

THE SMURF PROJECT CELEBRATES ITS SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY DURING THE ERIAFF 2024 CONFERENCE

- From 10th to 13th of June, the consortium of the project meets at Seinäjoki
- SMURF celebrates a side event along with the ERIAFF conference

(Seinäjoki (Finland), 11th of June, 2024) - The SMURF project holds its **second General Assembly from June 11 to 13, 2024**. This event is taking place in Seinäjoki, Finland, as a side event to the **10th annual conference** of the **European Regions for Innovation in Agriculture, Food and Forestry network (ERIAFF)**.

Following the successful kick-off meeting held in Soria (Spain), this assembly marks the second gathering of SMURF's consortium members. The event, coordinated by **Fundación Cesefor**, brings together experts from various fields, including forest-based value chains, wood technology, computer science, forest management, and environmental policy.

The choice of **Finland** as the venue for the General Assembly is highly significant. Finland is renowned for its **extensive forest cover and advanced forest management practices**, making it an ideal location to host discussions on sustainable forestry management. The Finnish forestry sector is a **global leader in innovation and sustainability**, providing valuable insights and practices that can benefit the SMURF project.

The forestry industry is crucial for Europe's economy and environment. Forests provide essential ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation, and raw materials for various industries. However, European forests face challenges like fragmentation, climate change, and unsustainable practices. The SMURF project addresses these issues by developing innovative solutions for small forest holdings, enhancing their economic viability and ecological sustainability.

Holding the assembly within the framework of the ERIAFF conference enhances its relevance and impact. This collaboration with ERIAFF offers a unique opportunity for SMURF to engage with a broader network of stakeholders, share knowledge, and build partnerships that will strengthen the project's outcomes.

Álvaro Picardo, the project coordinator from Fundación Cesefor, leads the assembly, providing insights into the current status and future direction of the project. Participants include representatives from institutions like Università degli Studi di Firenze (Italy), Xylofutur (France), Bluebiloba (Italy), Instituto Politécnico de Bragança (Portugal), AIR INSTITUTE (Spain), Preferred by Nature (Denmark), InnovaWood (Belgium), MILIEU (Belgium), and Contactica (Spain).

The General Assembly aims to review the project's progress, discuss deliverables, and plan future activities. Key sessions will cover an overview of the SMURF project, presentations of work packages, and discussions on deliverables such as the Data Management Plan and the Communication and Dissemination Plan. The event will also feature networking opportunities and interactions with the ERIAFF conference attendees.

The SMURF project is an ambitious initiative focused on developing sustainable and profitable forestry management models for small forest properties. It addresses critical challenges in European forestry, such as the fragmentation and lack of management of small forest holdings. It aims to create innovative solutions that enhance small forests' economic viability and ecological



sustainability. The project's objectives align with the European Green Deal and the EU Forest Strategy, contributing to the EU's broader goals of climate action and sustainable development.

For more information about the SMURF project and its upcoming events, please contact the project coordinator at info@smurfproject.eu.

About SMURF: The SMURF project, aligned with the EU's Forest Strategy, promotes sustainable forest management through innovative Closer to Nature Silviculture practices (CNS) and a harmonized European Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) system. By tailoring solutions for small forest properties, SMURF enhances carbon farming, biodiversity, and forest product valorization. With a multidisciplinary approach and diverse stakeholder engagement, SMURF provides holistic sustainability solutions across the forest-based value chain. Ten organizations from Spain, Belgium, Italy, France, Portugal, and Denmark collaborate with a translational, multidisciplinary, and multi-actor approach. This project is granted by the European Research Executive Agency (REA) under the Horizon Europe program.

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