



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 24.03.1998
COM(1998) 173 final

REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL

**on the implementation of the European Forestry
Information and Communication System (Efics) established by Council
Regulation (EEC) No 1615/89**

Proposal for a

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC)

**amending Council Regulation (EEC) No 1615/89 establishing a European
Forestry Information and Communication System (Efics)**

(presented by the Commission)

**Report to the Council on the implementation of the European Forestry
Information and Communication System (Efics) established by Council
Regulation (EEC) No 1615/89**

1. Efics's objectives

The European Forestry Information and Communication System (Efics) was established by Council Regulation (EEC) No 1615/89 of 29 May 1989¹ and extended by Council Regulation (EC) No 400/94 of 21 February 1994².

The objectives of the System are defined in Article 1 of the Regulation, which stipulates that:

- the purpose of the System is *"to collect, coordinate, standardise and process data concerning the forestry sector and its development"*.
- The System is created *"in order to collect comparable and objective information on the structure and operation of the forestry sector in the Community, and thus facilitate implementation and monitoring of the Community forestry provisions in force"*³.

Article 2 also stipulates that the System *"shall take account of existing data, and in particular statistics compiled by the Statistical Office of the European Communities, and shall make use of information available in the Member States, in particular data contained in national forestry inventories, and of any database accessible at Community and international level"*.

2. Implementation of the System during 1989-97

2.1 Initial period (1989-92)

A small number of measures were carried out during the initial period of application of the Regulation. An initial, limited, study was launched to evaluate the differences in the forestry inventory procedures in the Member States. It demonstrated the lack of harmonisation in the field of forestry statistics. However, given the lack of detail in the study, it was not possible to draw any operational conclusions on steps to be taken to improve the situation.

Preparatory work was also carried out to evaluate the status of forestry data available in the different Member States. It was found that there were no data at all for a large number of activities in the sector.

¹ OJ L 165, 15.6.1989, p. 12.

² OJ L 54, 25.2.1994, p. 5.

³ The main measures referred to are the subject of the following Regulations and Decisions: Regulation (EEC) No 1610/89 laying down provisions for implementing Regulation (EEC) No 4256/88 as regards the scheme to develop and optimally utilise woodlands in rural areas in the Community; Regulation (EEC) No 2080/92 instituting a Community aid scheme for forestry measures in agriculture; Regulation (EEC) No 867/90 on improving the processing and marketing conditions for forestry products; Decision 89/367/EEC setting up a Standing Forestry Committee; Regulation (EEC) No 2157/92 amending Regulation (EEC) No 3528/86 on the protection of the Community's forests against atmospheric pollution; Regulation (EEC) No 2158/92 on protection of the Community's forests against fire.

In view of the modesty of the results obtained in the initial period of application, the Regulation had to be extended for the period 1993-97.

2.2 *Second period (1993-97)*

At its meeting on 10 June 1994 the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) identified five main fields which it felt should form an initial framework for the Efics. They were:

- forestry resources (including the parameters sustainable development, biodiversity, etc)
- forest products (the timber industry)
- forest ownership structure
- forestry activities at Community level
- the organisation and objectives of and means for implementing forestry policies in the Member States.

Several operations forming part of the above objectives were then undertaken by the Commission:

- The collection, verification and publication by Eurostat of forestry statistics as part of Efics ("Forestry statistics" document published in 1995 for 1985-91 and under preparation for 1992-96).
- The implementation of measures in the field of remote sensing applied to the forestry sector, in connection with work undertaken by the SAI (department for remote sensing applications) at the Joint Research Centre (JRC) in Ispra as part of the FIRS (Forest Information from Remote Sensing) project⁴.
- The creation, and participation in the work, of the Intersecretariat Working Group (IWG) bringing together several international organisations working in the forestry statistics field (DG VI, Eurostat, the Economic Commission for Europe of the United Nations (UN-ECE), the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO)) and intended to guarantee cooperation between the organisations and complementarity of their activities so as to avoid any duplication of work. This cooperation has enabled a questionnaire to be drawn up common to Eurostat, the FAO and the UN-ECE for the collection of statistical data on the production of and trading in forest products.
- Collaboration with the UN-ECE and the FAO in the work undertaken by those bodies to assess temperate and boreal forest resources for the year 2000 (TBFRA-2000, part

⁴ Launching of a study on the application of remote sensing to the monitoring of changes in forest cover and the structural diversity of forests. Entrusted to a consortium led by GAF (Gesellschaft für Angewandte Fernerkundung mbH), the study was part of the scientific and technical support activities for Community policies and should be completed by August 1988.

