Forest Europe growing life

# - Final Report -

# An evaluation of the FOREST EUROPE Pan-European Forest Risk Facility (FoRISK) Pilot


Freiburg, 24.1.2024

**Final report for the evaluation of the FoRISK Pilot**

**Version: Draft 2.0 from 24.1.2024**

**Aim: Final evaluation of the FoRISK Pilot FOREST EUROPE**

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background of the final evaluation

Building on the Bratislava Ministerial Resolution "Adapting pan-European forests to climate change" (2021), FOREST EUROPE is working towards the pan-European forest risk facility (FoRISK) to support forest adaptation to changing climatic and site conditions as well as to maintain and enhance the resilience and mitigation potential of forests at a pan-European level (B1, B2).

The vision of the foreseen FoRISK, after its full-scale launch in 2025, is to provide relevant evidence-based forest risk and adaptation related information to political decision-makers based on trustful cooperation with scientists, practitioners and society (B3). During a Pilot running from September 2022 to December 2023, a range of informational policy tools (I. Policy briefs, II. Communication, III. Reference pools and networking and IV. Capacity building and knowledge exchange) and their added value for the national focal points of the FOREST EUROPE signatory countries and observers dealing with forestry issues are tested for three successive but interrelated phases. Each phase is focusing on a specific thematic focus of a forest damage agent: Pilot phase #1 "Wildfire" (9/2022 – 2/2023); Pilot phase #2 "Pests & diseases" (3/2022 – 8/2023); Pilot phase #3 "Storms" (9/2023 – 12/2023).

To monitor the progress during the Pilot implementation, FOREST EUROPE Liason Unit Bonn (LUBo) regularly and in close cooperation with the signatories and observers assessed the ongoing work and provided monitoring reports for the FoRISK Pilot phase #1 "wildfires" and phase #2 "pest & diseases". Evaluations and feedback during expert group meetings and workshops helped to determine the relevance and level of achievement of the Pilot deliverables, their effectiveness, efficiency and impact, as well as necessary adaptations for the continued implementation and for the development of the Ministerial Bonn decision to establish the FoRISK after 2024.

According to the FoRISK concept document, the FoRISK Pilot should be subject to a final evaluation by an external expert. This should result in an evaluation report planned to be shared with FOREST EUROPE signatories and observers and published for general dissemination as one key deliverable of the FoRISK Pilot (B1).

## 1.2. Purpose and objectives of the final evaluation

The **purpose** of this report is to present the results of the final evaluation of the FoRISK Pilot.

The main **objectives** of this reports are three-fold:

(i) to determine the relevance, level of achievement, effectiveness, efficiency and impacts of the FoRISK pilot and its deliverables, *and where possible*

(ii) to asses the success of implementation and participation, with a special focus on the policy level, as well as

(iii) to assess the added value, the niche of FoRISK and the level of synergies at Pan-European level.

## 1.3. Evaluation tasks and methods

The main **tasks** and **methodology** for this evaluation include:

- Development of an evaluation framework, including the identification of evaluation criteria and selection of evaluation techniques;
- Data collection followed by compilation of preliminary results of the evaluation and their presentation during the FoRISK FOREST EUROPE expert group meeting on 7.12.2023;
- Consultation with the FoRISK experts at the expert group meeting on 7.12.2023 to collect expert feedback and revise the material, if and where need be;
- Preparation of a short and concise final evaluation report until January 2024;
- Publication of the final report and dissemination to wider public, from January 2024 on.

The report is based on evaluation methodology that applies a systematic and objective assessment. The evidence is generated by a content analysis of various data sources partly provided by the FOREST EUROPE Liaison Unit Bonn (LUBo) (B1-B3; D1-15; S1-S36), partly co-generated by the consultant and LUBo (F1-F49). The main evidence extracted comes in the form of both quantitative and qualitative data. This is found in relevant sources such as background documents (e.g. ministerial decisions), project deliverables (e.g., concept note, policy briefs, workshop minutes), expert surveys (e.g., answered by participating experts), and records of communication activities (e.g., social media engagements and feedback). In addition, expert feedback from focus group discussions at the expert level meeting in December 2023 was analysed. **Table 1** provides an overview of the main data sources for the present evaluation.

The above mentioned method and data triangulation was applied to secure the relevance, reliability and validity of the main results and findings of the FoRISK Pilot evaluation. This triangulation allowed to obtain comprehensive and insightful information. The content analysis of data sources, paired with systematic and objective assessment in line with the evaluation criteria/assessment questions (see below), proved to provide relevant results of the evaluation which are presented in the form of qualitative (e.g., text narratives) and quantitative (e.g., descriptive statistics) information (McBurney and White 2009; Neuman 2006).

**Table 1:** Overview of data sources for the FoRISK Pilot evaluation

| Types of data sources | Total number | Data sources (number in brackets) | Referred to as |
|---|---|---|---|
| Background documents | N=3 | Bratislava Ministerial Decision (N=1), Bonn Ministerial Draft Decision (N=1), ToR FoRISK Annex (N=1) | B1, B2, B3 |
| FoRISK project documents | N=15 | FoRISK concept paper (=1), minutes from FoRISK expert group meetings (=2), project briefs (N=4), workshop summaries (N=4), monitoring reports (N=2), sets of social media analysis (N=2) | D1, D2-3, D4-7, D8-9, D10-11, D12-13, D14-15 |
| Expert surveys | N=36 | Expert responses to survey questionnaire (N036) | S1-S36 |
| Focus group results | N=49 | Expert feedback to focus group questions | F1-F49 |

## 1.4. Evaluation framework

The process of data collection and data analysis was guided by an evaluation framework composed of a list of leading assessment questions (Box 1). The list was used as the main coding framework for the content analysis of data sources (e.g., project documents, expert surveys, focus group feedback, see Table 1). The evaluation framework was derived from good practice examples of evaluation criteria with policy relevance (Chambers, R. et al. 2009; Gertler et al. 2016; Leeuw and Vaessen 2009; MoFA 2019; Noltze at al. 2018; OECD 2021; UNEG 2013).

In particular, the data collected from the data sources were analyzed by identifying, clustering and summarizing matching evidence as judged against the evaluation criteria. The applied rating scale of assessment refers to (i.) very good achievement (full match between evidence and planned activities, sometimes evidence going beyond plans), (ii.) generally good achievement (sufficient match between evidence and planned activities, albeit with some minor deviations), and (iii.) room for improvement (non-sufficient match between evidence and planned activities, with deviations).

## Box 1: An evaluation framework for the FoRISK Pilot final evaluation

*Criterion 1: FoRISK effectiveness ("add value")*

1. To what extent were the FoRISK Pilot deliverables achieved compared to the concept document?
2. What is the added-value the FoRISK Pilot achieved?
3. What needs to be improved in the near future?

*Criterion 2: FoRISK efficiency ("niche")*

4. To what extent did the FoRISK activities create synergies with other initiatives and help avoid overlaps?
5. What is the particular niche for FoRISK identified during the Pilot?
6. What needs to be improved in the future?

