

# *FOPER* NEWSLETTER

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I. Issue, September, 2010,

## WELCOME TO THE 1<sup>ST</sup> ISSUE OF THE FOPER NEWSLETTER

A little over a year ago, my husband said, 'Why not?' when I asked him if he would be willing to commute to Croatia and Southeast Europe from Buffalo, New York. A few weeks later we moved into the FOPER House in Varazdin, Croatia, where the Coordination Office for FOPER is located in conjunction with the new EFI Regional Office – EFISEE. Doni Blagojević, the new FOPER Project Officer, moved to Varazdin at the same time.

Over the past year, we have visited every FOPER Partner at least once. Everywhere we go, the faculty and researchers welcome us warmly and usually give us tastes of local delicacies – like local *rakia* and other delights. I have learned much about the nature of the forests in each country and region; the challenges and issues for forest policy and economy; and the cultural traditions of everyday life. (I now use a red wallet for my money to ensure wealth and avoid decisions when there is a south wind.) My delight is usually irrepressible when meeting new people, eating wonderful food, and seeing amazing new sights. I look forward to another year of surprises and new adventures.

This has been a very gratifying year for me. As someone who loves working with students, loves teaching, and loves research, no job could be more perfect for me. In the past year, regional researchers formed collaborative research teams focused on seven topics of high regional interest from policy makers, forest managers, and civil society. These Collaborative Regional Research Teams are composed of

members from all partner countries and have produced excellent Research Proposals. Now the field work begins.

A new initiative in FOPER is the creation of a Doctoral Graduate College and Support Program focused on the broad topic of 'Governance of Forests in SEE.' Over the year as the research teams formed, teams attended research workshops, and everyone came to our doctoral courses, the number of affiliated doctoral students grew. There are now doctoral students from every partner faculty and research institute who participate in our Doctoral College and Support Program.

The FOPER International Masters of Science in Forest Policy and Economics remains the flagship achievement of the FOPER partnership. With the renewal of their Agreement in September 2009, the Deans of the Faculty of Forestry in Albania, Banja Luka, Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Serbia recommitted to jointly supporting this new and very innovative International Masters of Science Program. The FOPER II students begin the program this September. In 2011, FOPER will coordinate a European Accreditation for this excellent program.

I look forward to meeting new faces, having new experiences, and new adventures in the coming year.

*FOPER*  
**Coordinator, Prof.**  
**Dr. Margaret A.**  
**Shannon**



**Macedonia got the first two *FOPER* interns within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy**

At the beginning of year 2009, the first generation of *FOPER* I Master program in Forest Policy and Economics, launched the first five graduated master students from Macedonia. Few years looking backward, the conducted need assessment determined necessity for capacity building in the field of forest policy and economics of the countries in the SEE region. Therefore the idea of establishing first generation of Forest Policy and Economics Master Program emerged. But this does not conclude here. In continuation of *FOPER* I and capacity building within the forest policy and economics field of the SEE region, *FOPER* II deals with consolidation of the human capacities in the same area. In this regard, *FOPER* II and the European Forest Institute launched a graduate college and therefore obtaining additional supports for the *FOPER* I graduates regarding their further studies within the forest policy and economics field. Among other students, we Marina Miovska and Vladimir Stojanovski are *FOPER* master graduates and at the same time potential *FOPER* PhD students with an enrolment status in procedure. Engaged in a voluntarily work as junior researchers within the *FOPER* II research projects we are still unemployed. Aware of this, our coordinator of *FOPER* II, Professor Dr Margaret Shannon during one visit in Macedonia, introduced us one brilliant idea of having internship. Starting with us and