Launching by the Centre for Earth Observation (CEO) of the SAI at Ispra JRC as part of the Forest Monitoring in Europe with Remote Sensing (FMERS) project, of a study intended to develop and implement methods aimed at deriving from remote sensing data certain information linked to forests (surface, structure and volume).

of the overall assessment FRA-2000), which included Community financial assistance to the analyses carried out by the UN-ECE into the sustainable development of forests (implementation of Resolution No 1 of the ministerial conference on the protection of forests in Europe (Helsinki, 1993) and integration of the sustainable management criteria and indicators into forestry inventories).

In addition to the above work a second comparative study on forestry inventory systems in Europe was carried out by the European Forestry Institute (EFI). This had more ambitious objectives than the first and was allocated more resources. It was intended to make a critical inventory of the quality and comparability of statistical data resulting from the different protocols used to measure forestry resources in Europe. It was completed at the end of January 1997.

An initial report describing and comparing the forestry inventory systems in the European Union and several other European countries⁵ was published by the Commission in 1997⁶. A second report, issued at the end of the study in February 1997, proposed several scenarios for action to be undertaken if Europe was to have reliable and comparable statistics on forestry resources. The scenarios were based on a comparison of the national inventories carried out during the first stage and on the results, also noted in the report, of an inquiry intended to assess the needs of users with regard to forestry resources statistics and of a simulation study estimating the discrepancies produced in such statistics by the disparities between the data collection and processing procedures used in the countries covered by the study⁷.

In addition, a number of measures undertaken outside the scope of the Efics Regulation have already supplied results the use of which could help to implement the System. Without encroaching on those measures, Efics could be a suitable method for disseminating and following up their results. The measures were:

- Work carried out under Council Regulation (EEC) No 3528/86 on the protection of the Community's forests against atmospheric pollution which is used for the preparation of an annual report on the state of health of Europe's forests. The work comprises a periodical inventory of damage caused to forests by observing more than 70 000 trees from about 3 400 observation points covering all European forests and the intensive monitoring of about 500 observation plots in all Member States.
- The system implemented under Council Regulation (EEC) No 2158/92 on protection of the Community's forests against fire. This covers 319 NUTS II or III regions in the six Member States containing the fire-risk zones (Germany, Spain, France, Greece, Italy and Portugal) and contains a description of the 460 000 fires studied between 1985 and 1995.
- The report prepared in application of Council Regulation (EEC) No 2080/92 of 30 June 1992 instituting a Community aid scheme for forestry measures in agriculture.

⁵ Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland.

⁶ "Document" series, 2 volumes, 1328 pp.; ISBN 92-827-9846-1.

⁷ The simulation demonstrated, for example, that if the definitions used in Luxembourg and in the United Kingdom were applied to the determination of the forest area of Finland there would be a 14% discrepancy between the two calculated figures.

- A description of the forestry research projects financed by the Commission under the Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development.

2.3 *Missing information and difficulties and obstacles encountered during implementation*

Alongside the problems already mentioned - lack of European harmonisation of forestry statistics and the availability of some data - the main difficulties encountered in implementing the Regulation to date have been the reservations expressed by Member States in taking the measures required to improve the quality of international data (lack of personnel and funding).

Although there has been significant progress in the field of forestry resources, work carried out in the other areas identified as priorities by the SFC in 1994 have yielded little success because of the above difficulties.

3. **Guidelines for implementing the System during the period 1998-2002**

3.1 *The challenges*

Recent developments and discussions on forests, their products and markets, particularly with regard to the concept of sustainable management, have confirmed that existing statistical data in the sector are not reliable or comparable enough. The economic, environmental and social significance of forests is currently receiving increased attention and the data available from national inventories are not adequate for meeting challenges such as:

- the action to be taken as a result of the European Parliament's legislative initiative (the Thomas Report). In paragraph 13 of one of its resolutions it asks the Commission to make provision for "*the effective implementation of the forestry information and communication system (Efics)*" and for the forestry sector to "*discuss forthwith the usefulness of a European forestry inventory by state and by region which would provide the Union with the necessary information to continue to ensure sustainable management of forestry resources*";
- the contribution which must be made to the work of the European Environmental Agency (EEA) on the report on the state of the environment in Europe (the Dobbris assessment) with regard to the forestry aspects (resources, multi-function role of forests);
- the evaluation that has to be made of future trends in the timber and derived products market, taking account of the impact on the market of the liberalisation of international trade, and of the resulting forestry forecasts that can be made at Union level;
- the necessary reinforcement of the multi-function role of the forest with its impact on rural development and employment policies.

After the accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden Europe became the second-largest producer and consumer of forestry products in the world and it must therefore have a statistical tool enabling it to give reliable information on at least the most important data.

That need can only be underlined by the likely accession in the near future of six new countries from central, eastern and Mediterranean Europe, which will significantly increase our forestry resources and the potential consumption of forestry products.