*Criterion 3: FoRISK impact ("implementation")*

7. What is the influence of the FoRISK Pilot implementation on policymakers, stakeholders and the general public in the Pan-European region?
8. What is the influence of the FoRISK Pilot implementation on forest practitioners on the ground in the Pan-European region?
9. What needs to be improved in the future?

*Criterion 4: FoRISK durability ("ownership")*

10. How to secure that FoRISK is likely to continue having an impact after the Pilot?
11. What commitments by FOREST EUROPE signatories and observers are needed to secure ownership?
12. What needs to be improved in the future?

# 2. Evaluation results

## 2.1. Evaluation of FoRISK Pilot policy instruments

### 2.1.1. Evaluation of policy briefs

During the three phases of the FoRISK Pilot, altogether four (N=4) policy briefs were drafted, presented, discussed, published and disseminated (D4-7; Table 2). In line with the concept note for the FoRISK Pilot (D1), for each of the three Pilot phases one policy brief with specific topical focus (wildfire, biotic threats, storms) was prepared (D4-6). The fourth policy brief addressed cross-cutting topics of cooperation and networking (D7). This documented evidence suggests a very good **level of achievement** of the policy brief deliverables.

According to the surveyed experts (S1-S36), the FoRISK Pilot policy briefs were found to be insofar **effective, efficient and impactful** as they offered relevant, additional and very useful knowledge-based recommendations and decision-making support to policymakers. In some FOREST EUROPE countries, the policy briefs revealed the need for national policy changes in order to better prevent and respond to the forest risks in the context of climate change. In other cases, the policy briefs were used as scientifically-based confirmation that a country had set up the appropriate policy and legal framework. According to most of the surveyed experts (S31-36) and the project documents (D10-D11), the main effects and impacts of drafting the policy briefs during the FoRISK Pilot were the inclusive collaboration at the policy-science-practice interface at (pan-)European level as well as the enhancement of cross-border knowledge exchange and information sharing at (pan-) European level. The policy briefs also supported **efficiency** in that they were successfully implemented with increased synergies, while avoiding duplication with existing national and European strategies and plans based on an efficient format that adds value (D10-11; S31-36; F1-F49).

According to the surveyed experts (S31-S36; F1-F49) and coded documents (D10-13), the **main room for improvement** lies in the future need to activate all FOREST EUROPE countries to make use of the policy briefs as well as to get their feedback on effectiveness and impact. Another important avenue for further improvement is to document any evidence that FoRISK can also inform policymaking at pan-European and/or EU level. It is also needed to provide information about the FoRISK on-the-ground impacts on increasing forest resilience and adaptation to climate change and future disturbance events. This will be needed as the FoRISK concept document sets among others the ambitious objective to "improve the ability to cope with future disturbance events with specific focus on risk prevention and preparedness within the frame of sustainable forest management" (D1, p.1). However, while the document hints at the positive impact of sustainable forest management (SFM) on reducing the vulnerability of forest ecosystems to disturbances, including recovery by restoration and resilience (D1, p. 3), no explicit proposals for policy-brief related actions were made as how to measure progress to meet this end. For the near future, it is hence recommended to spell out a clear theory of change that connects the application of informative policy tools (e.g., policy briefs, expert networking, capacity building, societal communication) to improved ability to cope with and adapt to forest risks through SFM. Last, but not least, FoRISK should also strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation

(e.g. forestry, transport, energy, infrastructure, land use, etc.) in forest risk management in the future.

A summary assessment of the FoRISK Pilot policy briefs can be found in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Summary assessment of FoRISK Pilot policy briefs

| Achievements | Effects, Efficiency, Impacts | Room for improvement |
|---|---|---|
| Policy brief "Reducing Wildfire Risk in Europe through Sustainable Forest Management" | Recommendations and guidance support policy makers and policy change (mainly national level) in some countries<br><br>Stimulating collaboration at the policy-science-practice interface at (pan-)European level<br><br>Enhancing cross-border knowledge exchange and information sharing at (pan-) European level | Need to get regular feedback by all countries on the usefulness of policy briefs<br><br>Support to policymaking and policy change at pan-European and/or EU level: any evidence?<br><br>Need to strengthen countries' commitments for FoRISK (funding, input etc.)<br><br>Increasing forest resilience and adaptation to climate change and future disturbance events: any on-the-ground evidence? |
| Policy brief "Managing Bark Beetle Outbreaks in the 21st Century" | | |
| Policy brief "Mitigating windstorm damage on European forests" | | |
| Policy brief "A vision of cooperation and networking in the field of risk and crisis management across Europe" | | Need to further strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation (e.g. forestry, transport, energy, infrastructure, land use, etc.) |

### 2.1.2. Evaluation of capacity building and knowledge exchange

During the three phases of the FoRISK Pilot, altogether four (N=4) capacity building and knowledge exchange workshops were organized and conducted (D8-D11; Table 3). In line with the concept note (D1), two workshops specifically focused on wildfires in Turkiye and Spain (D12), whereas two others dealt with other key damage agents such as bark beetles in the Czech Republic (D13) and storms in Germany (F1-F49). This documented evidence suggests a very good **level of achievement** of the FoRISK Pilot capacity building and knowledge exchange workshops.

According to the surveyed experts (S31-S36; F1-F49), and similar with the policy briefs, the FoRISK Pilot workshops were found to be insofar **effective, efficient and impactful** as they offered relevant, additional and very useful knowledge-based recommendations and decision-making support to policymakers. In some FOREST EUROPE countries, the workshops revealed the need for national policy changes in order to better prevent and respond to the forest risks in the context of climate change. According to most of the surveyed experts (S31-S36; F1-F49) and the project documents (D10-D11), the main **effects and impacts** of the FoRISK Pilot

workshops were the inclusive collaboration at the policy-science-practice interface at (pan-)European level as well as the enhancement of cross-border knowledge exchange and information sharing at (pan-) European level. Important achievements were seen not only in the trust building among experts through personal exchange, but also in the transfer of knowledge about best practices from more experienced to less experiences countries. Workshops also offered practical knowledge about avoiding bad practices and recommendations that could be adopted at national level. The workshops also supported **efficiency** in that they were successfully implemented with increased synergies, while avoiding duplication with existing national and European initiatives based on an efficient format that adds value (S31-S36; F1-F49; D12-D13).

According to the surveyed experts (S31-S36; F1-F49) and coded documents (D12-D13), the **main room for improvement** is the joint need for the FoRISK facility and the national experts to balance the participation of policy makers (relative stable group) as well as scientists and practitioners (changing experts) while keeping this format alive. It is also needed to balance the different possible formats of the future FoRISK. According to surveyed experts (S31-S36; F1-F49), future options to find this balance between policymakers and experts could range from using FoRISK either as a platform for regular knowledge exchange and expert meetings on different topics or as emergency platform for rapid response to emerging forest risk events. However, according to surveyed experts (F1-F49), the latter option might not be feasible due to scarce resources. Like for the policy briefs, another avenue for improvement is the future need to secure all FOREST EUROPE countries' support for the FoRISK capacity building and knowledge exchange activities. Likewise, evidence should be documented about the FoRISK workshop impacts on-the-ground in terms of increasing forest resilience and adaptation to climate change and future disturbance events. To achieve this, and as mentioned above, a clear theory of change, particular actions and observational data should be developed in the future that would spell out how information policy tools (e.g., policy briefs, knowledge exchange, expert networking, societal communication) will have a behavioral impact on decision-makers in policy and practice that will result in positive on-the-ground effects as regards improved forest risk prevention and recovery.

