



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Project title: “Strengthening the capacities of forest owners associations for sustainable forest management”

Activity 1.1.2

Selection of five forest owners’ associations in Suceava County

General background

Despite the fact that *de jure* the management of Romanian forests must be done according to same national guidelines regardless the type and size of ownership private forest management is confronting with important problems such as high deforestation rates and lack of investments in forest regeneration. This is mainly due to the perception that private owners are looking at forest as an immediate source of income ignoring the long term financial sustainability.

Capacity building of private forestry depends on numerous factors, from confidence in timber market to legal framework, from technical support in forest-related issues to appropriate financial instruments, like incentives and compensation for the economic loss brought about by functional zoning and provision of ecosystem services. In many situations the main problem the forest owners have to deal with is their own poverty and lack of appropriate settings, at local level, to cope with illegal logging and responsible forest management.

Setting up PEFC standards is an opportunity for “Nostra Silva” to turn into a proactive organization but, at the same time, the local associations, presumed to be members of “Nostra Silva”, shall improve their internal democratic system, the most important condition for being able to undertake new tasks meant to improve the quality of the forest management. Therefore the two aims are somehow harmonized: since PEFC procedures shall be addressed by a forest district, the repository of the certificate, the capacity building task shall be focused on forest owners association. In other words, the two goals shall be better pursued if the five pilot associations are backed up by forest districts established by those associations.

The fact that the forest owners can choose the administrator/manager for their forests creates more opportunities for private owners to be involved in decisions regarding forest management and thus the administrators, either state or private entities, have the challenging task of meeting the financial expectations of the owners while coping with the restrictive legal framework.

Establishing a private forest district is nevertheless not an easy task in areas where private ownership is reduced in size or scattered as the legal framework requires a minimum size needed for a district. Therefore forest owners which have established a private forest district have shown

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Întărirea capacității asociațiilor proprietarilor de păduri
pentru un management forestier durabil

Strengthening the capacities of forest owners associations
for sustainable forest management





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

already their capacity to get associated and organized in order to control and benefit from the management of their forests.

Compared with other regions of Romania, Suceava County appears dominated by public ownership constituted from state ownership (66,4%) and municipalities (14,5%). The private ownership is 19,1 % represented by individuals and juridical persons. In such conditions, the private forest districts administrate 15% of the forests in Suceava County half of it belonging to municipalities and half to juridical persons and individuals.

In this background the selection of the five forest owners associations prone to undertake PEFC certification in the Suceava County have used a step wise approach by addressing the following issues: the existence of a long term administrative contract, the role of the association in the administration of the forest, the capacity of the administrator to be PEFC certified, and the publicly available information provided by the administrator.

Criteria 1: The forest associations have to have a forest administration contract

Rationale: Because the forest district is the official entity in charge with forest management and it will be the holder of whatever certificate, the candidate associations shall have a long term contract with a forest district, either state (National Forest Administration) or private.

Indicator: contractual agreements with forest districts

Selection procedure: All identified forest associations have a valid administrative contract. The difference is that some are administrated by districts belonging to NFA and some are administrated by private forests districts.

Criteria 2: The forest associations have a major share in the forest district

Rationale: The decision to undertake the forest certification path has to be influenced by the owner will and should not be imposed by the forest administrator. The role of forest associations in the decision making process at the forest district level depends on the contribution they bring to the size of forest under administration.

Indicator: share of forest ownership at the forest administration level (forest ownership)

Selection procedure:

From the state forest administration: the 24 branches of the National Forest Administrations existing in Suceava County have under administration large areas of state forests (Figure 1) and therefore the interest of non-state owners are not prevailing in their business management. Only in one case the share of private property is higher than 50% (State Forest District Vatra Dornei) which has been included as a potential candidate in the preliminary analysis.