In addition, suitable information needs to be available for current discussions on ecological certification, on use of timber compatible with the environment (e.g. as a renewable energy resource) or as a building material with thermal and sound insulation properties.

3.2 Topics to be considered

The Commission is proposing to establish an indicative working programme for the next few years which will concentrate on the following:

- forestry resources,
- forest ownership structure,
- non-commercial forest values,
- Community forestry measures,
- forestry products (wood as a structural material ("mechanical") and other forestry products).

The Commission is aware of the amount of work required on those topics. It would be unrealistic to think that all the problems they contain can be resolved during the period covered by the Regulation. Efics's implementation can only be gradual; it is a process whose regular progress must be guaranteed.

3.3 The proposed working programme

The working programme proposed by the Commission is summarised in the annexed Table, which is based on the priorities mentioned above. It has already been presented to the SFC and the Eurostat "forestry statistics" working party at their joint meeting in Luxembourg on 21 July 1997, where, although the meeting stressed that some points still required discussion in more detail, it was on the whole given a positive reception. It will be re-presented to the SFC for approval in accordance with the procedure set out in the new Regulation.

Implementation of the measures in the working programme will require the maintenance and, if necessary, reinforcement of the existing cooperation with other international institutions active in the forestry statistics field, particularly within the intersecretariat working group on forestry statistics, so that the work of the various institutions can be coordinated and duplication avoided.

Measures to be undertaken on the development of nomenclatures, the harmonisation of existing data or the coordinated development of new data (e.g. on biodiversity) will be discussed within an Efics working party whose members can be taken from the SFC and the "forestry statistics" working party. The working party will also have to decide which of the working programme's measures should be given priority.

The sectoral studies and analyses (forestry product markets, statistics on foreign trade, etc) which the Commission intends to launch must link the various departments concerned (Eurostat, DG III, DG VI, etc). In more general terms, it will be necessary to specify during the measures' initial implementation phases the responsibilities of the various Commission departments; these are currently only mentioned in indicative terms in the working programme and only for certain measures.

It is expected that the working programme will permit the development over the course of the next few years of the most important measures and contribute to the broader discussion of forestry strategy in which Efics will be called on to play a role.

EFICS: INDICATIVE WORKING PROGRAMME

Measure		Type of work	
Creation of a database	Feasibility study	Launch of a computer-based project	Study
	Design of the database and inputting of data already available	<p><i>Forestry resources:</i> Eurostat and/or UN-ECE data</p> <p><i>Forestry products and trade:</i> Joint Eurostat/UN-ECE/FAO questionnaire and historical data (COMEXT)</p> <p><i>Forest ownership:</i> Information collected by Eurostat and UN-ECE</p> <p><i>Community forestry measures:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report on Regulation (EEC) No 2080/92 instituting a Community aid scheme for forestry measures in agriculture - Annual reports on Regulations concerning protection against atmospheric pollution and fire - Data on research measures and COST-type activities <p><i>Other information:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Addresses of contacts in the Member States possessing the results of national inventories or direct links with information servers - links with other international databases managed by governmental organisations (UN-ECE, FAO, etc) 	Services
	Inputting new information	<p>Geo-referenced information and/or maps resulting from cooperation with the institute for remote-sensing applications as part of the FIRS project, or CORINE Land Cover extracts</p> <p>Results of specific analyses linked to sectoral requirements</p>	<p>Internal DG VI work in liaison with the JRC at Ispra, the EEA, etc</p> <p>Services</p>
Improvement of data and harmonisation	Forestry resources nomenclature (timber)	Development of a common nomenclature for the most important features (related to forestry area, changes, species, volume and its variation), with study of the possibility of using for Eficis the definitions adopted as part of TBFRA-2000.	Discussions within an ad hoc Eficis working party under the SFC's control, plus collaboration with the IWG and consideration of the work on the assessment of temperate and boreal forests for the year 2000 (TBFRA-2000).

