

## Editorial

In recent decades, urban and peri-urban forestry (UPF) has emerged as an integrative, multidisciplinary approach to the planning, design and management of forest and tree resources in and around urban areas. UPF can help address economic, social and environmental challenges by providing multiple services and benefits that can make cities more resilient, improve dwellers' quality of life, build green economies and mitigate the effects of climate change. Especially in more vulnerable areas, where climate change and drought can represent serious constraints to communities' livelihood, UPF can play a crucial role by supporting climate-change mitigation and adaptation, supplying food, increasing health and well-being, improving job opportunities and income, as well as supporting biodiversity conservation, watershed management, and disaster risk prevention.

### MEDITERRANEAN NEWS

**Booth on Mediterranean Forests during the World Forestry Congress, 07-11 September 2015**

[www.fao.org/about/meetings/world-forestry-congress](http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/world-forestry-congress)

**eFIRECOMM, International workshop on risk culture and wildfire risk communication, 08-10 July 2015**

**organized by CTFC and EFIMED**  
<http://efirecom.ctfc.cat/?cat=1>

**COST Action FP1202 MaP-FGR launched the call for Short Term Scientific Missions** Deadline for application is June 21, 2015  
<http://map-fgr.entecra.it/?p=1207>

Although a large number of studies have proven the potential of urban and peri-urban forestry to increase environmental, economic and social sustainability in urban areas of Mediterranean countries, UPF is still not recognized as an established scientific discipline or as a strategic factor for the future development of cities. As a consequence of these limitations, so far only few Mediterranean countries have implemented action plans or national strategies which take into account the potential contributions of forests and trees for meeting the long-term challenges of cities. In order to address the common challenge of sustainability in the region and to build robust policies and management tools that help urban and regional territory planners manage urban forests, it is essential to promote a cooperative approach between northern, southern and eastern countries. Building a common strategy to promote UPF in the region and give UPF a more prominent position on the local agendas of Mediterranean countries requires a fluid and regular exchange of experiences and information on this topic as well as the development of a regional partnership to face UPF-related issues in the Mediterranean supporting:

- the development of tools supporting and guiding stakeholders' long term investments and decisions;



**SIMONE BORELLI**  
Forestry Officer - FAO

- the sharing between countries, stakeholders and practitioners of experiences, principles and key strategic actions optimizing the benefits of UPF ;
- the promotion of a cooperative approach between northern, western, southern and eastern countries oriented to build robust policies and management tools that help urban and regional territory planners manage urban forests.

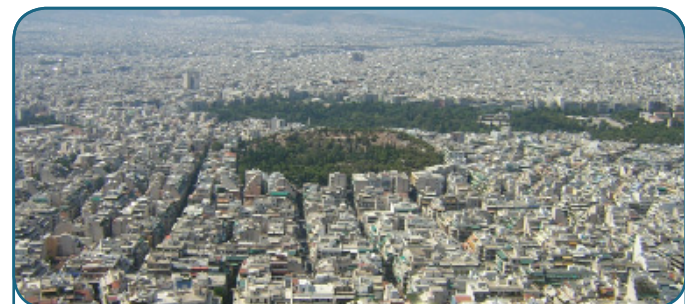
The Silva Mediterranea Working Group on UPF was created with the mandate of acting as a neutral forum where nations could meet, develop agreements, and debate policy aspects on the urban and peri-urban forestry. This issue of the Silva Mediterranea Newsletter will focus on the activities implemented by this Working Group to promote, implement and facilitate the dialogue on UPF in the region.

## The Working Group on urban and peri-urban forestry: mandate, vision, membership and coordination

The need for a regional partnership to address UPF-related issue in the Mediterranean area had already been highlighted during the 2-days workshop “MEDways Guidelines and common routes for the future challenges on UPF in Mediterranean Countries” (Florence, Italy, December 2011). During the workshop - organized by Universities of Bari and Florence, IUFRO and FAO in the framework of the International Year of Forests 2011 – participants identified the following gaps to the implementation of UPF in the region:

- a general lack of information on the state-of-the-art and on the dimensions and potential development of UPF in the Mediterranean region;
- a weak partnership at technical and scientific level, as well as at policy and administrative level;
- a significant gap between traditional forestry world and emerging UPF issues.

