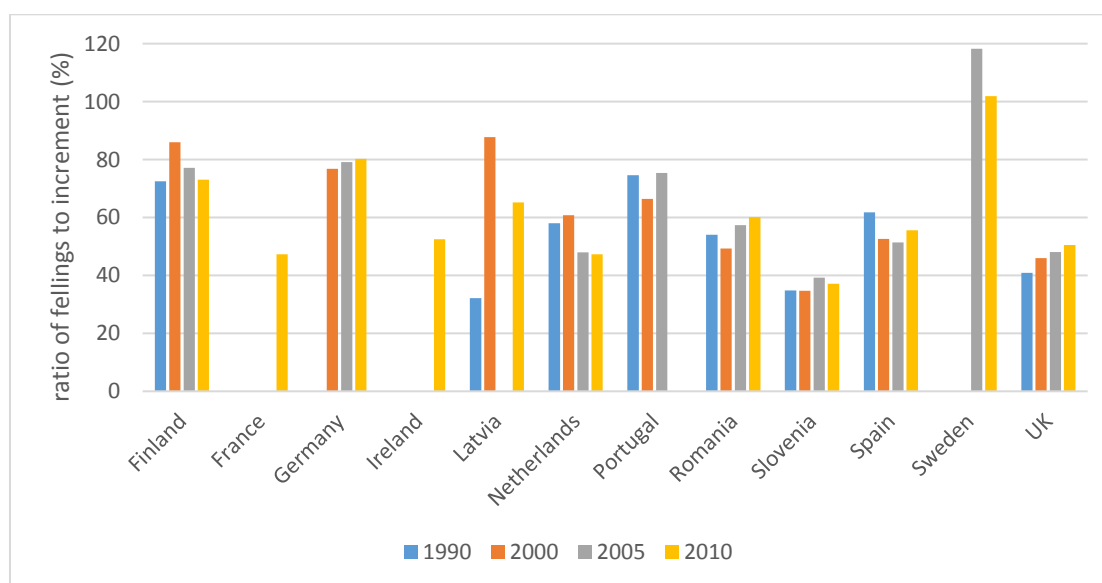


Figure 2. Ratio of fellings to increment in countries represented in the SIMWOOD project (data from: State of Europe's Forests. FOREST EUROPE 2015).

All countries except Sweden had felling/increment ratios of less than 100%, meaning that the annual growth of the forest is greater than the amount of wood harvested. The high ratios reported for Sweden are for years where large storms had occurred and harvesting rates were unusually high. Sweden and Finland are examples of countries with a large forest resource and well developed forest-based sectors, where the wood mobilisation is already quite high in comparison to other countries. Germany also has quite high rates of utilisation, but the growing stock in German forests is also very high (Figure 3) (as a result of a favourable climate and an accumulation of growing stock over decades and centuries). Slovenia also has a high growing stock that is increasing quickly. Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK are examples of countries that have a relatively small amount of forest, but where the forests are growing fast and where the growing stock is increasing (Figure 3).

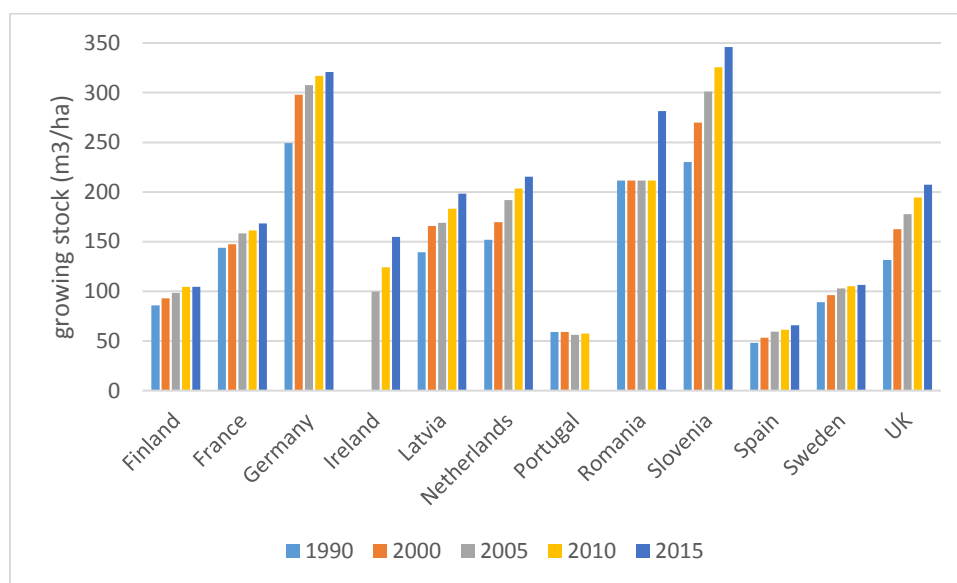


Figure 3. The growing stock in countries represented in SIMWOOD (data from: State of Europe’s Forests. FOREST EUROPE 2015).

Forest owners as key actors in wood mobilisation

The key to unlocking the wood potential is the willingness of a large number of public and private forest owners to engage in or permit an increase in forest harvesting and related uses. The majority of the industrial timber as well as other wood and non-wood products in Europe are sourced from private forest owners, the majority of whom are individuals and families. Because their forests are often under-utilised, they account for a significant, increasing portion of the wood potential. Among this key group occurs a growing diversification. The number of ‘traditional’ forest owners, who recognise the economic potential of their forest holding and are actively involved in timber harvesting, is declining as a result of structural changes in agriculture and the transfer of ownership from farmers to non-farmers through inheritance. The number of owners living in urban areas often at considerable distance from their property is increasing (‘urban’ or ‘distant’ forest owners). The changing ownership pattern is also leading to an increased fragmentation of forest holdings: almost two-thirds of European private forest holdings occupy less than one hectare. Many of these latter groups have little knowledge of the potential for, or interest in, producing timber from their forests and they lack the skills and capacity for sustainable forest management. Mobilising wood resources hence requires first of all a ‘mobilisation of forest owners’ and achieving this will require a greater understanding of the motivations and objectives of the different types of owners. These owners are

less likely to use the forest as a source of income, so they may also have other objectives and motivations – they may be more interested in using their forest for recreation or for nature conservation.