8

EFICS: INDICATIVE WORKING PROGRAMME

Measure		Type of work		
Improvement of data and harmonisation (continued)	Forestry resources nomenclature (goods and services other than timber production)	Development of a common nomenclature of goods and services other than timber production	Analyses within Efics working party under the SFC's control, plus collaboration with the IWG and consideration of the TBFRA-2000 work.	
	Forest ownership nomenclature	Development of a common nomenclature for forestry ownership. Determine whether the nomenclature chosen by TBFRA 2000 meets Efics's needs, if necessary agree on nomenclature to be adopted.	Analyses within Efics working party under the SFC's control, plus collaboration with the IWG and consideration of the TBFRA-2000 work.	
	Conversion of national data on forestry resources (timber)	Establishment of conversion factors for national data on forestry resources (timber) so that they can be aligned on the European definitions adopted (application of the factors will be an intermediate step between the adoption of the new nomenclature and its implementation in the national inventories).	Internal study in each Member State with coordination by the Efics working party and financial support from the Commission if necessary	
	Forestry products and trade	<p>Launch of a study on trade statistics for roundwood and forestry industry products aimed at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - analysing in detail the various sources of foreign trade statistics in the Union and EFTA (joint FAO/UN-ECE/Eurostat questionnaire, Eurostat's COMEXT database, UN Statistics Office's COMTRADE database, etc), - determining the reasons for the differences and incompatibilities between the data in these sources, <p>and including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an examination of the impact on data quality of the introduction, from 1993, of the Intrastat system, - proposals based on the analysis and aimed at improving the reliability of trade statistics in the forestry sector. 	Study	
	Extension of harmonisation	Extension of harmonisation to a larger number of factors (if the gradual approach chosen for the harmonisation of the first ten factors proves effective)		Discussions within the Efics working party.
		Monitoring of the technological developments which could help to implement an "Efics inventory" based on remote sensing, possible launching of studies in that field		Internal Commission work. Studies

6

EFICS: INDICATIVE WORKING PROGRAMME

Measure			Type of work
Data collection in the Member States	Forestry resources and forest ownership	Collection in the Member States of supplementary data on forestry resources and forest ownership, taking account of established nomenclature.	Internal work within Member States with possible part-financing by the Commission of additional work required for data collection.
	Community measures	Provision by the Member States of supplementary information on measures taken in favour of forests in Structural Funds' regional programmes (Objectives 1, 5(b) and 6, ERDF, ESF, Regulation (EEC) No 867/90.	Internal work within Member States with possible part-financing by the Commission of additional work required for data collection.
10	Publications	Annual publication of the document "Forestry statistics".	Collection, verification and publication of forestry statistics
	Establishment of a communication network	Establishment, in close collaboration with the Union's forestry industry and other bodies concerned, of a communication network in the forestry sector with the aim of encouraging the rapid and efficient exchange of information.	Pilot DG III/DG IV, industry, etc, project.
	Specific studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study of the operation of the timber sector: identification of the structure and operation of the timber markets, mainly the roundwood market, with examination of regional flows. In a second phase, extension of the study to derived products (wood as a structural material ("mechanical") and other forestry products). - Analysis of the wood/paper/printing sector aimed at providing detailed economic and strategic information on the wood processing, paper and board manufacturing and processing, and printing and publishing industries. - Other specific analyses linked to the forestry sector and connected industries, in particular in relation to the central and eastern European countries. 	Studies and services (DG II/DG VI collaboration)

Proposal for a
COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No
amending Council Regulation (EEC) No 1615/89
establishing a European Forestry Information and Communication System
(Efics)

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. The Community measure comprising the establishment of a European Forestry Information and Communication System (Efics), as provided for in Regulation (EEC) No 1615/89, extended for the first time by Regulation (EC) No 400/94 and based on Article 213 of the Treaty, expires on 31 December 1997. The Commission is presenting to the Council, as provided for in its 1997 agriculture and fisheries programme, a proposal for the measure's extension for a further five years.

2. The objective of the System is to collect, coordinate, standardise and process data concerning the forestry sector and its development, in order to compile comparable and objective information on the structure and operation of the forestry sector in the Union and to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of Community provisions in force in the matter.

3. During the past period of application of the Regulation substantial progress has been made in several fields:

- European forestry statistics are again being regularly collected, verified and published by Eurostat.
- Several research projects have been launched on the application of remote sensing to the forestry sector; these are independent of comparable projects in the R & TD Framework Programme but do not duplicate them.
- An Intersécretariat Working Group (IWG) has been created linking several international organisations active in the forestry statistics field with the aim of establishing cooperation to prevent duplication in the activities of the organisations. Its work has resulted in the preparation of a joint questionnaire for Eurostat, the FAO and UN-ECE for the collection of statistical data on production of and trading in forestry products.
- A critical inventory has been produced of the quality and comparability of statistical data obtained from the various forestry resource inventories produced by the Member States and other European countries; the analysis has helped to establish several ways to improve the future quality of the data.

4. The major difficulties encountered during the period of application of the Regulation have been:

- The lack of harmonisation between Member States in the field of forestry statistics; there were considerable differences in terms of the inventory, data sources, nomenclature and methods of analysis and organisation.
- The total absence of data for a great many activities in the sector.
- Reservations expressed by Member States concerning national implementation of the measures required to improve the quality of international data, mainly because of a lack of personnel and funding.

