

PERFORM - Perceiving the Forest-based Sector in the Bioeconomy

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PerForm is a European cooperation network supported by the European Forest Institute. We are an international team of social scientists investigating societal perceptions of the forest-based Bioeconomy. Political strategies worldwide, present bioeconomy as the way towards a new and sustainable economy. The forest and wood-based sector promises to be an important building block for the bioeconomy. The aim of PerForm is to understand regional disparities of national bioeconomy policies and the societal perceptions of a forest-based bioeconomy. For this, we explore the bioeconomy perceptions of three main stakeholder groups: forestry stakeholders, the next generation (forestry students) and public perceptions. These societal perceptions are analyzed across nine European countries (Germany, Austria, Slovakia, France, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Spain and Russia).

Work performed since the beginning of the project, final results and their societal impact:

- During the two years of cooperation, we organized **three main consortium meetings** (the 1st project kick-off meeting held between 28th and 29th of June was hosted by the Chair of Forest and Environmental Policy at the University of Freiburg, Germany; 2nd project meeting 14th-15th March 2019 was hosted by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala; 3rd and final project meeting 14th-15th of November was hosted by INRAE in Bordeaux, France). Each of these meetings provided a unique opportunity for networking, and resulted in different collaborations on publications and other research endeavors. The final PerForm meeting was organized as **public conference** titled “Bioeconomy and European Forests” which succeeded to bring together different bioeconomy actors from across Europe such as bioeconomy researchers, representatives from the European Commission and the European Forest Institute, local officials from the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region, as well as students and young researchers from European forestry programs, fostering an engaging discussion on how to co-create a sustainable bioeconomy for future generations.
- Not only did the PerForm networking bring together and harmonize already existing social-scientific research on the bioeconomy topic, but it also acted as a hub for **new research** studies and **extensive data collection** from nine European countries. For example, we have collected, analyzed and compared forestry student perceptions about bioeconomy (+1300 responses). Additionally, we have collected data on the perceptions and acceptance of forest stakeholders and urban consumers concerning the bioeconomy, as well as compared and analyzed different policy documents and scientific articles on the topic. This has resulted in a number of **10 scientific** publications that have been accepted in an upcoming PerForm Special issue hosted by the journal of *Ambio* (forthcoming Dec 2020).
- Our results were disseminated at different scientific forums. The most recent example is a PerForm **conference session** during the XXV IUFRO World Congress that took place between 29 Sept and 5 Oct 2019, in Curitiba, Brazil. Project members as well as external experts presented their results to an international forum of experts and researchers.
- Students contributing to the PerForm project through their MSc thesis are an integral part of this international project. We have recruited **14 Master students** to conduct their thesis research within the project. Many of these theses have resulted in scientific publications and society briefs. During the final PerForm conference in Bordeaux, students and young researchers had the opportunity to present their results and ask challenging questions to a panel of bioeconomy experts.

- Lastly, based on the network's expertise and the new research results collected, we have launched **the first open access online course** titled "Bioeconomy and Society". The course is available for students of all levels, as well as lay people interested in the forest-bioeconomy topic. It is available on the learning platform ILIAS of the University of Freiburg and is planned to start at the beginning of May 2020.