



## Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

(version 2. Dezember 2013)

### Content

1. Mission.....	2
2. Principles.....	3
3. Membership and Organisation .....	4
I. Members.....	4
II. Council.....	5
III. Working Committee.....	5
IV. Coordinator .....	6
4. Benefits of Members .....	7
5. Modalities .....	8

The members of the ForestDSS CoP declare their common intention to participate in the Community when they register on the platform. Through the registration the members accept this MoU.

## 1. Mission

The ForestDSS CoP organizes knowledge about the construction and use of forest Decision Support Systems (DSS) for promoting sustainable forest management. DSS are computer-based tools which provide support to solve ill-structured decision problems by integrating database management systems with analytical and operational research models, graphic display, tabular reporting capabilities, and the expert knowledge of scientists, managers, and decision makers to assist in specific decision making activities. Typically, a forest management planning problem involves the definition of the timing and location of forest management options in a unit of forest land over a planning horizon. In this context the approximation or optimisation of single or multiple management objectives are related to goods and services that traded or non-traded and often subject to resource constraints. Thus the output of a forest DSS, as understood by the ForestDSS CoP, ideally includes an efficient set of actions to be taken, the analysis of trade-offs between management goals and of impacts of changing and uncertain parameters.

The ForestDSS CoP has a well-established users' community with members from research, public bodies, business and NGOs of existing FP 7 projects and Cost Actions (FORSYS, ECHOS, ForestModels). The CoP connects and mobilizes developers and users of forest DSS to support the planning and sustainable use of forest resources.

The CoP is aiming to

- (i) provide mapping of ongoing research activities in the field of decision support;
- (ii) improve coordination between relevant fields of research (modelling, decision analysis, adaptation to climate change, IT, social sciences);
- (iii) achieve critical mass and ensure better use of limited resources in developing DSS;
- (iv) share good practices in implementing research projects focusing on DSS;
- (v) share lessons learned from the development and use of forest DSS;
- (vi) establish a network of research activities carried out at national and regional level for supporting the network;
- (vii) promote transnational collaborations and new knowledge generation and innovation by hosting the ongoing activities (e.g. Semantic Media WIKI; case studies, lessons learned);
- (viii) provide training for interested researchers and a forum for knowledge exchange (e.g. workshops, summer schools, webinars);
- (ix) support actions for rising funding to support collaboration by various means (e.g. projects, exchange programs, networks).

## 2. Principles

A CoP has a shared domain of interest and the membership implies commitment to the domain. The shared competence distinguishes members from other people and therefore members of the CoP pursuing their interest in the domain engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, share information, and enable them to learn from each other. In this context the ForestDSS CoP is following these principles:

- the ForestDSS CoP is a group of people who are active practitioners/experts (e.g. individuals from research, public bodies, business and NGOs with an interest in the promotion of forest DSSs), the purpose is to provide a platform to share tips and best practices, ask questions to their colleagues, and provide support for each other; the ForestDSS CoP is organically created, with as many objectives/tasks as active members of the community bring it; in such a way the means of communication (e.g. discussion forums, wikis) should be designed to support shifts in focus. An evaluation of the activities will allow reviewing how objectives are met and what kind of actions should be taken in the future;
- the ForestDSS CoP allows members to share their tacit knowledge, which may enable other members to avoid mistakes and shorten the learning curve. In the ForestDSS CoP, members can openly discuss and brainstorm about a project, which can lead to new capabilities; therefore the type of information that is shared and learned is boundless.
- the ForestDSS CoP can exist as long as the members believe they have something to contribute to it, or gain from it. When no activities are planned or conducted the CoP will lose its focus;

### 3. Membership and Organisation

The members of the ForestDSS CoP are individuals from research, public bodies, business and NGOs with an interest in the promotion of forest DSSs. Community membership is defined by the willingness to share knowledge with other members and the level of engagement by the individual. The Community membership can change over time and members may take on new roles within the community as interests and needs arise. The Community membership is administrated by the Coordinator of the ForestDSS CoP. Any individual can apply for Community membership through the online web-platform ([www.forestdss.org](http://www.forestdss.org)).

