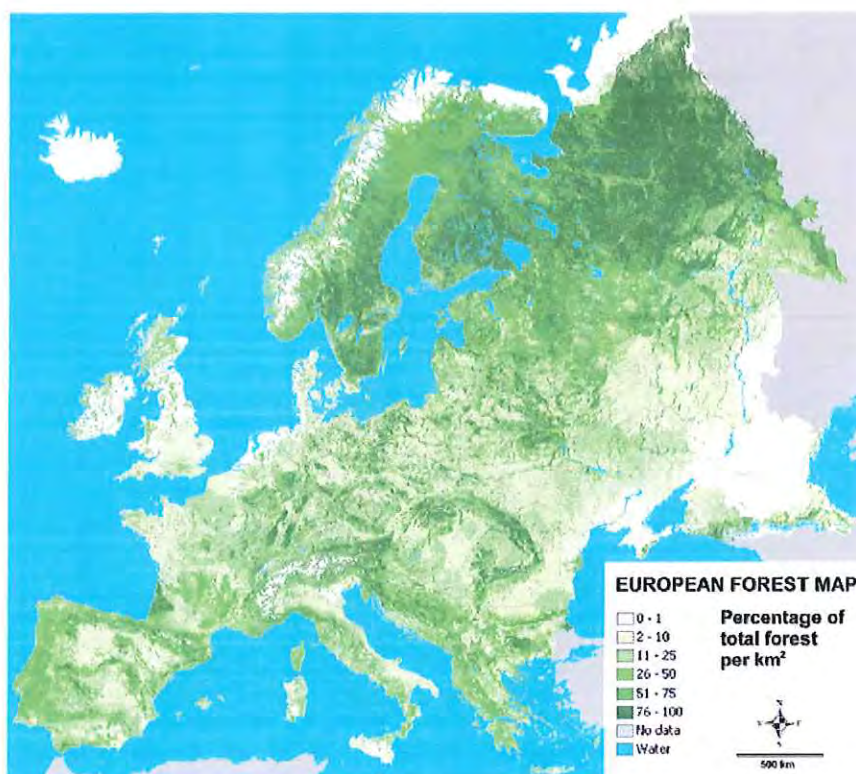




# Improving the Assessment of Forest Municipalities in Europe 25

A report issued in 2005 showing the quantitative and qualitative importance of the forest municipalities in Europe

## SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE MAIN REPORT



Source : Eurostat



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*This document is the English version of the first part and the conclusion of the main report available in French. The translation has been done by the European Observatory of Mountain Forests, Chambéry, France. The main report includes an analytical part related to each of the 25 EU Countries.*

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## Methodological remarks

The object of this study is to draw up an overall picture of the communal forest within the European Union 25. This analysis, at the same time quantitative (number and areas of communal forests, rate of forest cover, etc.) and qualitative (types and functions of the communal forests, management systems, etc.), is based on a significant search of information and data, which encountered a certain number of difficulties:

- Firstly, the national forest policies were recently updated or revised in the majority of the European countries, in particular in order to better ensure the taking into account of the recent developments of the forest sector and the social expectations, (e.g. multifunctionality). Moreover, in the majority of the country having joined the European Union at May 1, 2004, the structure of the forest property underwent significant consecutive changes with the processes of restitution of the lands and rights of ownership. The increasing integration of the results of the international dialogues in the national forest policies also seems one of the motivations of the recent reforms, (UN, 2001). These changes, sometimes major, in the national modes of organization are reflected in this work by a problem of limitation and actualisation of the information sources. Taking into account these fast changes and times of publication, an even recent document, relating to the organization of the policy or forest management of a country, can prove to be obsolete or erroneous. The synthesis of the literature and the collection of information thus prove sometimes difficult.
- Then, the majority of the national statistics do not provide information clear and precise on the structures of forest property. Often the communal forests are included in the whole of the public forests, at best, they are gathered with the national forests and the forests of the other public entities (public enterprises, universities, etc.) under the term: "other public forests". This fact led us to compare the communal forests to the whole of the "other public forests", described in the various data sources (FAOSTAT, TBFRA 2000...). Within the data available, this assumption does not seem to result in a too great loss of precision, at least for the countries whose communal forest is relatively significant. For example, according to ONF (1994), 88% of the forests of local communities in France belong to communes and according to data of the network SILVA (1999), in the Netherlands, the communal forests represent more than 85% of the category "other public forests". Therefore the results presented in this report probably over-estimate the importance of the communal forest within the European Union member countries. Moreover when the only data available illustrate the public forest as a whole we "related" them to the communal forest. For example, TBFRA, 2000 gives only the total number of public forests; we then estimated the number of communal forests while referring to us with the share of the communal forest in public forest surface, thus supposing, that the share of the communal forests in the public forests was the same one in number and surface. These various estimates result in considering the data presented in this report, more like orders of magnitude than absolute values. When other data sources provided a "real" figure, this one has been compared with our estimate, and mentioned in a note in case of significant difference (rather seldom produced).
- Finally, it should be noted that in certain European Union's Countries, there is not or little communal forest property. To Ireland and Finland, already present in Europe of the 15, should be added Malta and Cyprus, as well as Estonia and Lithuania for which