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Întărirea capacității asociațiilor proprietarilor de păduri
pentru un management forestier durabil

Strengthening the capacities of forest owners associations
for sustainable forest management





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

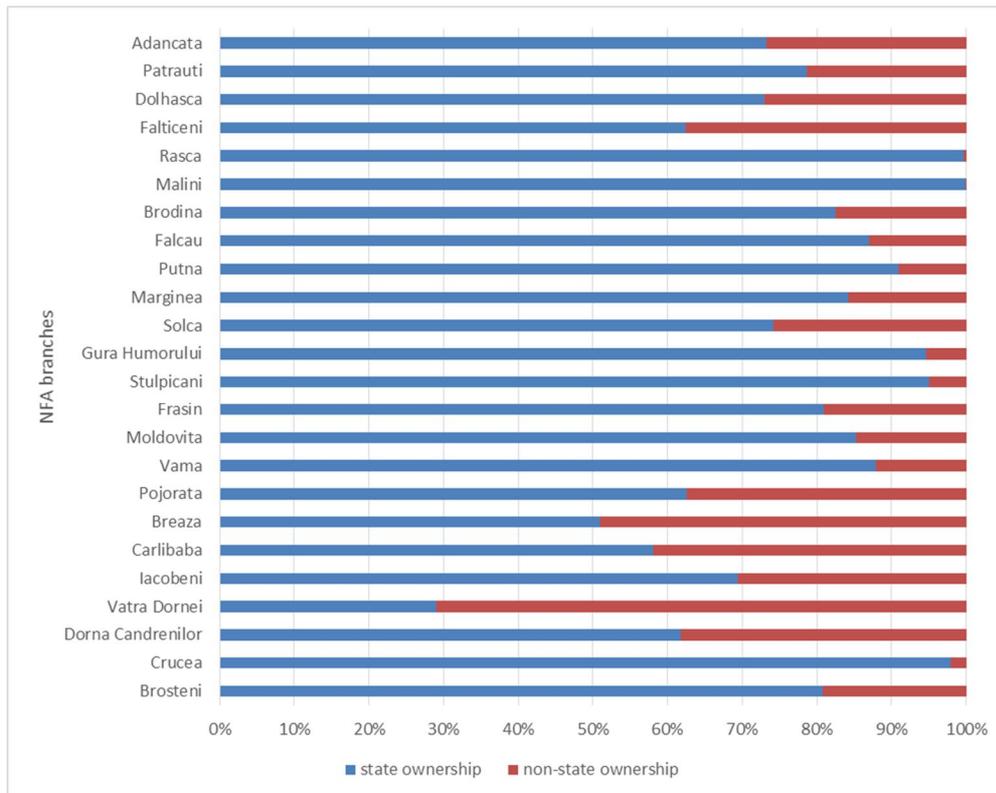


Figure 1 - The share of state and non-state ownership in state forest districts from Suceava County

From the private administration: the private forest districts existing in Suceava County manage only non-state forests. Out of the 18 private forest districts which have in administration forest from Suceava County 13 districts are located in the neighbouring counties (Bistrita Nasaud and Maramures) and therefore the share of forests from Suceava County in their total administrative size is limited. All together these 13 private district administrate 30% of the area under private administration in Suceava. Therefore the remaining 5 private forests districts which predominantly administrate forests in Suceava are those which integrate most of the selected candidates according to this criteria, as following:

1. Bucovina Private Forest District, which manages 7452 ha of private forest in Campulung Moldovenesc area, including the municipality forests owned by Cîmpulung municipality. All forests are gathered in a single association, which is **Bucovina Forest Owners Association**.
2. Dorna RA Private Forest District, which is managing 15007 ha divided on three types of forest ownerships: five municipalities (one city and four communes), joint ownership (two „obști”) and 13 private forest owners. Because this private forest district is subordinated to five municipalities (Vatra Dornei, Dorna Candrenilor, Cosna, Poiana Stampei and Carlibaba) with 80% of the forests **the association of these five municipalities** is also targeted as a candidate.