therefore and other *FOPER* I graduates, how can experience knowledge gaining of learning by doing within the forestry institutions in the all SEE region countries. Lead by this idea, with support of *FOPER* and EFI and given support from the people employed of the Department of Forestry and Hunting, within the Ministry of agriculture, forestry and water economy in Macedonia, we started our internship. Thus from June 1, 2010, we signed the contracts with the Ministry and agreed upon the Ministry rules to start our three months internship, the period until the beginning of our PhD studies. Starting our first day of the internship within the Ministry, we were introduced to the employees there and as well as in general with the four units within the department of forestry and hunting where we were situated. Our first delegated major task was work on the English version of the new Law on forests of Macedonia. From first days along, we started to receive different tasks and get familiar with all four units' work. Moreover we are delegated with tasks concerning the procedure for obtaining hunting areas under concession in Macedonia, issuing import permit for decorative forest seedlings, we got opportunity to participate to certain events and workshops organized from the Ministry of Environment and other International organizations etc.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Watershed Management, besides the Faculty of Forestry and the Public Forest enterprise is the main policy decision maker within the forestry sector in Macedonia. From this point of view is our biggest challenge of getting acquainted with its work and responsibilities. The Ministry and

the Department of Forestry and Hunting is one of the supporters of *FOPER* project and therefore they find very interesting and useful idea to get *FOPER* graduates as an interns within the Department, and therefore immediately agreed on that. With having this internship we already have: experienced the forest policy and economics in practice; get acquainted with team work and working environment within an organization; are giving support to the Department of Forestry and Hunting with the daily activities mainly with regards to forest policy and economics and also, with support of *FOPER* (EFI) we made in a way, contribution of the forest policy network strengthening of the sector in the country as well as within the region.

During these two months we have enough time to see how forest policy works in practice and therefore we get familiar with very pleasant and motivating working environment. From our aspect of interest is that at the moment Forest policy unit within the Department of Forestry and Hunting is in procedure of formation. Today, although Macedonia has necessity of this kind of expertise, as a country in transition and consequently to the world economics' crisis, the new employments are not still the case. But the sustainability of our internship is consisting in fact that we as interns here and as graduated master students within the requested area of forest policy we will have priority of getting employment in this new established unit and therefore to become one piece of the forest policy chain in the SEE region. There the connection with the regional and the international experts in the field of forest policy it can be also benefit and of great

benefit for Department Forestry and Hunting. Because is "Too late to establish a network when you need a network", is good that we as a former *FOPER* I students already have some contacts and established initial network which will help in strengthening even more the already established forest policy network in Macedonia. Our great appreciations to people employed within the Department of forestry and hunting for giving us opportunity to have our internship within the Ministry and our deepest gratitude to our *FOPER* II coordinator, Professor Dr. Margaret Shannon for obtaining the needed conditions all this happened. And at the end we would like to encourage all our colleagues and graduated *FOPER* I students if they have opportunity and need for having internship to follow our example as one positive gained experience.



M. Sc Vladimir Stojanovski



M. Sc Marina Miovska

**INRA PhD course, Nancy 17-21 May 2010**

The French National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA), with the help of European Forest Institute (EFI), hosted a



PhD course at Champenoux near Nancy entitled “International Forestry and Global Issues” which lasted from 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2010. In a pleasant working environment of INRA’s facilities, the course provided an extensive and up-to-date overview of global forestry “hot spots” through a trans-disciplinary approach of scientific and policy expert lecturers. The topics ranged from introduction to the current status of forests in the world, wood production and consumption patterns, defining of sustainable forest management

to more complex and analytical topics, such as the influence of climate change on forests, trends in Mediterranean forest management, economic and social aspects of sustainable forest management. Finally the lecturers and discussion focused on the political implications of these trends, ranging from carbon market mechanisms, to financing of sustainable forest management, or NATURA 2000, and cross - sectoral science - policy interface - interactions. Out of 35 participants nine were from SEE region, and five were former FOPER I M. Sc

students.



M. Sc Marko Lovrić-  
PhD Student

**Proposal review panel meeting in Durres,  
Albania was held 27-30 May 2010**



Writing research proposals and conducting scientific research is the hallmark of independent researchers and faculty. *FOPER* I developed a set of topics of regional interest in several stakeholder meetings.