A summary assessment of the FoRISK Pilot capacity building and knowledge exchange can be found in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Summary assessment of FoRISK Pilot capacity building and knowledge exchange

| Achievements | Effects, Efficiency, Impacts | Room for improvement |
|---|---|---|
| Joint workshop "Develop, adopt and transfer innovative solutions and actions to prevent and control wildfires", with SilvaMed & OGM in Antalya, Turkey, October 2022 | Recommendations and guidance support policy makers and policy change (mainly national level) in some countries<br><br>Stimulating collaboration at the policy-science-practice interface at (pan-)European level<br><br>Enhancing cross-border knowledge exchange and information sharing at (pan-)European level | Need to balance the participation of policy makers (same group) and changing experts (scientists, practitioners) and keep this format alive<br><br>Need to balance different formats: platform for regular meetings on different topics and emergency platform for rapid response to emerging events<br><br>Increasing forest resilience and adaptation to climate change and future disturbance events: any on-the-ground evidence?<br><br>Need to strengthen countries' commitments for FoRISK (funding, input etc.) |
| Workshop on "Communicating the important role of sustainable forest management to prevent wildfires" with CTFC, EFI and PCF; Barcelona, Spain, February 2023 | | |
| Workshop "Managing biotic threats in forests - lessons learned from bark beetle calamities", Breznice, Czech Republic, May-June 2023 | | |
| Workshop „Living with storms - towards resilience and adaptation to forest disturbances", Freiburg, Germany, September 2023 | | |

### 2.1.3. Evaluation of reference pools and expert networks

During the three phases of the FoRISK Pilot, altogether seven (N=7) different formats of networking were identified and used to connect forest risk experts (D12-D13; Table 4). This mainly included online (a joint webinar with EUFORGEN; three online FoRISK expert group meetings) and onsite (presentation at a scientific conference) communication activities. In addition, a cooperation with risk relevant EU knowledge platforms and/or projects was either ongoing (with EU Climate-Adapt) or planned to be launched (with EFIFORWARDS, CTFC FIRELOGUE). This documented evidence suggests a general good **level of achievement** of activities as regards reference pools and expert networks.

According to the surveyed experts (S31-S36; F1-F49) and coded documents (D12-D13), and similar to the other two policy tools evaluated above, the FoRISK Pilot networking activities were found to support collaboration at the policy-science-practice interface as well as the enhancement of cross-border knowledge exchange and information sharing at (pan-)European level. As such, they were **effective** and **impactful**. The networking activities also promoted **efficiency** in that they were implemented with increased synergies, while avoiding duplication

with the other initiatives based on an efficient format that adds value. This evidence testifies a good level of achievement of the planned networking activities.

According to the surveyed experts (S31-S36; F1-F49) and coded documents (D-12-D13), there is still some **room for further improvement**. While a more general Forest Europe Forum was launched, a virtual reference pool, including stockpiling of relevant literature and references, as well as a networking platform as suggested in the FoRISK concept note (D1) are not yet available and need to be delivered in the future. In addition, there is a need to address challenges in maintaining up-to-date lists of expert contacts and focal points as well as to provide for an overview of forest risk and adaptation initiatives at (pan-)European and national levels. Like the other policy tools, evidence is lacking as regards the networking activities' contribution to increase on-the-ground forest resilience and adaptation to climate change and future disturbance events.

A summary assessment of the FoRISK Pilot reference pools and expert networking can be found in Table 4.

**Table 4**: Summary assessment of FoRISK Pilot reference pools and expert networks

| Achievements | Effects, Efficiency, Impacts | Room for improvement |
|---|---|---|
| Webinar "Manage to Conserve Forest Genetic Resource conservation as part of Sustainable Forest Management" with EUFORGEN in October 2022 | Stimulating collaboration at the policy-science-practice interface at the (pan-)European level<br><br>Enhancing cross-border knowledge exchange and information sharing at the (pan-)European level | Virtual reference pool and networking platform is not yet available and needs to be delivered<br><br>Need to address challenges to maintain up-to-date list of contacts, focal points and overview of forest risk and adaptation initiatives at (pan-)European and national levels<br><br>Increasing forest resilience and adaptation to climate change and future disturbance events: any on-the-ground evidence? |
| FoRISK Expert Group Meetings (Online) in January, June and December 2023 | | |
| Presenting FoRISK at 8th International Wildland Fire Conference in Porto Portugal in May 2023 | | |
| Collaboration with EU funded FIRELOGUE knowledge and service provision platform, joining the Environment/Ecology working group - ongoing | | |
| Collaboration with EU Climate-ADAPT (The European Climate Adaptation Platform Climate) - ongoing | | |
| Intent to start cooperation with ICPP ONE-HEALTH<br>Intent to start cooperation with EU FISE and EU FORWARDS | | |

### 2.1.4. Evaluation of communication activities

During the FoRISK Pilot implementation spanning ca. 15 months, altogether sixty (N=60) social media communication activities took place. Thereof, 31 posts were done on X/Twitter (Figures) and 29 posts on LinkedIn. On average, this amounts to four (N=4) posts a month or one (N=1) post a week (D14-D15).

In particular, the FoRISK Pilot social media activities on *X (Twitter)* made an impact through impressions, engagement and reposts (**Figures 1-3**). Impressions refer to the number of times the post was seen on X/Twitter (with high peaks between 3.000-4.000 impressions, lows about

100, on average about 1.000). Engagement refers to the total number of times user have interacted with a post (high peaks about 150-300, lows about 10, on average about 70). Engagement is in the form of all clicks anywhere on the post including hashtags, links, avatar, username, and post expansion, reposts, replies, follows, and likes. Illustrative examples of FoRISK Pilot social media posts on X/Twitter with most impressions can be seen in **Box 2** below.