Different levels of participation are defined according to the level of intensity of activities and interest:

- ForestDSS **Members**: The main group of the ForestDSS CoP. Members of this group attend and participate regularly in discussions and activities. The members generally have at least some experiences in a certain subject area of the CoP.
- ForestDSS **Council**: The Council is constituted of those experts that participate in the Annual meeting of the CoP. It is a temporary group which acts as a review panel for the activity of the whole CoP.
- ForestDSS **Working Committee**: a core group of the ForestDSS CoP who participate intensely in the work of the community through discussions and special project activities. This group typically takes on leadership roles in guiding the community activities and works out the work plans.
- ForestDSS CoP **coordinator**: a member of the ForestDSS Working Committee who will be responsible for administration and organization of the members. The coordinator is able to nominate a vice chair for supporting the steering of the CoP.

The responsibilities and tasks of the different roles are defined below:

#### I. Members

The members of the ForestDSS CoP declare their common intention to participate in the Community when they register on the web platform. Through the registration the members accept this MoU. The members have their main role in the active participation in activities initiated by the working committee by sharing knowledge and experience on a certain domain. The members should offer learning opportunities to others (e.g. Lessons Learned of case studies) and contribute to the ForestDSS Wiki by providing their expertise on DSS development and application (e.g. providing DSS descriptions). The members should contribute to the work of the CoP in providing feedback to questions raised by other members, advertising activities of the CoP or uploading documents in the website. Members should share the work (publications, reports, tools) via the web platform with other members. The more active a member is, the more likely it will become a member of the Working Committee (WC). Members can propose other members to become more actively involved in the WC by contacting the responsible leaders of subgroups.

## II. Council

The Council is constituted of those experts that participate in the Annual meeting of the CoP. The Council will oversee the work plans presented by the Working Committee. It will also review and comment on the Coordinator report on the state of the CoP. Here everybody can get involved, whether it is an active member of the CoP or an interested expert participating in the annual meeting. The Council can bring up any other topics for discussion within the domain of the CoP.

## III. Working Committee

The Working Committee (WC) consists of a limited number of motivated members that is responsible for implementing actions to achieve the overall mission of the ForestDSS CoP. The Working Committee of the CoP should coordinate a cycle of activities and events that allow the members to regularly meet, reflect, and evolve. This cycle of activities should maintain an anticipated level of engagement to sustain the vibrancy of the community. The members of the Working Committee can work actively in the WC as long as they have an interest and willingness to do so. The members of the Working Committee are responsible for electing the Coordinator of the CoP among their members at the annual meeting. The following activities can be listed:

- maintaining the CoP platform (CMS, Wiki) as a well-functioning and easy-to-use platform for sharing knowledge about DSSs, their development and use;
- form subgroups and manage the work in the group in order to split responsibilities and workload. Each subgroup should provide a workplan of activities according to their field of expertise they are responsible (until end of October for the subsequent year) and revise the plan according to on going development and changes;
- ensure the quality of the content on the CoP platform (CMS, Wiki) as well as to coordinate its future development;
- act as moderator regarding the field of expertise they are responsible in the discussion forum that allows communication among members;
- systematically and actively search for and motivate people likely to publish relevant content on the CoP platform;
- stimulate and coordinate actions in line with the aim of CoP (e.g. Leonardo Training School, Marie Curie projects);
- investigate funding opportunities for the above activities (Organize ESF Workshops, ESPON Call, integrate in dissemination activities of existing EU projects).
- the Working Committee members are responsible for proposing individuals of the CoP to be nominated as member of the Working Committee as they screen the level of activity;
- organisation of the Annual Meeting.

#### IV. Coordinator

The Coordinator of the ForestDSS CoP is responsible for running the technical platform of the CoP and ensure the availability of a communication platform (Content Management System – CMS, Semantic Media WIKI) for questions and feedback as specified by the Working Committee. The Coordinator should administrate the application for membership and should preferably be supported by an organization with access to a team of supporting staff including administrative assistants and programmers.

The coordinator of the CoP should ensure that the subgroups provide a workplan of activities until end of October for the subsequent year. The Coordinator should be prepared to deliver a report on the state of the CoP for the Annual meeting. At least two virtual meetings per year and the Annual (physical) Meeting should be scheduled by the Coordinator in order to facilitate the work among the members of the Working Committee.