A few months later, in the framework of its 21st session (Turkey, Antalya, 2-3 February 2012) the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions – Silva Mediterranea established the Silva Mediterranea Working Group on Urban and peri-urban forestry to respond to the urgent need of building a common awareness and network on sustainable development of Mediterranean cities.



City view of Athens - 2007  
Athens, Greece @E. Conigliaro

### Mandate

The WG7 was created with the mandate of acting as a neutral forum where nations could meet, develop agreements, and debate policy aspects on the urban

and peri-urban forestry. To this aim, the activity of the WG would aim at:

1. establishing and rooting an efficient regional urban and peri-urban forestry networking strategy aimed at improving Mediterranean North-South and South-south cooperation between scientists, stakeholders and technicians on the UPF issue, as well as the exchange of valuable information;
2. building a strategic and common vision on the management of urban and peri-urban forests in the Mediterranean region;
3. consolidating the horizontal partnership (Northern-Eastern-Southern-Western countries) and the vertical dialogue (north-south) between decision makers, scientists, technicians and associations in order to build a strategic and common vision of Green Infrastructure and Urban Forests (UFs) and move UPF-related issues up on the local agendas of Mediterranean countries.



Gardens of Turia - 2014  
Valencia, Spain @E. Conigliaro

### Membership

The WG7 currently counts on the active participation of 30 members from 12 Mediterranean countries, while a total number of 130 members from 16 countries are included in the mailing list of the WG. The group meets twice a year, if possible on the occasion of other relevant UPF-related events in order to minimize participation costs for the members and promote the activity of the group in such contexts. Any expert from one of the 27 Silva Mediterranea member countries (whether representing a local institution or contributing as individual expert) can become a member of the group. Contribution to the activities and participation to the annual meetings is carried out on voluntary and



self-funded basis. Some 16 institutions are currently represented within the group, including Universities, Ministries, Research centers, Institutes, Foundations.



El Albaicín - 2014  
Granada, Spain @M. Conigliaro

### Coordination

The WG is coordinated by a Secretariat composed by two coordinators, one representing the North of the Mediterranean, the other representing the South/East of the region. The coordinators of the group have annual mandate and are elected by the members in the framework of their first annual meeting. Their role consists in: (i) coordinating the implementation of the activities developed by the group; (ii) organizing the two annual meetings; and, (iii) highlighting possible synergies with other relevant activities, projects and events in the region. The Secretariat of the WG7 is supported by FAO through its urban and peri-urban forestry programme (FAO Forestry Department, Rome), which plays a key role in coordinating activities, exploring funding opportunities with external partners, and bridging between the WG and the Secretariat of Silva Mediterranea (also hosted in FAO, Rome).

### Main fields of activity

The following types of activity have been identified by the group as a basis for the development of an active and efficient regional network promoting cooperation within the region:

- Preparation of publications and documentations aimed at advertising the role of the WG7 as well as providing a general overview of the expertise on UPF acquired in the Mediterranean region.
- Definition of terms, standards and indicators about UPF and related concepts, adapted to the Mediterranean region.

- Organization of meetings and workshops to strengthen the relationships between the members and discuss proposals for inclusion of new activities in the work plan.
- Preparation of regional project proposals.
- Development of guidelines, manuals and reference handbooks for technical aspects of UPF and governance.
- Organization of side events to be held in the framework of the major international conferences related to UPF, in collaboration with the UPF FAO programme.
- Capacity building activities through the organization of a series of meetings (webinars, telephone conferences, etc.).
- Development of training courses on UPF connecting all related disciplines.

### Workshops held 2012-2015

After a first meeting of the Provisional Secretariat held during the 15th European Forum on Urban Forestry (EFUF 2012) as a follow-up to the MED-Ways workshop, three workshops have been held from 2014 up to now:

1. Launching Workshop (22–23 May 2014, Granada, Spain): 14 participants from 5 countries
2. II Workshop (20 November 2014, Rome, Italy): 22 participants from 8 countries
3. III Workshop (16 March 2015, Barcelona, Spain): 26 participants from 12 countries



Second Workshop of the Working Group on UPF  
20-11-2014 Rome, Italy @Y. Chen

In the framework of the launching workshop, participants identified the scope of activities: efficiently promote the implementation of the whole integrated system of trees and green spaces found in and around Mediterranean urban areas, the so called Green Infrastructure (GI). To this aim, the following priority issues were identified:

- promoting a change of approach in the governance and management of cities based on a vision that considers the urban environment as a living and dynamic ecosystem (ecological structure of a city);
  - promoting conservation and restoration at habitat level, not only at species level, in the light of the fact that maintenance and restoration of the natural functions of the habitats is crucial to conserve the biodiversity on a long-term scale;
  - promoting and supporting the involvement of communities and civil society in the active design, planning and management of urban green infrastructure;
  - providing evidence of the contribution of urban forests and green spaces to the economy of cities (green infrastructure as an investment and not just as an expense);
  - promoting the importance of urban forests and green spaces in preserving the cultural value of landscapes;
  - promoting a UPF approach based on the recognition of the biological and ecological importance of native and spontaneous species;
  - addressing the issue of UPF/fire risk management (potentially urban and peri-urban forests are more exposed to fire risk due to their proximity to cities) as a common challenge most Mediterranean countries have to deal with;
  - strengthening the partnership between rural and urban communities under a city-region approach considering the relevant contribution of peri-urban areas to the urban economic, social and environmental sustainability;
- highlighting the contribution of UPF and GI in providing ecosystem services and goods to urban communities, among which the increase of communities' health and well-being and the, consequent decrease of public health's costs;
  - underlining the crucial relevance of the ecosystem services provided by trees and green in terms of increasing air and water quality;
  - addressing the issue of compact/spread cities with regard to their contribution to increase urban environmental sustainability;
  - integrating and synergizing activities, data, approaches, information from the different disciplines and sectors dealing with the UPF and GI issues.



Valle della Caffarella - 2015  
Rome, Italy @M. Conigliaro

## Activities implemented by the WG7: 2012-2015

Participation to the activities of the group is open to any member wishing to contribute. For each activity, one or two members responsible for coordinating the contributions from the different members are identified as reference focal point.

### 2012-2013

During the first two years of its mandate (2012-2013), the WG7 was led by a provisional Secretariat coordinated by Italy and Turkey. The work of the Secretariat over this first biennium mainly focused on establishing a regional network on UPF and on raising awareness on the need to build a common vision and strategy for implementation of UPF in the region. The many networking and promotion activities conducted resulted



in an increasing interest of many Mediterranean countries in management of urban and peri-urban forestry.

- Development of Chapter on “Urban and peri-urban forestry in the Mediterranean region” (first attempt to implement a preliminary assessment of UPF in the region) for its inclusion in the State of Mediterranean Forests 2013.
- Development of the case study “Montpellier, green city” for its inclusion in the FAO journal *Unasylva*.



City centre of Rome - 2015  
Rome, Italy @M. Conigliaro

## 2014-2015

Based on the priorities identified in the framework of the launching workshop, the following activities were selected for implementation by the group between 2014 and 2016 (next Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions – *Silva Mediterranea*):

- Development of a set of common regional indicators (social, economic, structural, biological, ecological, policy) suitable for assessing urban and peri-urban forests/forestry in Mediterranean cities. The work would take into account the outcomes of strategies and activities implemented by other international bodies working on issues related to green infrastructure and urban sustainability, including CBD (City Biodiversity Index), ICLEI, EU Commission.
- Development of a scientific paper on research and development of UPF/GI issues in Mediterranean countries.
- Development of a policy paper addressed to actors/stakeholders playing a key role in the region

and aimed at raising funds for the development of projects and programmes in the region.

- Survey of the types of UPF/GI (elements and spaces) in the region.
- Development of a database of case studies on UPF best practices and lessons learnt in the Mediterranean region via existing national/regional databases.
- Collection of information on the state of UPF in the Mediterranean countries.
- Development and submission to donors of project proposals involving two or more Mediterranean countries.
- Adaptation of the UPF voluntary guidelines to the Mediterranean region and testing of the guidelines in identified «champion cities».
- Implementation of communication activities aimed at promoting the role of the WG in the region.