the share of communal forest is so marginal (even negligible), that it does not make it possible to carry out of the consistent estimates of information which interests us here.

The data and information presented in this document are, as much as possible, assessments directly relating to the communal forest. When the level of necessary detail proved to be unavailable, we, either carried out estimates, or presented (by specifying it), assessments relating to the whole of the public forest of the country.

Following a preliminary stage of evaluation of the importance of the communal forest property in each European country, we focused more specifically to the description of the communal forests and the types of management, in the countries whose communal forest proved particularly significant (share of the communal forest in total wooded surface and/or share the communal forest in "significant" public wooded surface, cf. Table 87). These are 10 countries of Europe 15: Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Greece, Spain, Portugal and Sweden; and of two of the ten new countries: the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

In order to facilitate the location of these countries, they are reproduced in green on the synopsis of this study and in the title of their respective chapters.

## Introduction

### Europe 25: Some general information

Since the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004, the European Union counts 25 members and constitutes an economic and political area of almost 400 million hectares and more than 450 million inhabitants. In addition to the six countries founders of the European Economic Community (Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, 1957) and of the nine other countries constitutive of Europe of 15 (Denmark, the United Kingdom, Ireland, 1973; Greece, 1981; Spain, Portugal, 1986; Austria, Finland, Sweden, 1995), the European Union includes from now on ten new members (including eight resulting from the old communist world): three old Soviet republics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), four ex-satellites of the USSR (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia) and an old Yugoslav republic (Slovénie). Two Mediterranean islands (Cyprus and Malta) also form part of this great stage of the widening of the European Union with 25 members.

The enlargement of 2004 is a fundamental change in the European landscape. Historically and symbolically, one speaks about "revenge on Yalta", and about reconciliation between Western and Eastern Europe: the European Union shares from now on several hundred kilometers of borders with Russia, (P. Lamy, Commissaire European in the Barber, of the 12/12/2002). In a number of countries, it is the most significant enlargement since the beginning of European construction. Paradoxically, from a demographic point of view, it is the least significant: except Poland (30 million inhabitant), no country counts more than 10 million inhabitants; and the population of the Union increases only by 20% (against 30% during adhesion in 1973 of the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark). Lastly, from the economic point of view, the enlargement seems even less significant: the nominal GDP of the European Union increases only by 5%. The economy of the ten new members is largely less powerful than those of the other member countries: the GDP per capita of the ten new Member States exceeds hardly 11 000 dollars (PPA 2001), whereas that of Europe 15 passes very close to the 24 000 dollars (PPA, 2001), (UNDP, 2003).

Table 1 below, shows some socio-demographic characteristics of the 25 European Union countries. Countries are classified by order of entry (then alphabetical) in the European Union. The first 6 countries are the countries founders of the European Economic Community. This classification will be included in the continuation of the study, during the individual analysis of the communal forest in each of the 25 countries of the UE, (Table 1).