The coordinator of the CoP is elected among the members of the working committee based on a proposal made by the members of the working committee. This procedure takes place during regular annual meetings of the CoP. The period for a coordinator might be at maximum of two years and one year at minimum. The former coordinator might act as a vice coordinator for the next period in order to allow some continuation of the administrative work. The election is done at the annual meetings.

#### 4. Benefits of Members

The ForestDSS CoP is a group of people who are active practitioners/experts (e.g. individuals from research, public bodies, business and NGOs with an interest in the promotion of forest DSSs), the purpose is to provide a platform to share tips and best practices, ask questions to their colleagues, and provide support for each other on Forest Management Decision Support Systems. The following benefits for an active participation can be listed:

**Meetings & Conferences:** Be informed about national, international, regional, and topical meetings and conferences that provide you with the ultimate opportunity to present, network, and learn on the wide field of Forest Management Decision Support Systems. Make use of the opportunity to participate in the meetings and meet other interested professionals.

**Research Resources:** Complete your research with our comprehensive Semantic Wiki and the published papers of the members of the CoP shared via the platform. Keep up with exciting new developments in the field, fascinating case studies, and profiles of interesting people and organizations with your membership.

**Community:** Take advantage of geographic and special interest communities or subgroups formed within the CoP that provide multiple options to learn the tools of your interest in specific areas. Participate in the network activities and share your experiences with like-minded professionals. Build your professional profile by volunteering. Enjoy numerous opportunities to meet colleagues virtually and physical, build teams, advocate for the profession, and hone organizational and leadership skills.

**Career Resources:** Get first word of job openings with the announcements made public via the website. Meet face-to-face with prospective employers at the Annual Meeting or during the conferences announced. Compete for acknowledgements within the community by your active involvement that reward meritorious achievement in the field to raise your profile and enhance your career.

**Educational & Teaching Materials:** Choose from a wide variety of materials to improve your knowledge, practice, and teaching of Forest Management Decision Support and related topics: case studies, online forums, workshops, databases, and more.

## 5. Modalities

**Memorandum of understanding:** The members of the ForestDSS CoP declare their common intention to participate in the Community when they register on the platform. Through the registration the members accept this MoU. The MoU will take effect on being accepted by at least five Working Committee members. The MoU will remain in force for a period of 4 years, calculated from the date of the first meeting of the Working Committee. It can be revised based on the common interest of members of the Working Committee.

### **Organisation of meetings:**

**Virtual Meetings:** Regular virtual meetings are organized in order to facilitate the communication and work within the CoP. These meetings can be organized by everyone, who has an interest to discuss a certain topic with the other members. At least two meetings per year should be scheduled by the Coordinator of the CoP in order to facilitate the work among the members of the Working Committee.

**Annual Meeting:** The CoP should have a physical meeting each year to assemble the Council. It is an opportunity to critically evaluate the activities of the last year and discuss the working plans for the following year. The organisation of the meeting is the responsibility of the Working Committee in collaboration with the Coordinator. When no funds are available for hosting such a meeting, measures should be taken to link the meeting to scientific conferences and organize a side meeting.



## Workplans

The Working Committee of the CoP is responsible for drafting a workplan for the activities scheduled for the next year. The activities and events that allow the members to regularly discuss, reflect, and evolve DSS issues should be coordinated among the member of the Working Committee. The workplans are announced via the common platform of the CoP in order to allow other members to get actively involved in the activities. The workplans become part of this MoU when they are accepted. The following responsibilities for defining these workplans can be defined (current composition):

- 1) Technical coordination of the platform: **Allan Sims**, Harald Vacik, Christian Rosset;
- 2) Wiki Semantic structure - DSS descriptions: **Jussi Rassinmäki**, Christian Rosset, Alexandra Marques, Dominique Weber, Jose Borges;
- 3) Wiki Semantic structure - DSS cases and lessons learned: **Sean Gordon**, Antonio Floris, Luc Boerboom, Jose Borges, Tomas Lämås;
- 4) DSS architecture and design: **Christian Rosset**, Alexandra Marques, Jussi Rassinmäki, Graham West;
- 5) Methods and Models: **Jordi Garcia**, Jose Borges, Mikko Kurttila;
- 6) Participatory processes and Knowledge management: **Harald Vacik**, Eva-Maria Nordström, Chiara Torresan, Isabella De Meo, Teppo Hujala, Laszlo Bacsardi, Luc Boerboom.