[REDACTED]

5. Despite the difficulties and taking account of the progress already made, the Commission and the members of the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) believe that a decisive stage has been reached in the implementation of the System and that the measure must be continued with a number of activities of a high added-value for the operation of the System being strengthened or launched. In general terms, forestry information requirements are still urgent and have in fact been accentuated by the following:

- Accession to the Union in 1995 of Austria, Finland and Sweden; this has considerably increased the relative significance of the forestry sector in the Union's economic activities.
- Community commitments entered into at the ministerial conferences on forest protection (Strasbourg 1990 and Helsinki 1993). The Community and Member States have undertaken to cooperate in the collection of data on the protection and sustainable management of forests in Europe.
- The increasing worldwide responsibilities of the Union in the protection and sustainable management of forests, reflecting its commitment to implementing the recommendations of the intergovernmental group on forests (following on from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Committee on Sustainable Development), particularly as regards the integration of the criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of forests into forestry inventories, the harmonisation of definitions and the international coordination of work on assessing forestry resources.
- The forestry strategy which the Commission is obliged to prepare as a result of the European Parliament request expressed in its resolution of 30 January 1997. The resolution also underlines the importance of Erics in that context, namely as an information tool on Union forestry activities. That importance was also noted in the Economic and Social Committee non-initiative opinion of 24 April 1997 on the situation and problems of forestry in the European Union, and in the draft opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the management, utilisation and protection of the Union's forests.

6. The measures which the Commission is proposing to undertake during the next few years have been laid out in a working programme covering a number of priority topics. The plan had already been presented to the SFC and the Eurostat working party on forestry statistics and approved by them at their joint meeting held on 21 July 1997 in Luxembourg. It will be re-presented to the SFC for approval under the rules specified in the new Regulation.

Implementation of the measures contained in the working programme will require the maintenance and, if necessary, reinforcement of the existing cooperation with Member States and with other international institutions active in the forestry statistics field, particularly in the IWG, so as to coordinate and supplement the work of the different bodies and avoid duplication.

At the SFC meeting on 21 July a general consensus was reached in favour of extending the Regulation.

7. Extension of the measure respects the principles of *subsidiarity* and *proportionality*:

- Responsibility for the measure is shared by the Community and the Member States. Although it is the Community's duty to collect, process and disseminate comparable and objective data on the European forestry sector, it cannot do this unless the Member States are willing to undertake the work to improve the comparability of the data obtained from the forestry inventories. Given the work needed to realise that, action by the Member States alone will not be enough and will have to be combined with that of the Community. Coordination at Community level and exchanges of experience between the Member States will help to reduce the total cost of the measure.
- The development of common European definitions and nomenclatures could not be undertaken by the Member States alone. Community activities in that field coordinated with those of other international bodies will supply a definite added value to Member States' work.
- If the initiative had been left to the Member States the consequence of inactivity on the part of the Community would have been the continued lack of reliable data on the European forestry sector or, in some cases, the lack of any data at all. That situation would not be satisfactory since both the Member States and the Community institutions acknowledge that such data are an invaluable aid both internationally and throughout Europe for sustainable development (post-Rio and -Helsinki process) and within the Community to support the measures presented in favour of forests and to prepare the future forestry strategy.
- The financial framework of the Regulation remains unchanged. The reference amount, ECU 3 900 000, stays the same. During 1989-97 the appropriations were under-used (ECU 600 000) because activities were concentrated on the analysis of the existing quality of forestry data and of methods for improving it. The amount remaining for 1998-2002 is relatively modest given the objectives pursued and the cost of collecting and processing forestry information in the Member States. In addition to the creation of the information system, Community assistance will be concentrated on supporting Member States in their efforts to develop appropriate processes for improving the comparability, reliability and comprehensiveness of the data on a European scale.
- As the difficulties encountered during the past period of application of the Regulation have shown, the process of creating the System is a slow and complex one. The five-year extension is not disproportionate given the size of the tasks to be accomplished.

8. The action is *consistent* with the Union's *agricultural, structural and environmental policies*. It meets the requirements of those policies as well as being an

important information and evaluation tool, making available a number of indicators and parameters on Europe's natural resources and their environment.

The measure does not mean that the Community must implement new procedures for collecting data, it supplements measures already undertaken as part of the Union's *statistics* policy.

Proposal for a

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No

**amending Council Regulation (EEC) No 1615/89 establishing a European
Forestry Information and Communication System (Efics)**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 213 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission¹,

Whereas the period of application of Council Regulation (EEC) No 1615/89 of 29 May 1989 establishing a European Forestry Information and Communication System (Efics)², as amended by Council Regulation (EC) No 400/94 of 21 February 1994³, expires on 31 December 1997;

Whereas several Community measures have already been undertaken to establish the system; whereas they are mainly based on an analysis of the reliability and comparability of the data obtained from Member States' forest inventories and on improving coordination of the statistical work undertaken by international organisations on the forest sector; whereas that work has demonstrated the timeliness of the process initiated by the Community and the benefits which the latter can expect from the continuation of that work;

Whereas the system cannot be implemented unless the Member States take appropriate measures to that end; whereas such measures must be specified in a working programme prepared by the Commission and presented to the Standing Forestry Committee;

¹

² O.J.L. 165, 15.6.1989, p. 12.