Table 1 : Countries of Europe 25

Date of entry in Europe <sup>1</sup>	Countries	Land area <sup>2</sup> '000 hectares	Population <sup>3</sup> '000 inhabitants	Life expectancy at birth <sup>5</sup> years	GDP / inhabitant <sup>5</sup> (\$ PPA 2001)	Number of municipalities <sup>7</sup>
1957 Europe 6	Germany	34 927	82 349	78.0	25 350	13 854
	Belgium	3 050. <sup>4</sup>	10 273	78.5	25 520	589
	France	55 010	59 564	78.7	23 990	36 565
	Italy	29 406	57 521	78.6	24 670	8 100
	Luxemburg	258. <sup>4</sup>	441	78.1	53 780	118
	Netherlands	3 392	15 982	78.2	27 190	504
1973 Europe 9	Denmark	4 243	5 338	76.4	29 000	275
	Ireland	6 889	3 865	76.7	32 410	85
	United-Kingdom	24 160	59 099	77.9	24 160	433
1981 Europe 10	Greece	12 890	10 947	78.1	17 440	1 033
1986 Europe 12	Spain	49 944	40 875	79.1	20 150	8 106
	Portugal	9 150	10 033	75.9	18 150	278
1995 Europe 15	Austria	8 273	8 106	78.3	26 730	2 359
	Finland	30 459	5 188	77.8	24 430	448
	Sweden	41 162	8 860	79.9	24 180	289
<b>Sub-total UE 15</b>		<b>331 213</b>	<b>378 441</b>		<b>24 000</b>	<b>73 036</b>
2004 Europe 25	Chyprus	924	789	78.1	21 190	33. <sup>8</sup>
	Estonia	4 227	1 353	71.2	10 170	247. <sup>8</sup>
	Hungary	9 234	9 968	71.5	12 340	3 154
	Latvia	6 205	2 351	70.5	7 730	554. <sup>8</sup>
	Lithuania	6 257	3 484	72.3	8 470	60
	Malta	32	391	78.1	13 160	67. <sup>9</sup>
	Poland	30 442	38 651	73.6	9 450	2 489. <sup>8</sup>
	Czech Republic	7 728	10 257	75.1	14 720	6 237. <sup>8</sup>
	Slovakia	4 808	5 394	73.3	11 960	2 871. <sup>8</sup>
	Slovenia	2 012	1 988	75.9	17 130	192. <sup>8</sup>
<b>Sub-total 10 Countries</b>		<b>71 869</b>	<b>74 626</b>		<b>11 000</b>	<b>15 904</b>
<b>Total Europe 25</b>		<b>385 082</b>	<b>453 067</b>		<b>22 000</b>	<b>88 940</b>

Data 2001

The municipality constitutes the basic cell of the European administrative public bodies; for some countries (Luxembourg, Finland, and almost all of the new countries), it is even the only territorial division. Europe 15 counted nearly 75 000 municipalities, divided essentially into France, Germany, Spain and Italy. With the enlargement to 25, nearly 15 000 new municipalities have joined the Union.

### The forest in Europe 25

From the point of view of the forest resources, the European Union enlargement results in an increase in wooded lands of 20% approximately. On average, the rate of rate of forest cover of the 10 new Member States is virtually identical to that of Europe 15 (respectively: 33.3% and 33.7%); it is the same for the area of forest per capita (respectively: 0.32 hectare and 0.31 hectare) (Table 3). In Europe 25, only 4 countries in the north, have a forest cover per capita higher than one hectare (Finland, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia), (Table 3). The 10 new countries modify little the distribution of the forest cover by species: the proportion of coniferous/broadleaves/mixed (% of total forest area), reached 56/30/14 for Europe 15, against 55/30/15 for Europe 25; the European forest thus remains mainly made up of coniferous tree (TBFRA, 2000), (Table 3).

The structure of the forest property of the 10 new countries (72% public/28% private) is just the opposite of that of Europe 15 (29% public/71% private). The main source of this difference is due to the link to the communist world of eight of the ten new countries, that started a process of restitution and privatization.

The table below provides the structure of property post-transition concerned: the majority of the countries prove, in 2000, to be very close to these objectives, (Table 2):

Tableau 2 : Forest ownership expected post-transition in the eight CEEC in Europe 25

(% public/% private)	Structure of forest ownership: 2000 <sup>6</sup>	Structure of forest ownership: objective post-transition <sup>10</sup>
<b>Countries</b>		
<b>Estonia</b>	91/9	50/50
<b>Hungary</b>	64/36	60/40
<b>Latvia</b>	56/44	50/50
<b>Lituania</b>	82/18	53/47
<b>Poland</b>	83/17	82/18
<b>Czech Republic</b>	84/16	80/20
<b>Slovakia</b>	56/44	52/48
<b>Slovenia</b>	29/71	30/70

On a final balance, Europe 25 is now made out of 37% of public forests and 63% of private forests (Table 3).

