



Zaragoza, 4th July 2012.

The partners of FORESTERRA, an ERA-Net whose objective is to reinforce Mediterranean forest research, participated in a Strategic Activities event that took place in the Golden Tulip El Mechtel Hotel in Tunis on the 13th of June. The event aimed to introduce FORESTERRA to a large cross-section of the Mediterranean forest research community. Participants included eminent forest researchers like the Australian expert Jerry Vanclay of Southern Cross University, or the American scholar Keith Gilles from the College of Natural Resources, University of California, Berkeley.

This meeting took place as part of EFIMED Week, and its participants were welcomed by Tunisian authorities. Mr. Habib Amamou, President of the Institution de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur Agricoles (IRESA), opened the event, emphasising the importance to IRESA and all present of cooperation in environmental issues.

Dr. Rocío Lansac, the representative of Spain's Ministry of Economic Affairs and Competitiveness (MINECO), which coordinates FORESTERRA, explained the concept of ERA-NETs, a tool created by the European Commission to improve coordination and cooperation in European research. These initiatives aim to facilitate the flow of knowledge and technology as well as to develop research policy at the European level. Dr. Lansac also outlined FORESTERRA's specific goals in strengthening Mediterranean forest research and plans for achieving those aims.

The head of the Mediterranean Regional Office of the European Forest Institute (EFIMED), Dr. Marc Palahí, discussed the Mediterranean Forest Research Agenda (MFRA), a coherent, solid, dynamic and open strategic tool that EFIMED has played an important role in elaborating and that will serve as a basis for FORESTERRA's work. Dr. Palahí also discussed the FORESTERRA call for potential forest research ideas, which has elicited a strong response: 150 research institutions from 26 countries from all over the world submitted 28 project ideas. These countries include Australia, United States, Canada, Morocco, Algeria, South Africa and Turkey.

These projects ideas were grouped into thematic areas for discussion by rotating brainstorming groups. The conclusions drawn from these discussions will be useful in preparing a scientific plan for FORESTERRA, whose first version will be discussed at the next meeting of FORESTERRA's Steering Committee on the 18th and 19th of October, 2012, in Rome.

In the afternoon of June 13th a meeting of the FORESTERRA Management Committee took place. Advances made in the last few months by the project partners were presented, and specific plans made for future activities.