³ O.J.L. 54, 25.2.1994, p. 5.

████████████████████
████████

Whereas the implementation of Community policies, the European Union's international commitments as part of the post-Helsinki process and to the United Nations General Assembly and the work of the European Environmental Agency require that the measures to be taken to improve the quality of international forestry data and to improve the use of the computer and remote-sensing techniques most suitable for disseminating those data, should be reinforced;

Whereas also the European Parliament Report No A4-0414/96 of 18 December 1996 on the European Union's forestry strategy stresses that the Commission must ensure that Efics is effectively implemented; whereas the own-initiative opinion of the Economic and Social Committee of 24 April 1997 on the situation and problems of forestry in the European Union and the potential for developing forestry policies notes the importance of improving information in the forestry sector and the contribution that Efics could make to that, in particular by including data on forest protection;

Whereas the above Regulation should therefore be extended and amended to take account of the above requirements,

HAS ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:

Article 1

Regulation (EEC) No 1615/89 is hereby amended as follows:

(1) Article 1 is replaced by the following:

“Article 1

In order to collect objective, reliable and pertinent information on the structure and operation of the forestry sector in the Union, and thus:

- improve consideration of the interests of the forestry sector in international discussions;
- facilitate the implementation of measures in favour of the forestry sector under existing Community policies;

- facilitate implementation of Member State policies relating to forestry or having an impact on the forestry sector;
- authorise access by the general public to information on the European forestry sector,

a European Forestry Information and Communication System (Efics), hereinafter called 'the System', is hereby set up, the objective of which is to collect, coordinate, standardise and process information concerning the forestry sector and its development."

- (2) Article 3 is replaced by the following:

Article 3

The Commission shall set up the System in close cooperation with the Member States and international bodies active in the field of European forestry statistics during an initial four-year stage starting on 1 January 1989 and ending on 31 December 2002.

To improve the comparability and completeness of the data at a European level, implementation of the System may require that Member States take measures aimed at adjusting or supplementing their procedures for the collection of data, in particular where the evaluation of forestry resources and the monitoring of the timber and forestry products market are concerned.

The Commission shall, where appropriate, support measures undertaken by Member States and other international organisations such as the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE) and intended to meet the specific requirements for setting up the System."

- (3) The following Article 3a is inserted:

"Article 3a

- (1) The Commission shall present to the Standing Forestry Committee, set up by Decision 89/367/EEC⁴ for a period extending to 31 December 2002, a working programme detailing the measures which must be taken by Member States and the Commission with a view to establishing the System.
- (2) The Committee shall deliver its opinion on the working programme within a time limit to be fixed by its chairman on the basis of the urgency of the matter in question. The opinion shall be by a majority as provided for in Article 148(2) of the Treaty for the adoption of decisions which the Council is requested to take on a proposal from the Commission. Member States' votes in the Committee shall be weighted as set out in the said Article. The chairman shall not have a vote.
- (3)
 - (a) The Commission shall adopt the envisaged measures where they are in accordance with the opinion of the Committee.
 - (b) Where the envisaged measures are not in accordance with the opinion of the Committee, or in the absence of an opinion, the Commission shall present the Council without delay with a proposal on the measures to be taken. The Council shall decide on the proposal by qualified majority.

If the Council has failed to adopt the measures within a period of three months of being asked to do so, the Commission shall adopt the proposed measures and implement them immediately."

- (4) Article 4 is replaced by the following:

"Article 4

⁴ OJ L 165, 15.6.1989, p. 14.

The reference amount for implementing the System is ECU 3 900 000 for the period 1989-2002.

The annual appropriations shall be authorised by the budgetary authority within the limits of the available budget.”

(5) Article 5 is replaced by the following:

“Article 5

The Commission shall report to the Council, before 1 January 2003, on the implementation of the System and the results obtained. In the light of that report it shall, where necessary, make proposals to the Council on the future organisation and operation of the System.”

Article 2

This Regulation shall enter into force on the third day following its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Communities*.

It shall apply from 1 January 1998.

This Regulation shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States.

Done at

For the Council

The President

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

1. TITLE OF OPERATION

Extension of the Community measure establishing a European Forestry Information and Communication System (Efics).

2. BUDGET HEADING INVOLVED

B2-5150 Forests

3. LEGAL BASIS

Article 213 of the Treaty.