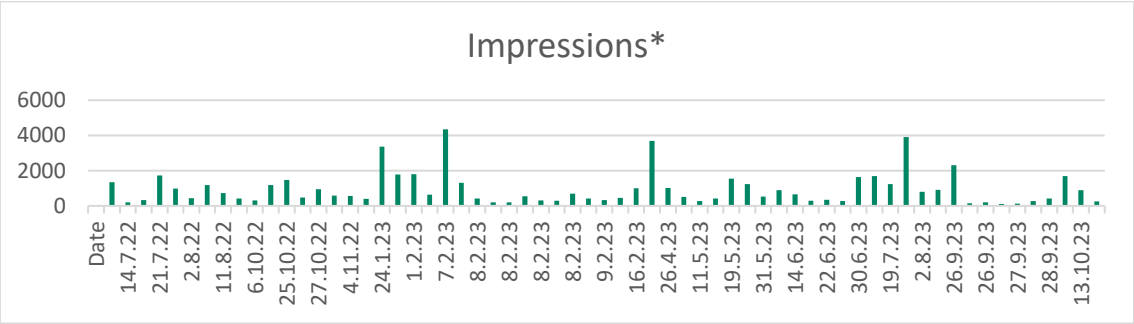



**Figure 1:** Impacts of social engagement on X/Twitter, by number of impressions

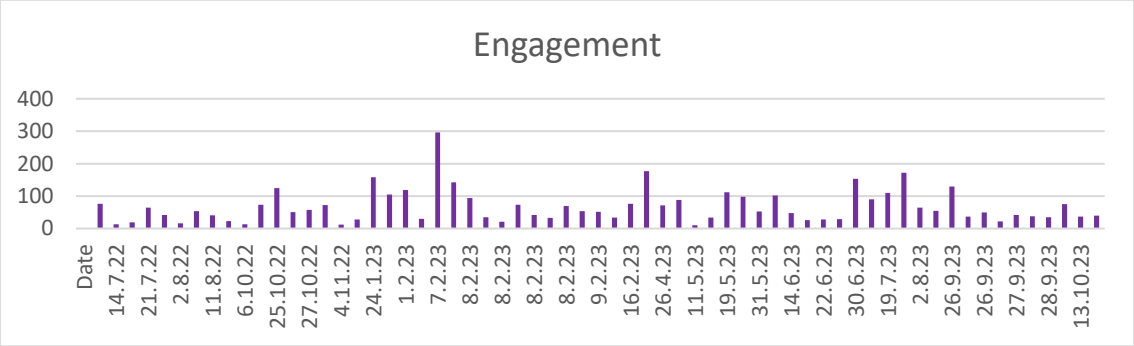



**Figure 2:** Impacts of social engagement on X/Twitter, by number of engagement

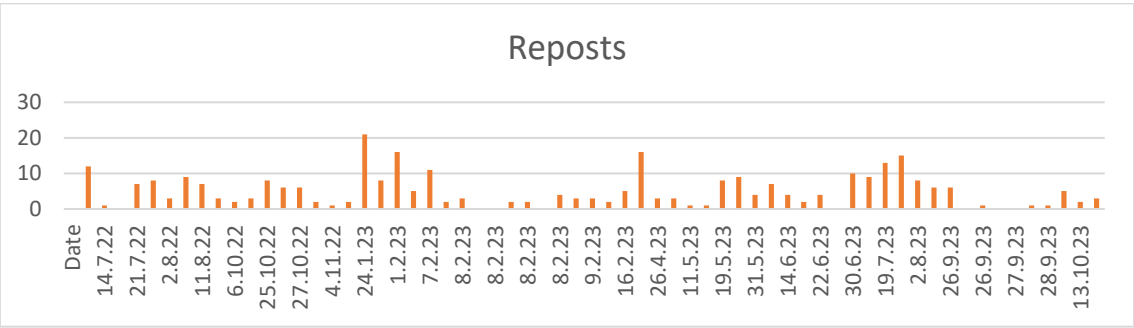



**Figure 3:** Impacts of social engagement on X/Twitter, by number of reposts

**BOX 2:** Examples of FoRISK Pilot social media posts on X/Twitter with most impressions

24.1.2023


7.2.2023


22.3.2023


25.7.2023


The FoRISK Pilot social media activities on *LinkedIn* made an impact through impressions and engagement (**Figures 4-6**). Impressions refer to the number of views where at least 50% of the post is visible on the screen or when it is clicked, whichever comes first (with high peaks between 2.000-3.000 impressions, lows about 200, on average about 1.000). Engagement refers to the total number of times a user has interacted with a post (high peaks about 500-800, lows about 10, on average about 70). This includes all clicks anywhere on the post (including hashtags, links, avatar, username, and post expansion), reposts, replies, follows, and likes. Illustrative examples of FoRISK Pilot social media posts on LinkedIn with most impressions can be seen in **Box 3** below.