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Întărirea capacității asociațiilor proprietarilor de păduri pentru un management forestier durabil

Strengthening the capacities of forest owners associations for sustainable forest management





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

3. Falticeni Private Forest District, which is managing private forests owned by individuals, out of which **one owns about 5000 hectares.**
4. Ilișești SRL Private Forest District, which is managing forests owned by two associations: **Silva Bucovina association**, located in Radauti, and **the Association of Orthodox Cult Entities of Suceava 1 Suceava 2.**
5. Silva Bucovina SRL Private Forest District, which is managing the forests owned by **Protopopiat Falticeni** (140 members, 4200 ha) and **Protopopiat Campulung** (also 140 members, and 4200 hectares respectively). In addition, Silva Bucovina manages 600 hectares of individual forest owners, and 1800 hectares of forest owned by a high school in Botosani County (Anastasiu Basota High School, located in Pomarla commune).

Criteria 3: The capacity of forest administrator to certify private forest under PEFC

Rationale: FSC is the only forest certification schemes implemented up to now in Romania therefore the forest districts already certified under FSC may not be willing to adhere to the PEFC scheme.

Indicator: the FSC certification of forest administrators

Selection procedure: all NFA forest districts in Suceava have been certified under FSC scheme (group certificate) and any attempt to certify private forests managed by NFA is more complicated because that private forest will be considered a new entity of the whole group subject to FSC certificate (about two million hectares). In other words, any private forest administrated by NFA shall be certified within the NFA group, meaning the decision is being made by NFA headquarter, not by the forest owners' themselves. Therefore the State Forest District Vatra Dornei it is not considered a valid candidate. None of the 5 selected private forest districts are FSC certified therefore the resulting indicator to choose or not to choose a certain association for being certified is its appurtenance to one of the five selected private forest districts.

Criteria 4: The forest associations are prone to be considered as pilot associations

Rationale: The success of the project is based on the willingness of the selected forest associations to participate in the capacity building process and to be considered for PEFC certification. Apart from the technical support needed for getting the forest certification, the internal democracy within the forest owners associations is also very important on long run because all important challenges, expenses and responsibilities coming about with the certification process shall be openly discussed and accepted by the forest owners.

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Întărirea capacității asociațiilor proprietarilor de păduri
pentru un management forestier durabil

Strengthening the capacities of forest owners associations
for sustainable forest management





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Indicator: check-list of indicators:

- Do you have an updated status, supervised by a person with juridical expertise?
- Do you organize general assemblies on regular basis?
- Do you have an operational steering committee that make decision on democratic bases?
- Do you keep records for all general assemblies and steering committee meetings?
- Are you recorded into the National Catalogue of Associations, Foundations, and NGOs?

Questions addressed to the forest administration (forest districts, private or public):

- Do the forest owners pay on regular bases the administration fee?
- Do the forest owners cooperate with NFA and ITRSV in preventing illegal cuttings?
- Did the forest owners try to alter the data they have to provide to the forest planning companies in order to cut more timber, or did they try to harm the trees for having more salvage products?
- Did the forest owners feed the regeneration fund, according to the legal provisions?

Selection procedure:

Along the implementation of the 2014 phase of the project four associations which fulfil the check-list of indicators have responded positively to the project team by actively participating in the organized meetings of the project: **Silva Bucovina Association** and **the Association of Orthodox Cult Entities of Suceava 1 Suceava 2 (administrated by PFD Ilisesti)** and **Protopopiat Falticeni** and **Protopopiat Campulung** (administrated by PFD Silva Bucovina SRL) and thus they are considered as selected pilot associations.

For the fifth association shall be selected from one of the remaining three private forest districts, as follows: 1) Bucovina Private Forest District, affiliated to Campulung municipality (which has a legal status of autonomous entity), 2) Dorna private forest district and 3) Falticeni private forest district. The check list of indicators has been partially filled in either from the association side or from the forest administrator side therefore the additional indicator for the selection procedure in this case was the availability of information and willingness to participate in the project. A brief analysis of these forest districts is presented in

Table

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Întărirea capacității asociațiilor proprietarilor de păduri
pentru un management forestier durabil

Strengthening the capacities of forest owners associations
for sustainable forest management





Table 2 - Selection criteria for private forests supposed to carry out the effort for getting the forest management certified