Table 3 : The forest in Europe 25

Countries	Wooded lands <sup>2</sup> '000 ha	Rate of forest cover (%) <sup>2</sup> .	Forest area per capita (ha)	Type of dominant species <sup>6</sup> % coniferous / % broadleaves / % mixed	Structure of ownership <sup>6</sup> % publique / % private	% of municipal forests on the total of public forests <sup>11</sup>
<b>Germany</b>	10 740	30.7	0.13	56/25/18	54/46	37
<b>Belgium</b>	694	22.8	0.07	42/51/7	43/57	75
<b>France</b>	15 341	27.9	0.26	27/64/9	25/75	61
<b>Italy</b>	10 003	34	0.17	21/72/7	34/66	82
<b>Luxemburg</b>	89	34.5	0.20	36/62/2	47/53	76
<b>Netherlands</b>	375	11	0.02	42/43/15	51/49	28
<b>Denmark</b>	455	10.8	0.09	55/29/15	28/72	16
<b>Ireland</b>	659	9.6	0.17	83/13/4	66/34	0
<b>United Kingdom</b>	2 794	11.6	0.05	56/37/7	43/57	8
<b>Greece</b>	3 599	22.9	0.33	43/57/0	82/18	15
<b>Spain</b>	14 370	28.8	0.35	43/39/18	22/78	98
<b>Portugal</b>	3 666	40.1	0.37	26/61/13	15/85	88
<b>Austria</b>	3 886	47	0.48	68/12/20	18/82	16
<b>Finland</b>	21 935	72	4.23	80/8/12	30/70	0
<b>Sweden</b>	27 134	65.9	3.06	77/7/17	20/80	79
<b>Sub-total EU 15</b>	<b>115 695</b>	<b>33.7</b>	<b>0.31</b>	<b>56/30/14</b>	<b>29/71</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Chyprus</b>	172	18.6	0.22	99/1/0	58/42	0
<b>Estonia</b>	2 060	48.7	1.52	39/21/40	91/9	0.3
<b>Hungary</b>	1 840	19.9	0.18	10/78/12	64/36	0.9
<b>Latvia</b>	2 923	47.1	1.24	39/19/42	56/44	7
<b>Lituania</b>	1 994	31.9	0.57	46/36/18	82/18	0.4
<b>Malta</b>	0	1.1	0.001	0/0/100	100/0	0
<b>Poland</b>	9 047	29.7	0.23	67/15/18	83/17	1
<b>Czech Republic</b>	2 632	34.1	0.26	31/13/56	84/16	15
<b>Slovakia</b>	2 177	45.3	0.40	30/52/18	56/44	25
<b>Slovenia</b>	1 107	55	0.56	30/37/33	29/71	8
<b>Sub-total 10 Countries</b>	<b>23 997</b>	<b>33.3</b>	<b>0.32</b>	<b>46/27/27</b>	<b>72/28</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total Europe 25</b>	<b>139 692</b>	<b>36.3</b>	<b>0.31</b>	<b>55/30/15</b>	<b>37/63</b>	<b>35</b>



Among the public forests, we will focus more particularly on the "municipal" forests, which gather the forests of the municipalities, their associations and local communities (FECOF, 1992). On average, in Europe 15, the municipal forest accounted for 15% of the total of forest cover and almost 50% of the surface of the public forests. In Spain and to Portugal in particular, almost the whole of the public forests belongs to the municipalities. In the ten new countries, the municipalites occupy a place much less significant in the structure of the forest ownership (on average 3.6% of the total forest area of the countries and less than 5% of public forest area). Only the municipal forests of the Czech Republic and Slovakia represent more than 10% of the forest area of the country, and that of the public forests.

The object of this document is to present the municipal forest of the European Union 25 by providing for each country an identity card of the municipal forest (quantitative elements, nature and objectives of management of these forests) and the organisation of the management of the municipal forests.