Council Regulation (EEC) No 1615/89 of 29 May 1989 establishing a European Forestry Information and Communication System (Efics)¹, as amended by Council Regulation (EC) No 400/94 of 21 February 1994², expiring on 31 December 1997.

The purpose of the proposal is to extend the Regulation by five years. The period covered by the Regulation would then be 1989-2002.

4. DESCRIPTION OF OPERATION

4.1 General objective

Regulation (EEC) No 1615/89 was adopted as part of the implementation of the "Forestry action programme" launched by the Commission in 1988. The system introduced by the Regulation was regarded as a tool indispensable to the optimum implementation of the forestry policy measures which the programme proposed to implement throughout the Community.

The objective of the system is to collect, coordinate, standardise, process and disseminate data concerning the forestry sector and its development, in order to collect objective, reliable and pertinent information on the structure and operation of the forestry sector in the Union, and thus:

- improve consideration of the interests of the forestry sector in international forums, such as the Convention on biodiversity, or in forums related to forest protection and climate change;
- facilitate the implementation of measures in favour of the forestry sector under existing Community policies (CAP accompanying measures, the Structural Funds, environment, industry);

¹ OJ L 165, 15.6.1989, p. 12.

² OJ L 54, 25.2.1994, p. 5.

- facilitate implementation of Member States' forestry policies;
- allow more public access to information on European forests.

To achieve those objectives, the Commission proposes to undertake the following measures over the next few years:

- the creation, maintenance and feeding of a database (feasibility study, design and inputting of data already available);
- studies to develop common nomenclatures for forestry resources (timber, goods and services other than timber production);
- studies on the conversion of national data on forestry resources (timber);
- study on the inputting of new data into the database (geo-referenced information and/or maps, results of specific analyses);
- specific studies (statistics on trade in roundwood and forestry industry products, operation of the timber market and specific analyses linked to sectoral needs).

In addition to those measures, which are entirely the responsibility of the Community, it is planned that the Commission will contribute to the financing of projects in the Member States to aid the conversion of national data on forestry resources (timber) and collection by Member States of supplementary information on forestry resources; forest ownership and measures in favour of forests taken as part of the Structural Fund regional programmes.

Lastly, it is planned to make a financial contribution to work the objectives of which are compatible with those of Erics and which other international institutions active in the field of forestry statistics will be implementing.

4.2 Period covered and arrangements for renewal or extension

First period of 4 years (Regulation (EC) No 1615/89):	1.1.1989-31.12.1992
Second period of 5 years (Regulation (EC) No 400/94):	1.1.1993-31.12.1997
Proposed extension by 5 years:	1.1.1998-31.12.2002

5. CLASSIFICATION OF EXPENDITURE

5.1 Non-compulsory expenditure

5.2 Differentiated appropriations

6. TYPE OF EXPENDITURE

See point 7.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

7.1 Method of calculating total cost of operation

- For actions in Member States part-financed by the Commission (support for the conversion of data and the collection of supplementary data) a part-financing rate up to a maximum of 50% of the total cost is planned.
- The rate of Community part-financing for projects presented by other international institutions will be studied on a case-by-case basis.
- The financing of other measures will be 100% for the account of the Community.

7.2 Itemised breakdown of cost

Measure	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003 et seq.	TOTAL
Studies and services	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2		1.3
Contributions to Member State expenses	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.3		1.5
Contribution to international organisations' expenses	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1		0.5
TOTAL	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.6		3.3

N.B.: Expenditure already incurred during the first two periods of application of the Regulation (1989-92 and 1993-97) was of the order of ECU 600 000, so the total amount of expenditure planned for the period 1989-2002 will be, as mentioned in the Regulation, ECU 3 900 000.

7.3 Indicative schedule of appropriations

commitment appropriations in million ecus

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003 et seq.	TOTAL
Commitment appropriations	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.6		3.3
Payment appropriations							
1998	0.3						0.3
1999	0.2	0.4					0.6
2000		0.1	0.5				0.6
2001		0.1	0.2	0.5			0.8
2002			0.1	0.2	0.4		0.7
2003 et seq.				0.1	0.2		0.3
TOTAL	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.6		3.3

8. FRAUD PREVENTION MEASURES

On-the-spot checks will be carried out to verify the execution in Member States of projects part-financed by the Commission and to verify the financial aspects.

9. ELEMENTS OF COST-EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS

9.1 Specific and quantified objectives; target population

To attain the objectives set out in the Regulation it is proposed to concentrate in the next few years on the acquisition of data and improving their comparability and reliability in each of the following areas:

- forestry resources,
- forest ownership structure,
- non-commercial values of forests;
- Community forestry measures,
- forest products (wood as a structural material ("mechanical") and other forest products).