Criteria	Dorna private forest district (local autonomous regie RA)	Bucovina Private forest district (local autonomous regie RA)	Falticeni private forest district (SRL)
Financial transparency	Not available now, but likely to be improved	No data publicly available	No data publicly available
Web-site	www.ocoluldorna.ro	n.a.	www.ocolfalticeni.ro
Readiness to fill in different surveys and cooperate in different projects focused on private forestry	**	Only one attendance during the awareness campaign carried out by the public authority in 2008	n.a.
Willingness to participate in the project	Open	Not interested	Not responding

Conclusions regarding the target group of forest owners associations

Because the main responsibility for getting and keeping whatever certificate (FSC or PEFC)

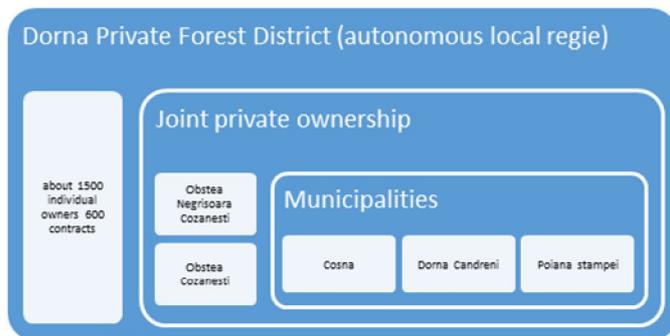


Figure 2 - Structure of Dorna Private Forest District

pertains to the forest district, and only five private forest districts have qualified for applying PEFC certification scheme (the reasons for being sceptical about the FSC group certification scheme have been already explained) we have to choose that combination of private forest district which able to fulfil the project goal: getting the certification process initiated for five associations.

Four associations are managed by two private forest districts belonging to the Orthodox Church and are opened to be considered as pilot associations in the project.

Falticeni Private Forest District has the same legal status as the two private forest districts previously discussed (commercial companies) and manages 6206 hectares, much of the forest (5000 hectares) being owned by a single association Asociația Forestieră Română. This association is somehow atypical, in the sense it is not interested in joining any kind of partnership neither with “Nostra Silva” (small forest owners) nor with Proforest, the association of large forest owners. The chief of the forest district was informed about the project but didn’t show any interest in such an



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

endeavour. The web site of this forest district is not functional, although its architecture suggests a complex enterprise.

The fifth one was sought into the associations located in Campulung Moldovenesc area, Falticeni and Vatra Dornei. These associations have signed management contracts with three private forest districts (Bucovina RA, Falticeni and Dorna RA), all of them bearing the legal status of local autonomous regie, which implies less freedom in making the decision to go for a forest certificate (major decisions are made by mayor and the municipality council). The most willing to pursue the project objectives is Dorna Forest District, for two reasons at least: 1) the ownership structure is complex (about 1500 individual ownerships, 2 joint ownerships and three municipalities 2) the staff of the forest district is willing to join the project because a better cooperation with such a large variety of stakeholders (see Figure 2) improves its capacity to cope, on the one hand, with a higher demand for wood and, on the other hand, with potential conflicts between such a large variety of interests.

Addendum explaining the reasons for changing some pilot associations/areas

The initial selection of the five pilot area have considered the following major criteria

- I. The forest associations have to have a forest administration contract
- II. The forest associations have a major share in the forest district
- III. The capacity of forest administrator to certify private forest under PEFC
- IV. The forest associations are prone to be considered as pilot associations

In order to respect the second criterion the pilot associations have been related to private forest districts. Out of the five private forest districts located in Suceava county two of them have declared as being not interested to be part of the project namely Bucovina Private Forest District and Falticeni Private Forest District.

Consequently the selection procedure considered the interested associations administrated by the rest of the private forest districts:

1. ***Silva Bucovina association administrated by PFD Ilisesti***
2. ***the Association of Orthodox Cult Entities of Suceava 1 Suceava 2 administrated by Silva Bucovina SRL***
3. ***Protopopiat Falticeni*** administrated by PFD Silva Bucovina SRL
4. ***Protopopiat Cîmpulung*** administrated by PFD Ilîșești
5. ***Obștea Negrișoara*** administrated by PFD Dorna Candreni RA

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Întărirea capacității asociațiilor proprietarilor de păduri
pentru un management forestier durabil

Strengthening the capacities of forest owners associations
for sustainable forest management





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

The first four associations are managed by two private forest districts belonging to the Orthodox Church and they declared in the initial meetings to be opened to be considered as pilot associations in the project. Worth mentioning in this context is that the two forest districts pertaining to the four church association are completely private entities, and they have no power in making any decisions whenever it comes to forestry.