## **Elements of synthesis and conclusion**

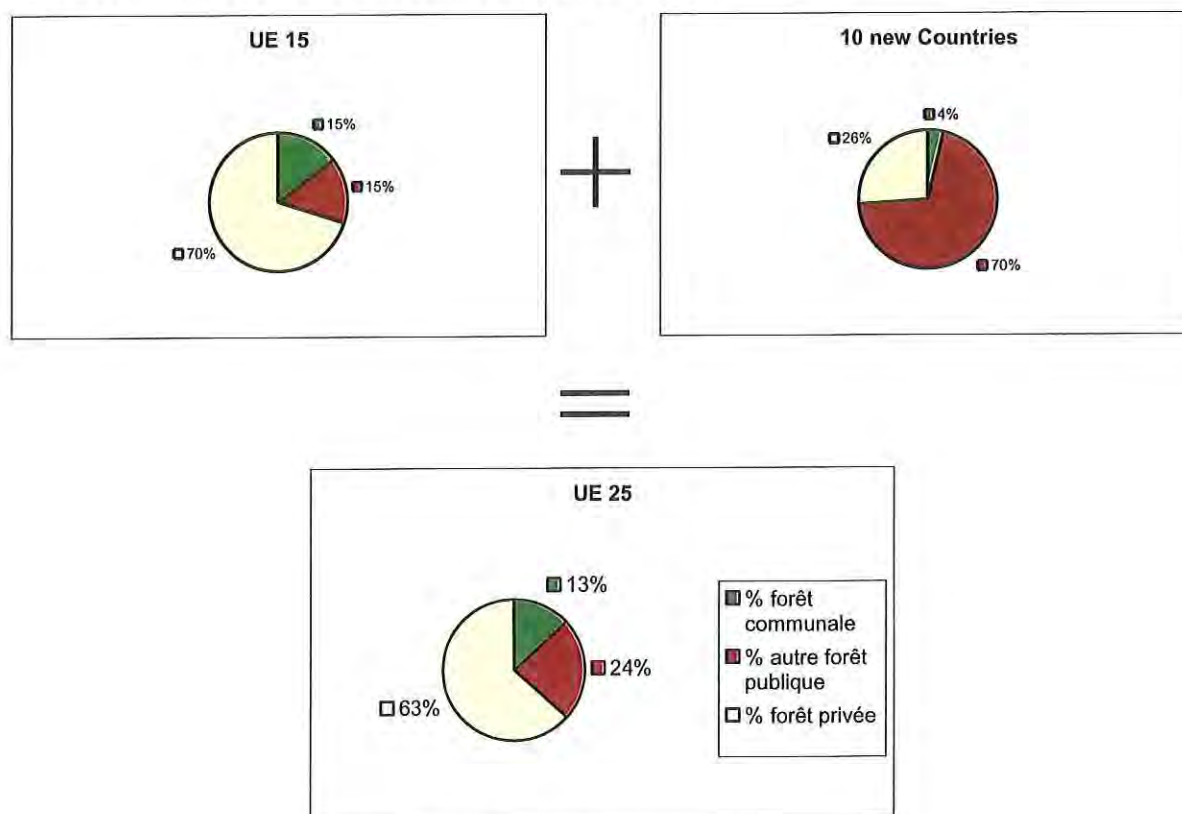
The structure of forest property strongly varies from one country to another, resulting from the various historical, political and social influences. In Western Europe, the structure of the forest property generally concerns a long tradition and the concretization of secular rights of user. In Eastern Europe, the process of restitution of the lands and ownership rights, implied, significant institutional changes and a considerable increase in the private properties and (to a lesser extent) communal (Schmithüsen, 1997).

### **Characterisation of the municipal forest in the EU25**

Within the enlarged European Union to 25 Members, the municipal forest is more particularly found on a great western part of the Union. In Belgium, Spain, Italy, Luxembourg, France, Germany, Sweden, it represents more than 15% of total forest area. However, in a general way, the municipalities remain a minority in the overall forest property. Portugal has a different feature from other countries somewhat, since in spite of the relatively low importance of the communal forest in the total public property (only 7%), the communal property is almost the only form of public forest property (88%). The Greek communal forest appears also significant, insofar as it represents nearly 15% of total and public wooded surface. Lastly, the Netherlands, although less wooded, also have nearly 15% of communal forests (either 28% of the public forests). Among the 10 countries which joined the European Union the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004, only Slovakia and the Czech Republic show differences by the relative importance of their communal forest (respectively: 14% and 12% of forest area). On the contrary, Cyprus, Malta, Estonia and Lithuania do not have (or practically not) municipal forests.

Thus, the entry of these new Countries has only a minor influence on the general structure of the forest property of the Union. Indeed, if the structure of the forest property of Europe 15 is clearly different from that of the 10 new Countries (respectively 70% private, 15% communal, 15% another public forest and 26% private, 4% communal, 70% another public forest), the composition of the forest property in Europe 25 (63% private, 13% communal, 24% another public owners) remains very close to that of Europe15, (Figure 30).