Special horizontal measures will be undertaken to:

- define the nomenclatures and common definitions in each of the fields,
- improve Community-wide comparability of national data collected,
- determine the technical solutions to be adopted for the collection, storage and dissemination of the information taking account of the principle of subsidiarity.

The Commission intends to use Efics to undertake consistent measures for the forestry sector in the Community and to implement them in the best possible way. It may also prove useful in the formulation and implementation of more general policies such as environmental or industrial policies or for employment initiatives. It is also anticipated that the system, by providing reliable information on the European forestry sector, its sustainable development and its environment, will more broadly benefit various public and private bodies in the Member States.

9.2 Grounds for the operation

9.2.1 Need for Community financial aid

It is necessary for the Community to participate in the measures needed to implement Efics and improve the quality of its data. If the initiative were left to the Member States the consequence of inactivity on the part of the Community would be the continued lack of reliable data on the European forestry sector or, in some cases, the lack of any data at all. That situation would not be satisfactory since both the Member States and the Community institutions acknowledge that such data are an invaluable aid both internationally and throughout Europe for sustainable development (the post-Rio and -Helsinki process) and within the Community to support measures in favour of forestry and to prepare future forestry strategy.

Implementing forestry measures as part of Community policies (the CAP, industry, the environment, etc) requires a suitable information system possessing reliable and comparable data at European level. In addition, any national or regional measure must have access to such data to form its basic indicators (environment, socio-economic conditions, etc) which will later permit a quantitative evaluation of the impact of the measure on the territory in question. The specific characteristics and great variety of ecological and socio-economic conditions in Europe's forests must be reflected in such an information system. Consideration of local and regional features in European forests will permit an integrated and decentralised approach at regional level.

Responsibility for the measure is shared between the Community and its Member States. Although it is the Community's duty to collect, process and disseminate the comparable and objective data on the European forestry sector, it cannot do this unless the Member States are willing to take action to improve national data. Such work will require coordination and consultations at Community level and exchanges of information and experience will help Member States to profit from their work.

The development of common European definitions and nomenclatures could not be undertaken by the Member States alone. Community activities in that field coordinated with those of other international bodies will supply a definite added value to Member States' work.

The need for Community action has been repeatedly stressed by the SFC, which has always been unanimously in favour of implementing the System. That need has been confirmed by other institutions, viz.:

- the European Parliament, in its report of 18 December 1996 on the European Union's forestry strategy,
- the Economic and Social Committee, in its own-initiative opinion of 24 April 1997 on the situation and problems of forestry in the European Union and the potential for developing forestry policies,
- the Committee of the Regions, in its draft opinion on the management, use and protection of forests in the European Union.

9.2.2 Choice of ways and means

The ways and means chosen by the Community and based around the measures described in point 9.1 are the result of discussions with the Member States within the SFC. During their course all the scenarios were studied which were proposed in a study on forestry inventory systems in Europe conducted by the European Forestry Institute (EFI) for the Commission and completed in 1997. For example, the option of conducting a Europe-wide independent Erics inventory was judged unrealistic at the current stage in view of its expense and the problems which would be encountered by Member States.

The amount allocated is considered relatively modest given the objectives pursued and the cost of collecting and processing forestry information in the Member States. In

addition to the creation of the information system, Community assistance will be concentrated on supporting Member States in their work on creating appropriate processes for improving the comparability, reliability and comprehensiveness of the data on a European scale.

9.3 Monitoring and evaluation of the operation

The operation will be monitored and evaluated in close collaboration between DGs III, VI, XI and XII, Eurostat and the Member States represented in the SFC's Efics working party and the Agricultural Statistics Committee's "forestry statistics" working party. Close cooperation is also guaranteed with international organisations such as UN-ECE in Geneva which are already involved on a more worldwide level in collection, processing and supply of data on the forestry sector. In the context of that cooperation the Commission participates in the work of an inter-secretariat working group comprising representatives of DG VI, Eurostat, the FAO, the UN-ECE, the OECD and the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO).

The presence and cooperation of those different bodies guarantees the best possible implementation of the operation.

10. ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENDITURE (PART A OF THE BUDGET)

Implementation of the Regulation will not require additional administrative expenditure. Administration will be by staff already allocated to this task, viz. one part-time A official and one full-time B official.

Expenditure connected with the organisation of meetings, with missions and possibly with certain publications will be charged to the general budget headings created for that purpose in Part A of the budget. Other expenditure (studies, development of special information systems, etc) will be committed in heading B2-5150.

ISSN 0254-1475

COM(98) 173 final

DOCUMENTS

EN

03 15 16 17

Catalogue number : CB-CO-98-170-EN-C

ISBN 92-78-32132-X

Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

L-2985 Luxembourg

27