The first initiative in 2009 when the second phase of the *FOPER* Project began was to prepare independent research with collaborative regional research teams on some of these topics.

In December at a Pre-Proposal Review Workshop, the Team discussed 22 pre-proposals. By consolidating them around themes, integrated topics were identified that incorporated all of them. During the next few months, Collaborative Regional Research Teams composed of faculty, researchers, experts, and students self-organized and developed Pre-Proposals, which were presented at a Workshop in Varazdin in 10-12 April 2010.

After this workshop, seven full proposals were written and submitted by the deadline of May 7 for an Evaluation Panel. Since a normal step in research is the evaluation of a proposal for funding, *FOPER* organized a Proposal Evaluation Review Workshop. All proposals were reviewed by a panel of experts from Europe and the USA according to the Academy of Finland Evaluation Criteria – a very demanding set of criteria for any proposal! Forty-one *FOPER* researchers, faculty and students met with the Evaluation Panel for a Workshop in Durres Albania 27-30 May 2010. The first day, the research teams worked on their preparation to present their projects, while the panel members discussed and commented on the draft proposals. Then a PhD



student from each research team presented and defended the proposal and in front of the panel members and the rest of the participants. The second day was an Evaluation Workshop where the panel members, sitting together at a table, discussed the proposals in front of the research teams. This was an excellent process

to learn how panels discuss proposals! After the Panel meeting, each research team met with their panel reviewers to discuss improvements and changes in the proposals. Overall, the Panel agreed that these proposals were good and deserved further development. The seven members of the panel included: Chair - Dr. Marcus Sangster, (UK Forestry Commission, Edinburgh), Dr. Alexios Antypas (CEU Budapest), Dr. Brandon Anthony (CEU Budapest), Dr. Gerard Buttoud (U of Tuscia, Italy), Dr. Irina Kouplevatskaya Buttoud (FAO, Rome), Dr. Maureen McDonough (Michigan State University, USA) and Dr. Ulrich Schraml

**Research Design and Methodology  
Workshop - Brač, Croatia July 18-24**

On one of the warmest islands on the Croatian Riviera, Brač, in the hottest week this summer, 20 PhD and M. Sc students and their research team coordinators, gathered to have the privilege to be part of the course offered by Prof. Dr. Errol Meidinger (SUNY Buffalo, USA), Prof. Dr. Margaret Shannon (FOPER Coordinator), Dr. Gert-Jan Nabuurs (EFI), on research design and methodology. Living and working in a large house brought us together. We learned about methodology, but we also learned to function and be part of one big research team and family. Every day was a new experience, reading the literature, discussing it, making some examples, and presenting our thoughts and opinions. We even had a chance to experiment in the practice of qualitative research when on our (relaxing?) boat trip we needed to observe the owners and present our observations the next day as well as swimming, dining and hrelaxing.



(University of Freiburg, Germany). This was a good chance for every research team to have direct consultation and evaluation from recognized experts in their field, in order to improve their proposal writing skills. Now – on to the research!

M. Sc Nataša Lovrić  
-PhD student





Brač Workshop

The outcome was amazing. Every single one of us had different observations. I am glad to say that I was part of that workshop and proud of the knowledge that I got that week. At the end of the course, we received certificates awarding us with 3 ECTS credits for successfully completing the course.