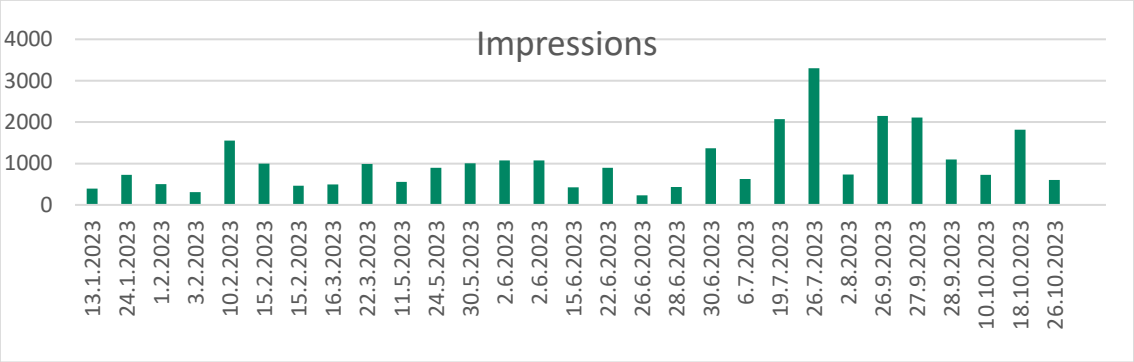



**Figure 4:** Impacts of social engagement on LinkedIn, by number of impressions

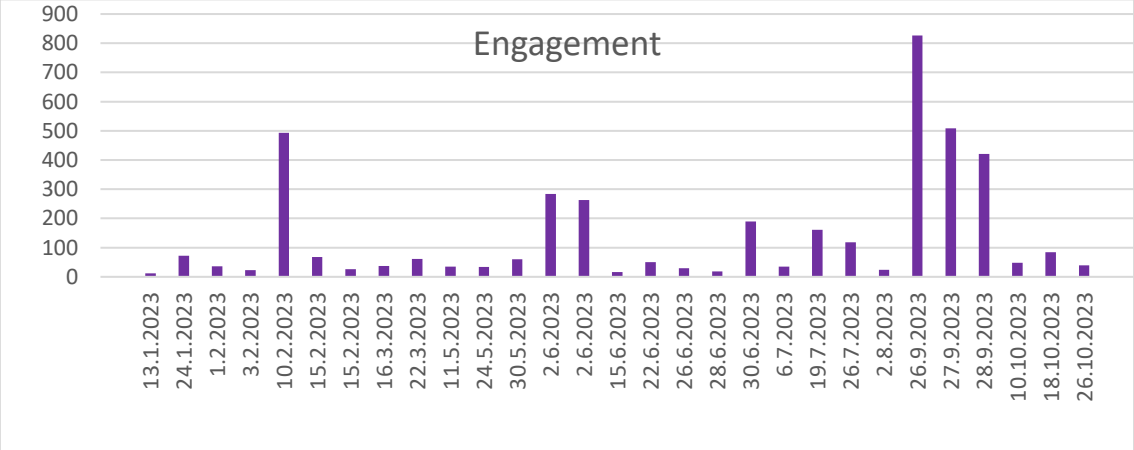



**Figure 5:** Impacts of social engagement on LinkedIn, by number of engagement

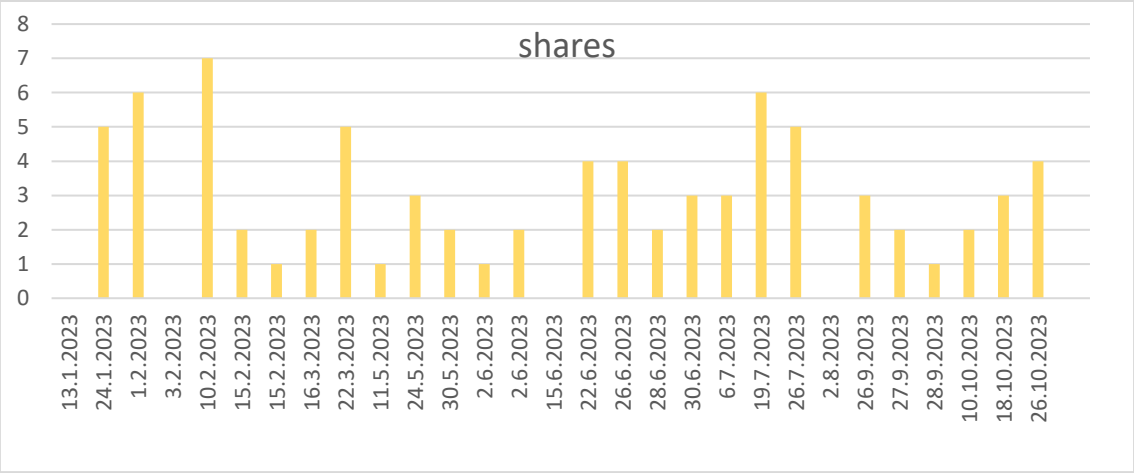
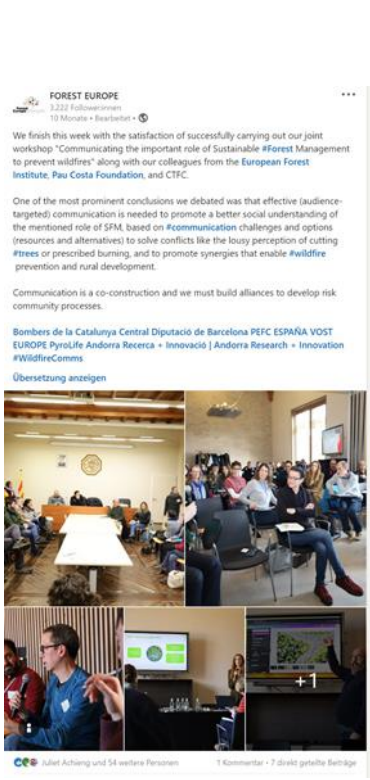
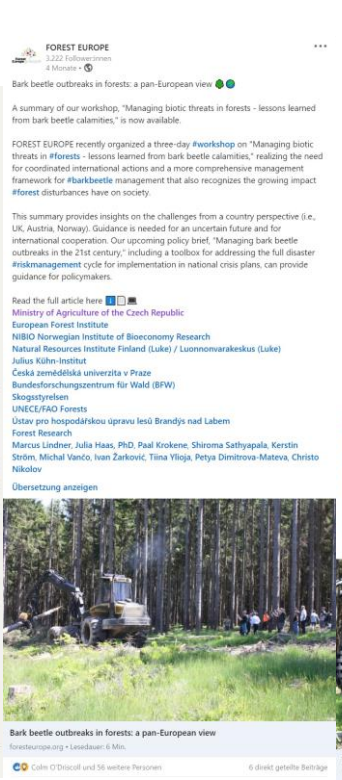