By April 2016 the cooperation between the project team and the four church associations envisaged initially was undermined by the public debates about the poor quality of harvesting operations carried out in Suceava county by various logging companies. The four associations (the four churches associations) approached by the project team to improve their internal democratic mechanism and management were cooperative for a while in implementing the project until they realised that complying with any forest certification standard is beyond their expectations and interest.

Being aware about the problems raised by the harvesting companies, the four association became very reluctant when it came to banning skidding operations along the creeks in hilly and mountainous areas. Skidding operations carried out along creeks and rivulets is the sensitive point of any harvesting contract between a forest district and any harvesting company and now most of the harvesting companies claim that FSC standards, compulsory applied by the NFA forest districts in Suceava county, simply cannot be fully observed. In any public debate organized by NFA Suceava during the certification process this issue raised first as major condition. Therefore two of the four associations publicly declared their reluctance in following up the objective of the project and we have to seek for other two pilot areas in Suceava county.

Effectively, just one church associations is still involved in the project as pilot areas namely the **Asociația Unităților de Cult Ortodoxe proprietare de pădure din Protopopiatul Suceava (AUCOPPSV)** administered by PFD Silva Bucovina SRL which is an association including the second (Protopopiat Suceava) and the third association (Protopopiat Fălticeni) from the initial list.

Considering the initial selection criteria only PFD Dorna Candreni RA has remain open about the implementation of the project objectives. The PFD Dorna Candreni RA, who is managing the forest of the fifth pilot association, although is a private forest district, has more power in making any decision about forestry, because the local municipality, who actually owns the forest, has more financial resources and doesn't rely only on forest revenues. Therefore it was in the expressed interest of the PFD to add one more association as a pilot association for the project. **The association Obstea Cozanesti Ortoaia** has been approached and integrated in the project additionally to the initial association: **Obștea Negrișoara**.

Having to find out at least two more associations, we have looked at the associations administered by National Forest Administration (NFA) which has been managing also private forests on contractual bases. The project team has not addressed the NFA as partner from the very beginning because the project main goal is to increase the power of local forest owners' association

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Întărirea capacității asociațiilor proprietarilor de păduri
pentru un management forestier durabil

Strengthening the capacities of forest owners associations
for sustainable forest management





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

and pinpointing the NFA as the main partner would have jeopardized this goal, since the NFA has been perceived, in many situations, as a sort enemy of private forestry.

Nevertheless, because the NFA is also interested in joining a PEFC certification scheme, although this company was not initially taken into consideration as partner, the discussions with Solca Forest district which is willing to cooperate with the project team, being more motivated to undertake the technical responsibilities raised by PEFC certification process.

The selection of the Solca forest district was based on the large number of associations of private forest owners existing in the area (10 association have been present at the first meeting for the inception phase of the project). After the first round of discussions two associations have been selected with the interest of the others to be addressed in the dissemination phase. These associations are: **Obstea Humoreni** and **Obstea Solonetul Nou**.

Consequently the following pilot associations are addressed by the project and included for the training activities and the next steps:

1. **Obstea Negrilesti** administered by PFD Dorna RA – contact person Roman Irimescu
2. **Obstea Cozanești Ortoaia** administered by PFD Dorna RA – contact person Rusu Constantin
3. **AUCOPPSV** administered by PFD Silva Bucovina SRL – Pr. Horga Dinu, secretar
4. **Asociația Proprietarilor de pădure ai Obstei Humoreni** administered by NFA district Solca – contact person vice-president Vorobchevici Ioan
5. **Obstea Pădurii Solonetul Nou** administered by NFA district Solca – contact person Chachula Mecislav