**Figure 1 : Evolution of the structure of the forest property in EU**



Source : TBFRA, 2000

The most wooded countries of the European Union (in terms of area covered) France, Spain, Sweden, Germany are those whose municipal forest is most significant (respectively 15%, 21%, 16%, 20% of total wooded surface). In parallel, two countries with relevant forest cover, Finland and Poland, have only little, even not at all, communal forest. The country whose total surface of communal forest is most significant is Spain (5 500 000 ha approximately). The communal forest accounts for there 21% of total forest cover and the near totality of the public forest property. According to our estimates, the communal forests are most numerous in Sweden, France and Spain, where their number passes very close to the 10 000, and their average surface lies between 300 and 600 hectares. The greatest units of communal forests meet in Poland (estimated average surface: 16 600 hectares, in Latvia (2 900 hectares) and in Greece (2 400 hectares). Paradoxically, it is one of the smallest European Union countries, Luxembourg, which, with 36% of communal forests, shows the highest share of communal forest out of the total forest property. Spain, Portugal and Sweden share, as for them, the highest score of countries whose share of communal forest in the public forest property is most significant, (Table 87).

Finally, the low importance of the communal forest in the 10 new countries (4% of total area and hardly 4.8% of the public forest), results in a limited share of the communal forest within the Union. Whereas the average surface of a municipal forest of the EU15 was 515 hectares, it is now of 525 hectares in the EU25, (in the ten new countries this average surface is estimated at more than 900 hectares). The communal forest, which represented in the Union with 15, 49% of the area of public forests accounts for now on 35% approximately of this surface, (Table 87).

Table 4 : The Municipal Forest in the Enlarged Europe

Countries	Geographical Situation	Total Land Area '000 ha	Rate of Forest Cover	Total Area of Municipal Forest '000 ha	Number of Municipal Forests	Average Area (ha)	% Municipal Forest/Total Forest Cover	% Municipal Forest/Public Forest
<b>Germany</b>	Europe centrale	34 927	30.7	2 147	4 858	400	20	37
<b>Belgium</b>	Europe de l'ouest	3 050	22.8	217	631	300	32	75
<b>France</b>	Europe de l'ouest	<b>55 010</b>	27.9	2 592	9 757	300	15	61
<b>Italy</b>	Europe du Sud	29 406	34	3 015	1 833	1 600	28	82
<b>Luxembourg</b>	Europe de l'ouest	258	34.5	32	224	100	<b>36</b>	76
<b>Netherlands</b>	Europe de l'ouest	3 392	11	49	719	100	14	28
<b>Denmark</b>	Europe du nord	4 243	10.8	24	46	500	4	16
<b>Ireland</b>	Europe de l'ouest	5 889	9.6	0	0	0	0	0
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Europe de l'ouest	24 160	11.6	89	47	1 900	4	8
<b>Greece</b>	Europe du Sud	12 890	22.9	825	339	2 400	13	15
<b>Spain</b>	Europe du Sud-ouest	49 944	28.8	<b>5 499</b>	8 549	600	21	<b>98</b>
<b>Portugal</b>	Europe du Sud-ouest	9 150	40.1	234	5	400	7	88

**NOTES**

(data 2001)

# = negligible

**Maximum Values**

Relevant Municipal Forest Ownership

<b>Austria</b>	Europe centrale	8 273	47	116	564	200	3	16
<b>Finland</b>	Europe du nord	30 459	72	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Sweden</b>	Europe du nord	41 162	65.9	4 839	10 624	500	16	79
<b>Cyprus</b>	Europe du Sud-est	924	18.6	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Estonia</b>	Europe de l'est	4 227	48.7	#	#	#	<1	<1
<b>Hungary</b>	Europe de l'est	9 234	19.9	10	8	1 200	0.5	0.8
<b>Latvia</b>	Europe de l'est	6 205	47.1	121	41	2 900	4	7
<b>Lithuania</b>	Europe de l'est	6 257	31.9	#	#	#	<1	<1
<b>Malta</b>	Europe du sud	52	1.1	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Poland</b>	Europe de l'est	30 442	29.7	83	5	16 600	0.9	1
<b>Czech Republic</b>	Europe de l'est	7 728	34.1	325	672	500	12	15
<b>Slovakia</b>	Europe de l'est	4 808	45.3	285	158	1 800	14	25
<b>Slovenia</b>	Europe centrale	2 012	55	28	20	1 400	2	8
<b>Total EU 25</b>		160 271	36.3	20 541	39 100	525	13	35
<b>Total EU 15</b>		136 204	33.7	19 677	38 196	515	15	49
<b>Total 10 Countries</b>		24 067	33.3	864	904	955	4	4.8

Marginal  
Municipal Forest  
Ownership

## **Nature and objectives of the management of these forests**

The municipal ownership and more generally that of local communities, is a form of forest property closely related on the harmonisation of a large set of interests (sometimes diverging) and to the multiple role of the resources, (Zingari, 2000). It is a type of particularly frequent form of property in mountain areas, where it allows, through a participative approach to the forest issues, an effective management of the less-favoured rural areas (rural development: economy, tourism... protection of areas...), (Zingari, 1998). Its presence is also significant on a great part of the Mediterranean basin, where the communal management of the forests can be a major asset in the use (forest and tourism) and the protection of these fragile and vulnerable forests.

