

SMURF PROJECT HOLDS THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN FLORENCE: PAVING THE WAY FOR THE 1ST EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON SMALL FOREST HOLDINGS

- From January 14-16, 2025, the project consortium met at the University of Florence's Novoli Campus
- The 1st European Conference on Small Forest Holdings will be held from 20 to 22 May 2025 in Rome (FAO Headquarters). Co-organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the European Forest Institute (EFI).

(Florence, Italy – 29th of January 2025) - From January 14-16, 2025, the SMURF (Sustainable Management models and value chains for small Forests) project convened its 3rd General Assembly at the University of Florence's Novoli Campus. This pivotal meeting gathered 22 people, from 10 project partners to review progress, outline upcoming activities, and prepare for the **Second Cascade Funding Call** and the **First European Conference on Small Forest Holdings**.

The General Assembly featured engaging discussions on project milestones, deliverables, and collaborative efforts among universities, policymakers, associations, and forestry stakeholders. The event also included a **field trip to Monte Amiata in the Tuscany region**, a region renowned for its forestry heritage and innovative practices.

Sharing Knowledge and Best Practices in Monte Amiata

The field trip provided a valuable opportunity to exchange knowledge and learn from local forestry management practices. Participants visited **Pian dei Renai, Macchiafaggeta Wood and Pozzo Stella and Marsiliana**, forested areas managed by the **Unione dei Comuni Amiata Valdorcia, Society Macchiafaggeta**, and **Consorzio Forestale dell'Amiata Grossetana**. These organizations showcased their sustainable forestry practices, including biodiversity preservation, timber production, and local community engagement. The insights shared during this visit reinforces SMURF's ongoing efforts to provide innovative tools for small forest owners and to redefine the future of European forest management.

Rome to Host 1st European Conference on Small Forest Holdings

An important milestone of the project will be its first international event, that will take place in Rome from 20th to 22nd May. It will **bring together small forest owners associations, international experts, policymakers, associations, NGOs, forest industry, and support system managers**.

The sectoral event aims to:

- Review the challenges and opportunities in the sector.
- Discuss recent initiatives to engage forest owners, finance forestry activities, prevent land abandonment, and address forest fragmentation.
- Provide an overview of the current state of small EU forest holdings, including legal frameworks and national and regional support systems for multifunctional forestry.
- Foster the development of a European community of practice on small forest holdings.



This conference is **funded by the European Commission** and mainly organized by the **Cesefor Foundation** and the **University of Florence** on behalf of the **SMURF Consortium**. It is co-organized by the **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)** and the **European Forest Institute (EFI)**, with additional support from the **Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty, and Forests (MASAF)** and the **Spanish Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (MITECO)**.

By convening a diverse range of stakeholders, the conference seeks to lay the groundwork for profitable and sustainable solutions that will empower small forest owners and contribute to the long-term resilience of Europe's forests.

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.

For more information about the SMURF project, visit www.smurfproject.eu.

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