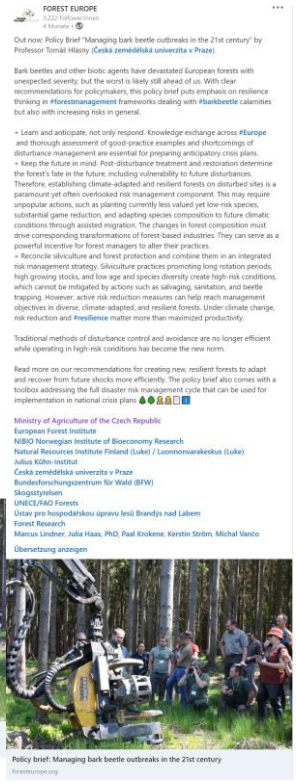

**Figure 6:** Impacts of social engagement on LinkedIn, by number of shares

**Box 3:** Examples of FoRISK Pilot social media posts on LinkedIn with most impressions

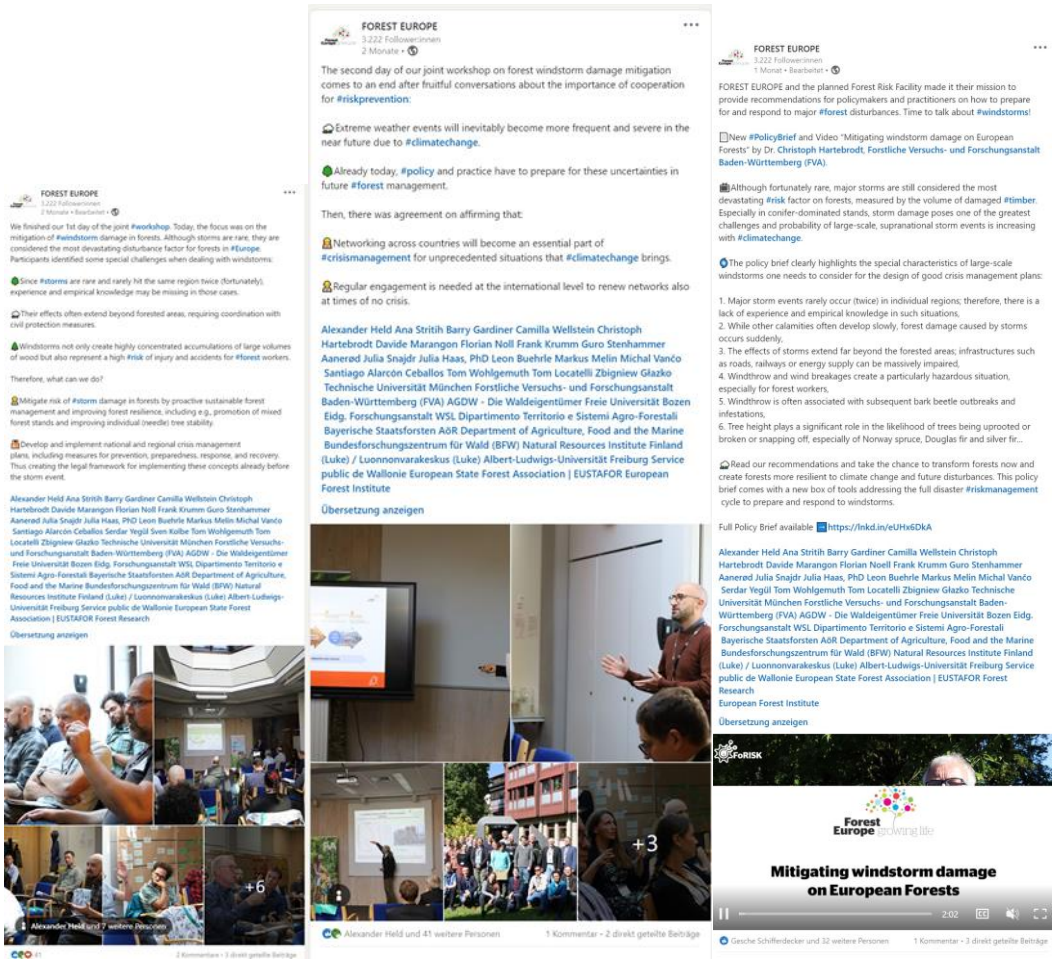
10.2.2023: 19.7.2023: 26.7.2023



26.9.2023 27.9.2023 18.10.2023




The FoRISK webpage was also released, and later offered with a new layout of the landing page. Press releases on the FoRISK webpage also provided summary reports and take-home messages of the different capacity building and knowledge exchange workshops (D12-D13). In addition, professional communication products addressing wildfires (e.g. video clips) were also delivered and communicated, in line with the FoRISK concept note (D1, p. 5). In addition, videos with key expert interviews were prepared and communicated on social media platforms (X, LinkedIn) to promote the outcomes of the policy briefs and the workshops from phase 2 and phase 3 of the FoRISK pilot (**Box 4**).

**Box 4:** Expert interviews promoting the FoRISK Pilot policy briefs 2, 3 and 4

| |
|---|
| Interview with Prof. Tomas Hlasny on Policy Brief 2: https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7092428831940063232, https://x.com/FORESTEUROPE/status/1686663129298616320?s=20 |
| Interview with Dr. Christoph Hartebrodt on Policy Brief 3: https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7120349709889593344, https://x.com/FORESTEUROPE/status/1714588177640362310?s=20 |
| Interview with Dr. Yvonne Hengst on Policy Brief 4: https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7155471185244266497, https://x.com/FORESTEUROPE/status/1749708669502025752?s=20 |

Altogether, the social media analysis and the delivery of the professional video clip reveal a very good level of achievement of the communication activities foreseen. The communication of three additional expert interviews over social media channels adds additional value to these achievements. According to surveyed experts (S31-S36; F1-F49) and communication statistics (D14-D15), the social media communications, together with relevant content and user friendly format, has contributed to an **effective and efficient** engagement with experts and the broader public. This can be considered as an important step to raise the awareness of both experts and lay people of forest risks and possible response actions in the context of climate change. According to surveyed experts, the professional video clips on wildfires, together with the expert interviews, have also contributed to raising society's and experts' awareness (S31-S36).

Some **room for further improvement** can still be identified. While social media interactions, professional videos on wildfires and videos with expert interviews on other risks were delivered, the lasting impacts of these communication tools on the increased awareness of experts and society at large needs to be examined and documented in the future. Like with the other informative policy tools, evidence needs to show whether and to what extent forest resilience and adaptation to climate change and future disturbance events are enhanced on-the-ground through social media and professional product communication. As mentioned above, a clear theory of change, particular actions and observational data will need to be developed to be able to measure the on-the-ground impact of informative policy tools (e.g., policy briefs, capacity building, expert networking, and social media and professional communication).

Table 5 provides a summary assessment of the FoRISK Pilot communication activities.

**Table 5:** Summary assessment of FoRISK Pilot communication activities

| Achievements | Effects, Efficiency, Impacts | Room for improvement |
|---|---|---|
| Posts and videos on Twitter (X) and LinkedIn | Raising society's and experts' awareness of the topics of forest risks and forest adaptation<br>Societal engagement through social media and user-friendly audio-video material | Increasing forest resilience and adaptation to climate change and future disturbance events: any on-the-ground evidence? |
| Press release on FoRISK webpage | | |
| New layout of the FoRISK landing page | | |
| Press release on FoRISK webpage: summary report and take-home messages of the workshops | | |
| Professional communication product/video clips on wildfires<br>Videos with expert interviews on policy briefs 2, 3 and 4 | | |

## 2.2. General evaluation of the FoRISK Pilot

### 2.2.1. Effectiveness (added value)

According to the majority of surveyed experts (S31-S36; Figure 7), the main added value of the prototype FoRISK is seen in its effective role as a platform for cross-border exchange of knowledge and experience. Additional positive benefits were found in its possibility to offer credible European level communication that can support and shape national level decision-making in policy and practice. It was also suggested that it can function as a platform to address common forest risk related challenges through joint solutions in the framework of sustainable forest management. According to some experts, FoRISK could also add specific value if it would be used as a platform for freely available forest risk and adaptation data. Last, but not least, it could support cooperation with other European and national forest risk and adaptation initiatives (Figure 7).

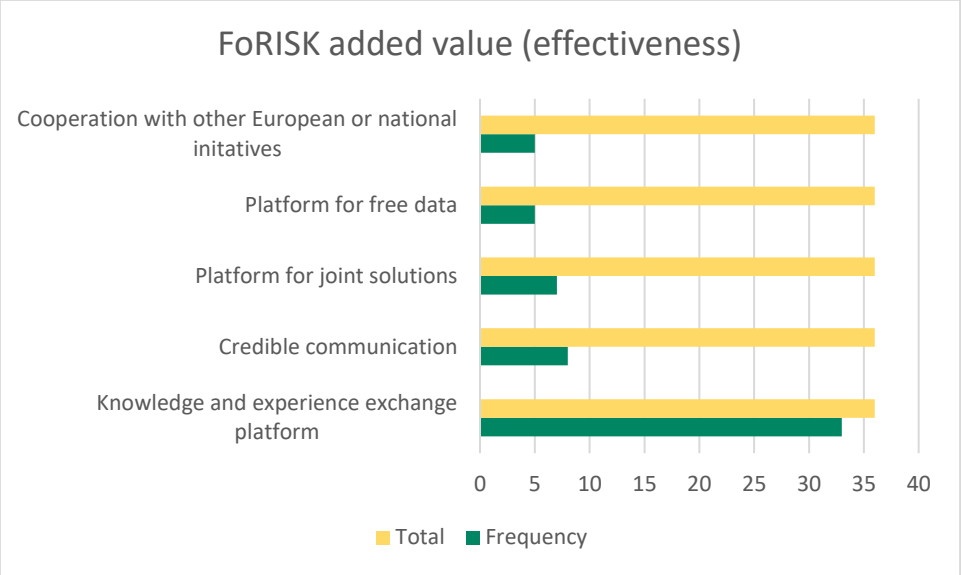



**Figure 7:** FoRISK Pilot added value (effectiveness)

### 2.2.2. Niche (efficiency)

According to the majority of the surveyed experts (S31-S36; **Figure 8**), the main **niche** of FoRISK that will efficiently complement other European and national forest risk initiatives and help avoid duplications is the establishment of a clear topical focus on prevention (e.g., forest adaptation) and addressing multiple and interrelated forest risks. The provision of efficient evidence and knowledge based decision support for national and European policymakers supporting policy changes is another key specific priority. To some experts, FoRISK could also offer a unique early warning and/or forest risk monitoring system at European level that would complement and support national systems. According to some experts, FoRISK could be further developed as a European platform for mutual cross-country technical support to exchange and share human resources (e.g., specialists, workers) and techniques (e.g., harvesters, airplanes) at critical times (e.g., disaster events). Beyond this specific role in response and recovery actions, few experts were of the opinion that it could also strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation beyond the forest sector (**Figure 8**). However, it should be mentioned that some of the above mentioned potential uses (e.g., early warning system, technological exchange between countries) as suggested by the experts may not be feasible to implement with the full scale FoRISK due to scarce resources, variety of institutional rules, and potential overlaps with some national systems in place (F1-F49).