On the whole, the objectives of management of municipal forests of the enlarged European Union, are thus directed towards a multipurpose and sustainable management of wooded lands. Some more specific objectives can however appear according to countries or areas.

Thus, the German federal State of Baden-Württemberg gives special importance to the protection of the forests and their recreation function.

In Walloon, the most forested part of Belgium, 99 % of the communal forests are adapted to wood production, whereas the Brussels-Capital area, it is the peri-urban character and thus the recreation function of the forests which prevails.

In France, as in Italy, to Portugal and in Spain, the management of the communal forests grants a relevant place to the multifunctionality of the forests (economic stakes of local development, protection of the environment, erosion..., social functions, etc), accentuated by the often fragile and vulnerable character of the majority of the communal forests (Mediterranean forests, mountain forests).

In the Netherlands, the relevant population density is makes that municipal forests are mainly devoted with the social functions of the forest (leisures, recreation...).

In Greece, the natural, climatic and topographic conditions direct "naturally" the management of the forests towards ecological concerns on conservation of the forests and fire control.

Slovakia also gives an very high importance to the ecological functions of the forests, primarily the protection of the biodiversity, the protection of the soils and the water management.

Luxembourg, Sweden and the Czech Republic attempt to develop a sustainable and harmonised management of the multifunctionality of the forest.

The species composition of the municipal forests varies from one country to another, according to the general characteristics of the forests.

In France, the composition of the forest of local communities (68% broadleaf) is related to that of the whole of the national forests. In the same way, in Italy and in Luxembourg, the communal forest is rather broadleaf, whereas in the Netherlands and in Sweden, it is rather coniferous (respectively 54% and 75%).

Because of the particular geographical conditions or specific objectives of management, the composition of communal forests diverges sometimes from composition of the whole of the national forests or other forms of property. Thus, in German Land of Baden-Württemberg, the communal forest is "less coniferous" than the forest of the whole of the forest owners of the area (57% coniferous tree in communal forest, against 67% coniferous tree on the whole of the forests of the area), and "much less coniferous" than the private forest of the Land (72% of surfaces of private forests). In Walloon (Belgian province), the forest under public management is broadleaf to a total value of 57% whereas the private forest is in majority coniferous. On the contrary, in Galice (Spanish province), the public forest is mainly coniferous whereas the private forest is rather broadleaf. Lastly, Portugal is characterized almost exclusively by coniferous trees within the communal forest (95%), whereas the forest as a whole is dominantly broadleaf.

### **Organisation of the management in municipal forests**

Among the countries whose communal forest property is particularly significant, four are characterized by federal administrative structure, strongly decentralized.

In Germany, the ministry in charge of the development of general orientations in the national forest policy is the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forest. The environmental problems relating to the forest are led by the Federal Ministry the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. Each Land has its own institutions and works out its own policy of forest management. The type of management and municipal administration of the forests thus varies from one Land to another. According to Länders and their own orientations, the municipalities manage themselves their forests or subordinate them to the forest administration, through the Land Forest Services. In Belgium, public forests are managed by the regional forest services ("*Bos in Groen*" for Flandres and "Nature and Forests Division" for Walloon).

The forest management organisation in Italy is relatively complex, being strongly dependent on the regional organizations. At the national level the forests refer to the Ministry for Agricultural and Forest Policies, on which in particular the "*Corpo Forestale*" depends. The responsibilities in policies and forest management, as for them, are allocated to the regional authorities. Certain areas (mainly in the north of the country), benefited from this autonomy and organized Regional Forest Services. Others, especially in the south, continue to have recourse to the Forest Service of the State to ensure the definition of their forest policies. Lastly, a third alternative in forest organization, based on a remarkable decentralization of forest matter competences, regional authorities towards the local authorities (provinces or communities of mountain - *Comunità Montane*), is frequent in the centre of the country. Thus, it is relatively difficult to release from the common tendencies in the various policies and regional organizations out of forest matters. The management of the communal forests is generally orchestrated by a "consortium", financially depending on the region, or a "mountain community", which is an association of several municipalities managing together their forest areas.