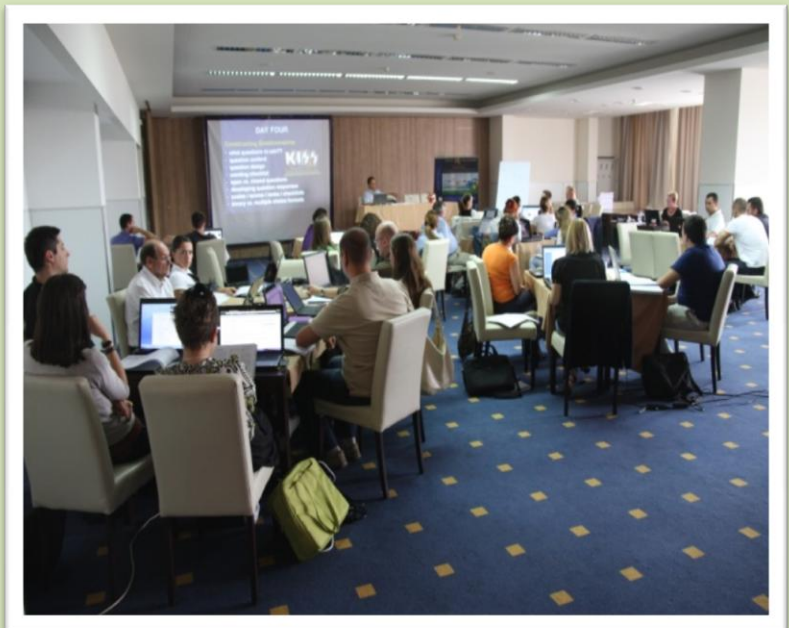
M. Sc. Nataša Lovrić - PhD student

**PhD course “Survey Research Methods”  
Sarajevo, 6-10 September, 2010, BIH**

At the Hollywood Hotel in Sarajevo from 6-10 September 2010, 30 participants (students, research team’s coordinator, and some new M. Sc Students) attended the PhD “Survey Research Methods” course taught by Dr. Brandon Anthony from Central European University in Budapest. The five day course gave the students a chance to see inside the art and practice of conducting a survey and creating a questionnaire. The course moved from developing theories, to identifying concepts, operationalizing variables, and then some ways to analyze and interpret the data. The hotel facilities created a very good working environment, including quiet places where students could concentrate on their reading and group work assignments. Professor Anthony was available

all the time for every student’s dilemma and question. The students, who successfully completed the course and all exercises, received 3 ECTS credits certificates.

Sarajevo PhD course



M. Sc. Nataša Lovrić - PhD student

M. Sc Student *FOPER* I  
Experience

"What the hell, I'll do it", thought I after receiving a phone call from my friend in the Ministry about the international master program, fully financed and supported by the EFI, aimed at developing human and institutional capacities in the field of forest policy and economics in the Western Balkans region. Four months later I was already in Sarajevo, meeting with colleagues and teachers from the region and getting ready to roll. As expected, the program was quite comprehensive, exhausting, infor

mative... and, above all, interesting. After spending several months in two of the region's countries capitals (Sarajevo and Belgrade), participating in a few inspiring field trips - international as well - and finally graduating two years later, I can only say that those were some fine days. Knowledge, skills and experiences we gained are rather unique and I hopefully useful in our future life. But, more than knowledge, it is friendship, acquaintanceship and connections we created that count the most - the network of the new alliance of the regions' foresters, hopefully used for the

general benefits of the region's forestry sector.

The new generation is at hand - *FOPER* II starts in September and it's bigger, better and improved. Novelty is the PhD support program, mostly attended by the former *FOPER* master students.

The legacy continues - you're free to join!

*M. Sc Konrad Kiš, Croatia*



*FOPER* I Generation at a fieldtrip

*FOPER* II Master Course starts in September



*FOPER* II M. Sc Generation

**Meet the NEW Generation – *FOPER* II – MSc students!**

Bosnia-Herzegovina: Senka Mutabdžija, Dženan Bećirević, Amila Brajić, Nijaz Kadrić, Adnana Hasanović, Bruno Marić, Ajla Mehmedović, Adnan Bilajac, Tamara Bajkuša, Alisa Polić, Naida Kadušić, Marijana Vukotić, Nail Halimić, Davor Lahovski

Croatia: Marta Curman

Macedonia: Biljana Stojanova; Anita Blaževska; Vaska Nedanovska; Jana Jovanovska (on educational leave from the Ministry for Agriculture, Forests, and Water in Macedonia)

Albania: Ines Cilka

Serbia: Maja Srndović, Vladimir Nikolić, Todora Grašić, Dragan Jankov

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