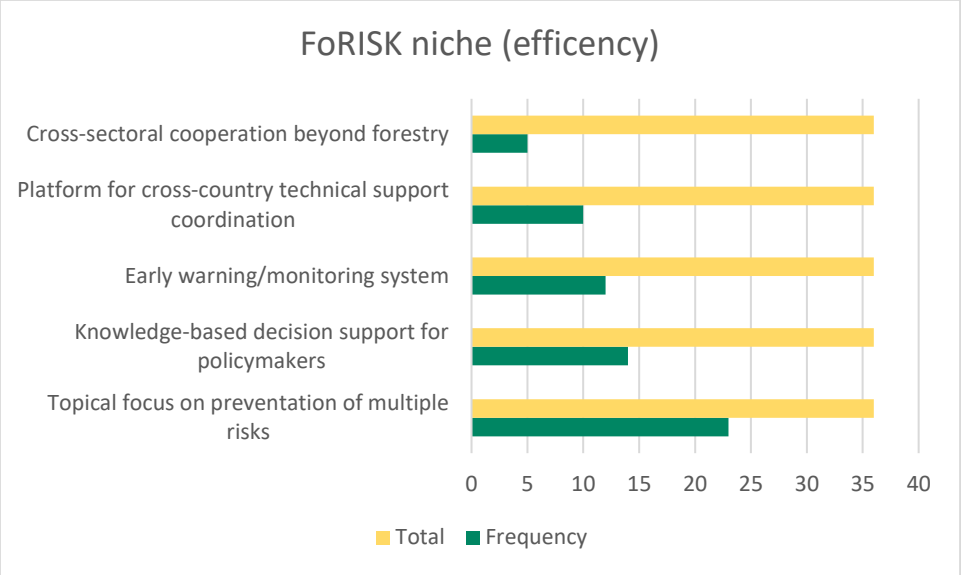



**Figure 8:** FoRISK niche (efficency)

### 2.2.3. Impact (implementation)

According to experts assessments (S31-S36; F1-F49), FoRISK should be established as a permanent European facility for cross-country knowledge exchange with secured resources (e.g., funding, staff) and continuous organizational structure. This will be needed to help make an impact on policymakers (e.g., ministers, policy officers, parliamentarians) to use its informational policy tools (e.g., policy briefs; social media; reference pool/networking and capacity building/workshops) to make decisions about forest risk management, including prevention and response. According to the majority of experts (S31-S36), the facility should be vested with an international organization with excellent scientific standing and broader networks within the countries. This would enable the FoRISK facility to connect international, European, national and local levels at the science-policy-practice interface.

In particular, future FoRISK workshops and networking events on forest risk management and climate adaption of forests, based on sustainable forest management, would be helpful to make an impact on decision-makers in policy and practice. Future capacity building work through knowledge exchange and training should however avoid a narrow view on single forest disturbances (fires, pathogens, storms,) like in the Pilot phases 1-3. Instead, a multi-risk approach should be taken. While the FoRISK Pilot workshops have revived existing networks and collaborations from previous projects, the future facility should offer a pool of experts and scientists from different disciplines (e.g., forest ecology, forest management, forest economy, forest policy, etc.) and country backgrounds that can provide integrated, rapid and targeted decision-making support to policymakers and stakeholders (S31-S36).

Organizing practice-oriented capacity building and knowledge exchange workshops in the field would also offer further good opportunity to bring together experts and practitioners. This would translate in a better understanding of scientific evidence among the forest practitioners and integration of the advice into forest management practices. Scientists and experts linked to forest practitioners would need to act as knowledge intermediaries to facilitate the policy-

science-practice interface. For a greater on-the-ground impact, while keeping its main policy and science orientation, the full-scale FoRISK could specifically support and advise on the establishment of national and local forest risk management initiatives and structures. In this regard, the knowledge from the FoRISK network could be actively used and adapted to the specific local conditions (S31-S36; F1-F49).

Like during the FoRISK Pilot, *policy briefs* are recommended to be further communicated in English to reach out to European and some national political decision-makers as well as to the scientific communities. In order to secure on-the-ground impacts by forest owners, forest managers and other local stakeholders, policy briefs would rather be translated into the respective languages. This should enable effective use by and impacts on policymakers and stakeholders in many of the FOREST EUROPE countries (S31-S36; F1-F49).

### 2.2.4. Durability (ownership)

According to many surveyed experts (S31-S36; **Figure 9**), the **continuity** and **ownership** of FoRISK will critically depend on the durable support and commitment of FOREST EUROPE signatories and observers in the future. In order to secure commitment and ownership, most of the experts suggested that FoRISK should establish a network of national focal points, initiatives and tools on forest risk management. This should be supported by regular meetings and activities facilitated by a European unit. Likewise, critically important is to seek and secure funding and institutional support from the FOREST EUROPE signatories and observers for FoRISK. In particular, the full scale FoRISK can build on and further strengthen the responsibility and role of nominated national experts in advertising the use of the Pan-European facility and advocating for funding with their national focal points. In addition, engaging with and involving other experts/disciplines (e.g., climate science, political sciences) and sectors (e.g., transport, energy, land use) were suggested as useful further actions to build in commitment and ownership. Another option would be to integrate FoRISK into other relevant well established European initiatives (**Figure 9**).

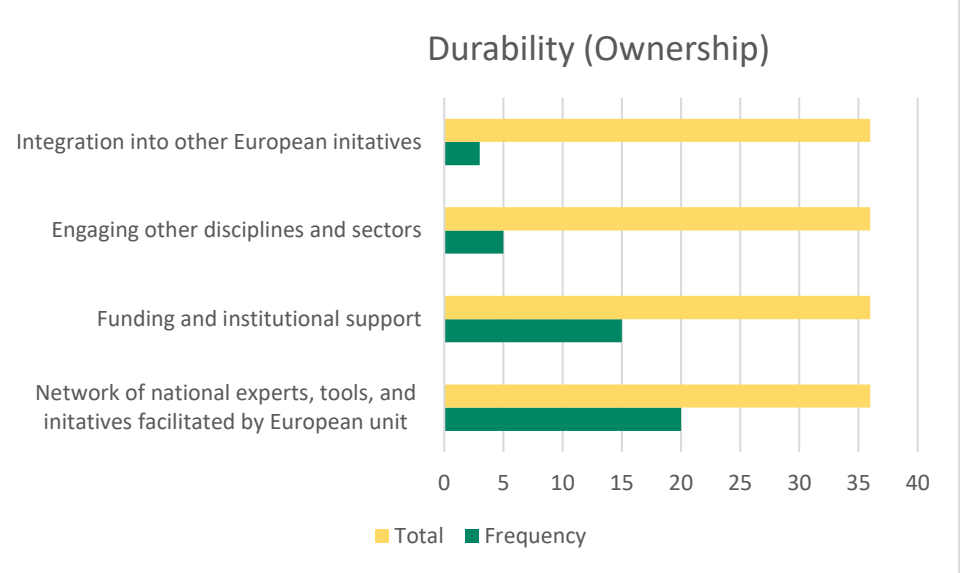



**Figure 9:** Durability (ownership) of FoRISK

### 2.2.5. Room for improvement

In addition to the specific avenues for improvements identified above, a range of non-trivial challenges need to be addressed to secure a full operational FoRISK in the future (**Figure 10**). Most important priority according to the expert opinions (S31-S36) is to secure continuous funding and institutional support from the FOREST EUROPE signatories and observers.