In Spain, at the national level, three ministries are directly involved in the development of the policies governing the forest-wood sector. The Ministry for Agriculture, Fishing and Food deals with the problems related to forest production and industries of first manufacturing.

Industries of second manufacturing and the production of paper-pulp depend on the Ministry for Industry, Trade and Tourism. Lastly, the Department of the Environment is in charge of the protection of habitats as well as the promotion and the management of the heritage. The communal forests are of two types: forests "of public utility" and forests "of free provision". Their management generally takes place on a regional or infra-regional level.

In Portugal, the forests depend on the Ministry for Rural Development and Fishing. There is a forest regime to which the communal forests are subjected in an obligatory or optional way. These communal forests can be managed in an autonomous way by the owner (the commune) or via the national forest administration.

In France, the communal forests are submitted to the forest regime, which is implemented and exclusively assured by the National Office the Forests. The various stages of the process of decentralization offer however more and more autonomy to the municipal authorities, sometimes relegating the ONF to a simple role of implementation.

In Luxembourg, the municipalities manage their heritage via their local representatives, under the control of the central authorities (External Services of the Administration of National Forestry Commission). The management of the communal forests is placed under the responsibility of the Administration for Water and Forests, which depends on the Department of Environment. However, the sector of silviculture is financially supervised by the Ministry for Agriculture.

The issues relating to the Dutch forests are under the responsibility of the Ministry for Agriculture, Nature Management and Fishing, which is responsible for the development and the application of the national forest policy. The Ministry for the Economic affairs is, as for him, responsible for wood industries. The municipal forests are generally managed by the municipal services and/or one of the four forest groupings of the country, or by private consultants. The municipality, as a local government, is strongly involved in the forest sector. It decides budget and operations of management; the managers executants (elected officials, working officers of the forest groupings or private consultants) do nothing but carry out the decisions taken by the town council.

In Greece, competences as regards forest management have been decentralized, but the broad objectives of the forest policy remain at the national level by the secretariat-general of the forests and natural environment of the Ministry for Agriculture. Regional services are the bodies of execution of the instructions (forest production management, protection, forest improvement, forest work) and of the forest policy emanating from the secretariat-general. They are also in charge of the application of the local programmes. All the forests of the country, whatever their type of property are under the control of the government, through the forest services.

In Sweden, the forest is under the administrative responsibility of the Ministry for Industry and Trade, whose mission is to centralize all the questions touching with wood and the related sector. The manager of the public domain is the "national Forest Enterprise". It has been privatised in 1994, the majority remaining to the State. It operates like a private company. However, there is not uniform structure in management of the communal forests. Certain municipalities have their own management units, and others call upon companies under contract.



The political, economic and social transformations that the applicant countries knew with the European Union, have affected the structures of their forest administrations, significantly bringing them closer the models of the "Western" countries. Thus, in all the European Union countries, including the Czech Republic and Slovakia, a Department of Environment is in charge of the policy for the protection of the natural resources and thus for the protection of the forests, and often, it is the ministry for the agriculture which sets up the general forest policy. In the Czech Republic, the management of the public forests is responsible for Lesy Ceske Republiky (Forests of the Czech Republic), public owned establishment, by the ministry for agriculture. Its overall mission is to ensure the sustainable management of the public forests and rivers of the country. It does not carry it out directly the forest work, which is generally entrusted to small local companies, but supervises the wood sales. In Slovakia, the management of public forests, is the responsibility of a State forest company, which in addition to the national forests, is responsible for the forests entrusted by other owners. Forest management is ensured on the Slovak territory by the Forest Project (Lesoprojekt) based in Zloven.

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<sup>1</sup>. Source: <http://www.europe.gouv.fr>

<sup>2</sup>. Source : <http://www.fao.org>, August 2004 , data 2000

<sup>3</sup>. Source: FAOSTAT, data 2001

<sup>4</sup>. Source: Petit Larousse Illustré, 2001.

<sup>5</sup>. Source: PNUD, 2003.

<sup>6</sup>. Source: UNCE/FAO 2000.

<sup>7</sup>. Source: <http://www.minefi.gouv.fr>

<sup>8</sup>. Source: <http://www.projetdeterritoire.com>

<sup>9</sup>. Source: <http://www.cordexa.org>

<sup>10</sup>. Source: Phare, 1998

<sup>11</sup>. Source: TBFRA, 2000