Another issue is to ensure that the wood from these forests reaches the desired market. Therefore, a larger group of regional actors in the wood supply chain has to be involved. Professional foresters, forest entrepreneurs, wood industries and members of local authorities and communities all have important roles to play in mobilisation of the wood resources. Their collective expert knowledge of drivers in wood mobilisation and their input into identifying suitable solutions is essential.

Forest governance and the role of regional initiatives

Today's increasing societal concern for the environment has led to criticism that forest management is too focused on economic production. More than ever, management of forests must incorporate ecological and social functions, balance the impacts of forest use, and extend its 'portfolio' with the provision of other goods and services (i.e. multifunctional forestry). In response to this societal demand, forest governance comprises aligned social, economic and official state driven activities to guide and control peoples' interaction with forests and has become the leading approach in international forestry in this context. Following a cycle of policy making and implementation towards 'good' forest governance and sustainable forest use, forest governance initiatives work towards a balanced compromise between different parties and different forest functions. First attempts to integrate other stakeholders that are not related to forestry (e.g. environment or recreation interest groups) by participatory approaches are gaining more and more importance. Therefore, beyond the technical improvement of 'classical' forest management, novel wood mobilisation approaches require inevitably a wider inclusion of stakeholders' opinions in forest policy making. Embedding wood mobilisation in wider regional initiatives driven by the local economy beyond the forest sector has so far not been explored on a wider scale.

Key messages

- In all cases, over the medium- to long-term, the amount of wood being extracted from forests in the countries represented in SIMWOOD is less than the annual growth in forests. There is, therefore, potential to increase wood mobilisation without depleting the growing stock.
- The main barriers impeding a widespread wood mobilisation in forestry are not only of a technical nature, but also to a large extent of a socio-economic nature, and are dependent on the motivation of a multitude of forest owners and other stakeholders.

→ *The SIMWOOD project targets a broad mobilisation of forest owners, considering all types of forest owners, but with a special focus on private owners, who represent a major opportunity to unlock currently unused wood resource potentials.*

- Wood mobilisation engages joint activities of members of regional wood supply chains to increase raw timber supplies from forest owners, and to work towards an enlarged, stabilised and sustainable wood production.

→ *The SIMWOOD project responds to major opportunities in growing wood markets, including bioenergy, and develops sets of novel integrated wood mobilisation solutions to overcome the main socio-economic and technical barriers in the regions.*

- To guarantee the sustainability of forest management for increased wood mobilisation, a multitude of forest ecosystem functions and related services (e.g. ecological system integrity, non-wood forest products) need to be integrated and ensured. There needs to be consideration of other factors and policy objectives. For example, Increasing the amount of wood used for bioenergy may contribute to the policy objective of moving towards an economy that is less dependent on fossil fuels, but in comparison with leaving wood in the forest or using it in a building or product that may last several decades (or centuries), more carbon is released into the atmosphere. Increasing bioenergy use of wood, may also make it more difficult to achieve objectives to maintain biodiversity.

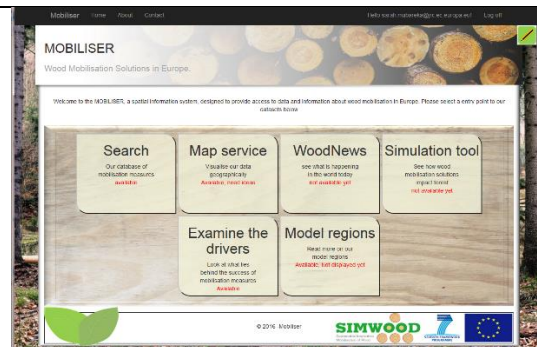
The SIMWOOD project focuses on multifunctional forest management, incorporating adapted solutions to ensure and control a balance of economic, ecological and social impacts of proposed wood mobilisation measures, and considering the existing set of indicators for sustainable forest management.

- Wood mobilisation is more likely to be successful when embedded in collaborative regional initiatives within and beyond the forest-based sector, which are aimed to have positive impacts on the regional development and economy.

The SIMWOOD project specifically targets regional initiatives, participatory processes and governance related to sustainable development of forest-dependent regions of Europe.

TEXT BOX:

The ‘SIMWOOD Information Toolkit’ is implemented as a web information service about issues concerning wood mobilisation in Europe. The main sources for the content of the SIMWOOD IT are the SIMWOOD project and the partners of the SIMWOOD consortium. The components of the system include: a knowledge base of barriers impeding wood mobilisation along with corresponding solutions capable of overcoming these barriers – related projects and measures from across Europe; maps and graphs showing wood mobilisation initiatives, facts and figures and relevant web-sites on the topic; an interactive tool to assess the outputs of modelling exercises related to wood mobilisation scenarios in pilot regions; and finally, a newsfeed on the latest happenings in biomass mobilisation across the world.



TEXT BOX: The ‘SIMWOOD Handbook’ is designed as a tool for forest stakeholders and practitioners. In the Handbook they will find: methods for enhancing wood mobilisation from the experience of the successful Pilot Projects; and in addition information provided by the consortium relating to additional successful national, regional and local measures (collected by EFI and JRC). The Handbook will provide end-users with a more “general vision” using all the feedback and knowledge accumulated during the SIMWOOD project.