Another room for improvement is to engage more actively with forest practitioners on-the-ground and provide them with targeted support. Overall, the future FoRISK needs to transfer common European/cross-country best practices of forest risk management into a diversity of ecological, political and socioeconomic contexts in the FOREST EUROPE countries (**Figure 10**).

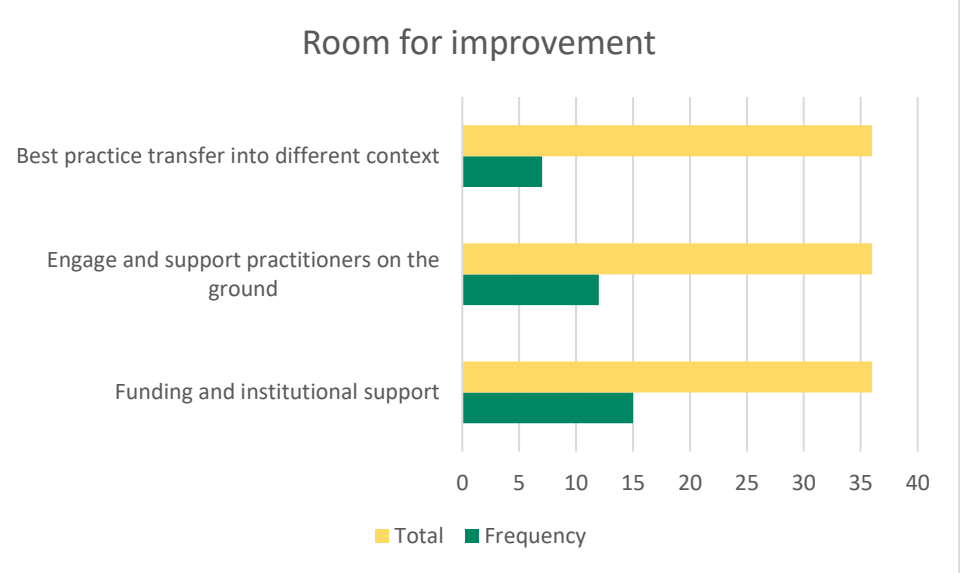



**Figure 10:** Room for FoRISK improvement

# 3. Concluding assessment and outlook

The evidence reported in this final evaluation report highlights the very good achievement in the implementation of the small-scale FoRISK Pilot. Building on the assessment results, it could be concluded that the FoRISK Pilot largely proved to show the effectiveness, efficiency, and impacts as regards the small-scale application of informative policy tools including policy briefs, capacity building and knowledge exchange workshops, reference pools and expert networks, and social media and professional communication.

From a holistic perspective, the main added-value of the future full-scale Pan-European Facility can be seen in its role of providing FOREST EUROPE signatories and observers a network and venues for cross-national exchange of knowledge and experience. This should help them find a common understanding of how to tackle increasing cross-boundary biotic and abiotic forest risks and their cross-cutting effects as well as on forest adaptation and resilience. The main institutional niche and efficiency of the future full-scale FoRISK can be seen in its operation as a "small and simple" European knowledge facility (secretariat) that will complement and support existing national systems while cooperating with other relevant European initiatives. The future facility secretariat could be hosted by an established international organization with broader European membership (inside and outside the EU), with proved leading expertise in the field of forest risk management and forest resilience, and communication capacities. If the full-scale FoRISK would also be tasked to facilitate and coordinate, together with the participating countries, rapid responses to emerging risk situations in European forests, the host international organization should be ready to increase the operating capacity of the facility for a given time if additional funding is provided. It will be however important to establish the full-scale FoRISK facility on voluntary financing (e.g., Multi-Donor Trust Fund) as well as in-kind contributions (e.g., expert input, logistics) from the FOREST EUROPE signatories and observers. Very important will be to ensure the open participation of all FOREST EUROPE countries regardless of their financial situations and possibilities to act as donors, or not. This, together with institutional arrangements for shared co-responsibility and leadership, should help further ensure a strong sense of ownership and commitment for all actively participating countries.

The main topical niche of the future full-scale FoRISK should remain the exchange of knowledge and experience about disaster risk management. The focus shall be on risk prevention and preparedness as well as on forest adaptation with the aim to inform and support decision-making support in forest policy and practice by science and evidence-based recommendations and guidance. This should offer access to sound evidence and diverse experience about anticipatory risk management aimed at prevention and adaptation actions within the framework of sustainable forest management, potentially paired with efficient response measures to climate change related forest risks. Importantly, national experts and initiatives need to take on active roles as intermediaries between the European knowledge production and local action levels. In addition, the topical niche should include relevant, proactive and user-friendly engagement with the public and experts through social media and professional communication means.

From an outlook perspective, for the FoRISK to become fully operational in the near future, some strategic challenges need to be addressed and specific questions addressed. This mainly relates to the basic need to secure continuity and ownership through active participation,

commitments, funding, in-kind and institutional support by FOREST EUROPE signatories and observers in the near future. Specific room for improvement also lies in addressing challenges such as the support of tangible impacts on-the-ground aimed at the better engagement with practitioners while transferring the European know-how and experience into diverse local conditions. Policymakers and stakeholders should also be encouraged to use more FoRISK knowledge in decision-making in policy and practice. Further work also needs to help effectively manage different sets of national contact points and initiatives, and provide pools of mobilisable experts with different backgrounds. It also needs to be decided if and to what extent FoRISK will be integrated into, or will be working together with other existing European initiatives. In this regard it seems sound to conclude that FoRISK can take a proactive stance on its own development by capitalizing on its added value and niche while working together with other relevant initiatives. Last, but not least, it is recommended to keep engaging with the general public through social media and professional communication channels and formats.

Last, but not least, one key recommendations is for the full-scale FoRISK designers and users to spell out and implement a clear theory of change, relevant activities and observational data that will help connect and monitor the application of informative policy tools (e.g., policy briefs, expert networking and reference pools, capacity building and knowledge transfer, societal and professional communication) to improved ability of political decision-makers and forest practitioners to cope with and adapt to forest risks through sustainable forest management.

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