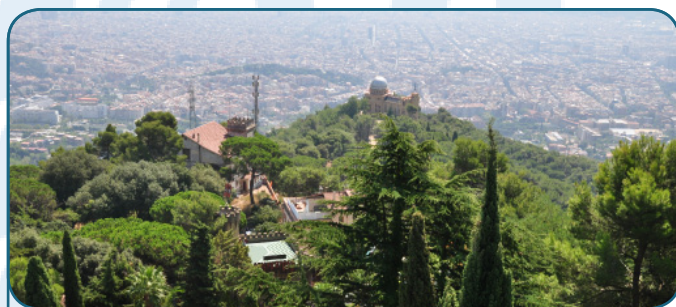
## Synergies

As it aims at promoting local and regional sustainability in urban landscapes, the activity of the WG is in line with the international statements on sustainable development (Rio Earth Summit, 1992; Johannesburg Summit, 2002; Bali Summit, 2007; Rio+20 Summit, 2012). The WG’s activity also encompasses the outputs of the agreements and conventions addressing the improvement of the sustainable management of natural resources (e.g. Aalborg Charter, 1994; Kyoto Protocol, 1997). The WG is also an important tool to achieve the objectives proposed in the “Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests: policy orientations for integrated management of forest ecosystems in Mediterranean landscapes”, namely: 1) developing and promoting goods and services provided by forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean; 2) promoting resilience of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean to face global changes; and, 3) enhancing capacity of stakeholders and the resource mobilization necessary for the sustainable management of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean.

## Vision and long-term objectives of the WG7

- Build a shared vision of the UPF in the region.
- Make UPF a priority on stakeholders' agenda.
- Make the Secretariat of the WG the UPF focal point for Mediterranean countries.
- Have a shared monitoring process of UPF adopted in the Mediterranean region.
- Involve most Mediterranean countries and UPF-related institutions in the activities of the WG.
- Develop an efficient Mediterranean network facilitating the exchange of information and data, as well as the collaboration between countries on UPF-related issues.
- Make Mediterranean cities economically, socially and environmentally more sustainable by maximizing the benefits and services provided by UPF to urban communities.
- Promote research and studies on UPF, in particular with regard to climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation, desertification and land degradation prevention.

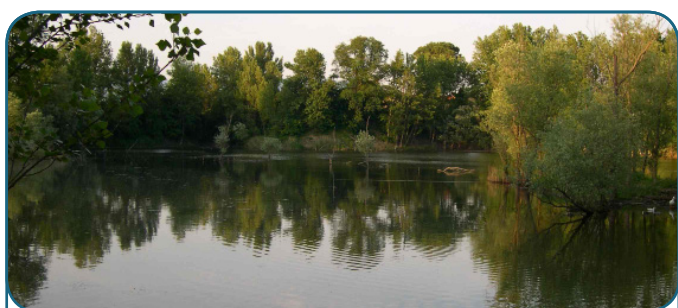
ed is invited to contact the FAO WG focal points: Mr. Simone Borelli at [simone.borelli@fao.org](mailto:simone.borelli@fao.org) or Ms. Michela Conigliaro at [michela.conigliaro@fao.org](mailto:michela.conigliaro@fao.org)



Tibidabo view - 2014  
Barcelona, Spain @M. Conigliaro

## Departure of Christophe Besacier from Silva Mediterranea

From 2009 to 2015 Christophe Besacier took charge of the Secretary of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions - Silva Mediterranea. During those five years a new dynamic was created thanks to him. He coordinated the work of member countries and of the different observers of Silva Mediterranea and supported its working groups. Four editions of the Mediterranean Forest Week, the Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests, the first edition of the State of Mediterranean Forests and the startup and implementation of several projects in the context of the Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests were some of the good results he obtained. Christophe does not leave the forests and he will now work on forests and landscapes restoration. Therefore, we will certainly have the pleasure to meet him again in the Mediterranean.



Parco Chico Lago Bella - 2015  
Florence, Italy @F. Salbitano

## How to join the WG7

For more detailed information on ongoing activities, outcomes of the previous workshops, and coordination of the Secretariat, please visit the WG7 webpage at: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/80480/en/>

Any expert interested in joining the group or in getting more precise information on the activities implement-

For more information related to the newsletter of *Silva Mediterranea* please contact Nicolas Picard ([Nicolas.Picard@fao.org](mailto:Nicolas.Picard@fao.org)) or Caterina Marchetta ([Caterina.Marchetta@fao.org](mailto:Caterina.Marchetta@fao.org)) at the Secretariat of *Silva Mediterranea*