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**Promoting climate change adaptaion in forests ecosystems with suitable forest seed and seedlings**

Guiding the selection and utilization of appropriate forest planting material under climate change requires a transnational approach, because the natural range of most European tree species extends beyond politically defined borders. Instead, the SUSTREE project aims at investigating and communicating the “natural” borders of trees and their local adaptations as the basis for future forests.

Focusing on seven ecologically and economically important forest tree species of Europe, SUSTREE fosters awareness on the intraspecific genetic variation of forest trees among stakeholders and practitioners in Central Europe(CE). An important step in this direction was an online survey conducted in 2017 among forest managers, conservation managers and forest nurseries in the six CE partner countries. With more than 800 responses, the survey found encouraging trends in the level of awareness on climate change adaptation, the importance of genetic variation, utilization of forest genetic materials along with mixed trends on overall awareness on EU regulations on seed transfer. All respondents across the six countries considered climate change as an important factor impacting their businesses in future. Also, most participants regarded the selection of adapted provenances/planting materials under climate change as important. Another important finding of the survey was that although the majority of the managers believed genetic diversity to be an important element that should be incorporated in their official management plans, but they did not feel well informed about the application of genetic diversity. To fill this gap in knowledge should be a major task of the SUSTREE project said Project manager Dr. Silvio Schüler from Austrian Research Centre for Forests, (BFW) in Vienna.

Moreover, the first half of the project laid the technical foundation for the aspired online and mobile information apps. This included the downscaling and conversion of appropriate climate data from the EURO‑CORDEX climate dataset into 83 annual, seasonal and monthly biologically relevant climate variables for two future climate scenarios. Moreover, detailed species occurrence maps and a database of range-wide provenance research trial data were established. These data were already used to evaluate existing provenance delineation in the different CE countries. Using Norway spruce and pedunculate oak as model species, we show that the current delineation system within the countries is highly different. Moreover, our climatic comparison allows highlighting groups of provenance regions with similar climatic conditions spanning across political borders. These clusters can be further used as a basis for defining transnational seed zones under climate change.

The project deliverables until now will be presented at the upcoming mid-term meeting of SUSTREE to be held in Chorin, Germany from 24th-26th April 2018. In the presence of representatives from the Joint Secretariat and the project advisory board, the next step of project implementation will be discussed. Feedback from this board will be incorporated in further shaping the project output.

SUSTREE is funded by the Interreg Central Europe Programme and aims at conservation and sustainable utilization of forest tree diversity in Climate Change. It is a collaboration of eight partner institutions from six Central European countries comprising of Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. The lead partner is the Austrian Research Centre for Forests (BFW) which is an Austrian federal, multidisciplinary research and education center based in Vienna.

For more information on the project and ongoing activities please visit our website,

<http://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/SUSTREE.html> and <https://www.facebook.com/SUSTREE-652655298219670/> ; <https://twitter.com/SUSTREE4>

