

22nd Meeting of the Advisory Committee

Belgrade, Serbia, 27 – 29 March 2017



Discussion paper for the IWG on Bat Conservation and Sustainable Forest Management: PEFC Certification

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Background (taken verbatim from www.pefc.org)

The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) is an international non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) through independent third-party certification.

PEFC works throughout the entire forest supply chain to promote good practice in the forest and to ensure that timber and non-timber forest products are produced with respect for the highest ecological, social and ethical standards. Thanks to its eco-label, customers and consumers are able to identify products from sustainably managed forests.

PEFC is an umbrella organization. It works by endorsing national forest certification systems developed through multi-stakeholder processes and tailored to local priorities and conditions.

With 38 endorsed national certification systems and more than 300 million hectares of certified forests, PEFC is the world's largest forest certification system.

Each national forest certification system undergoes rigorous third-party assessment against PEFC's unique Sustainability Benchmarks to ensure consistency with international requirements.

Table 1: PEFC member organisation in the Eurobats area

Country	PEFC member	First endorsed
Austria	PEFC Austria	2000
Belarus	Republican Association of Forest Certification System	2010
Belgium	PEFC Belgium	2002
Czech Republic	PEFC Czech Republic	2002

Denmark	PEFC Denmark	2002
Estonia	Estonian Forest Certification Council	2015
Finland	PEFC Finland	2000
France	PEFC France	2001
Germany	PEFC Germany	2000
Hungary	Hungarian Forest Certification Non-profit Ltd.	2016
Ireland	PEFC Ireland	2011
Italy	PEFC Italy	2004
Latvia	PEFC Latvia	2001
Lithuania	PEFC Lithuania	Ongoing
Luxembourg	PEFC Luxembourg	2005
Netherlands	PEFC Netherlands	2012
Norway	PEFC Norway	2000
Poland	PEFC Poland	2008
Portugal	PEFC Portugal	2004
Macedonia	The Council for Sustainable Forest Management in the Republic of Macedonia	Ongoing
Romania	PEFC Romania	Ongoing
Russia	PEFC Russia	2009
Slovakia	PEFC Slovakia	2005
Slovenia	Institute for Forest Certification in Slovenia	2007
Spain	PEFC Spain	2002
Sweden	PEFC Sweden	2000
Switzerland	PEFC Switzerland	2001
United Kingdom	PEFC UK	2002

Sustainable Forest Management – PEFC Requirements

PEFC operates by setting international standards for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). These are high-level standards which are then adapted for national application by member organisations, perhaps using or amending existing national certification standards. The resulting national document is then subject to scrutiny by PESC and, if it is considered to meet PESC standards, endorsed for a set length of time. Each endorsed scheme is subject to regular evaluations.

The international standards adopted by PESC are modelled closely on those developed by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) and similar intergovernmental processes relating to other forest regions. These standards are updated from time to time to reflect any changes adopted by the MCPFE; the current version of the standards is PEFC ST 1003:2010 (see www.pefc.org).

The PEFC standards cover all aspects of SFM under a set of 7 criteria:

- 1: Maintenance and appropriate enhancement of forest resources and their contribution to the global carbon cycle
- 2: Maintenance of forest ecosystem health and

- 3: Maintenance and encouragement of productive functions of forests (wood and non-wood)
- 4: Maintenance, conservation and appropriate enhancement of biological diversity in forest ecosystems
- 5: Maintenance and appropriate enhancement of protective functions in forest management (notably soil and water)
- 6: Maintenance of other socio-economic functions and conditions
- 7: Compliance with legal requirements

Of these, the one of most relevance to Eurobats is Criterion 4, relating to biological diversity:

- 4.1 Forest management planning shall aim to maintain, conserve and enhance biodiversity on ecosystem, species and genetic levels and, where appropriate, diversity at landscape level.
- 4.2 Forest management planning, inventory and mapping of forest resources shall identify, protect and/or conserve ecologically important forest areas containing significant concentrations of:
 - a) protected, rare, sensitive or representative forest ecosystems such as riparian areas and wetland biotopes;
 - b) areas containing endemic species and habitats of threatened species, as defined in recognised reference lists;
 - c) endangered or protected genetic *in situ* resources; and taking into account
 - d) globally, regionally and nationally significant large landscape areas with natural distribution and abundance of naturally occurring species.
Note: This does not necessarily exclude forest management activities that do not damage biodiversity values of those biotopes
- 4.3 Protected and endangered plant and animal species shall not be exploited for commercial purposes. Where necessary, measures shall be taken for their protection and, where relevant, to increase their population.
- 4.4 Forest management shall ensure successful regeneration through natural regeneration or, where not appropriate, planting that is adequate to ensure the quantity and quality of the forest resources.

4.5 For reforestation and afforestation, origins of native species and local provenances that are well-adapted to site conditions shall be preferred, where appropriate. Only those introduced species, provenances or varieties shall be used whose impacts on the ecosystem and on the genetic integrity of native species and local provenances have been evaluated, and if negative impacts can be avoided or minimised. *Note: CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity) Guiding Principles for the Prevention, Introduction, and Mitigation of Impacts of Alien Species that Threaten Ecosystems, Habitats or Species are recognised as guidance for avoidance of invasive species.*

The sub-elements of this high-level criterion (especially 4.2 and 4.3) clearly cover, in general terms, the conservation of bat populations and their habitats, particularly where bats are legally protected or listed as threatened species.

National implementations of PEFC requirements

As well as providing an agreed international framework of standards for SFM, PESC also provides assistance in translating those requirements into national forestry standards that can then become PESC- certified. These include the PEFC toolkit and other documentation, system development workshops and a system development fund to support projects in countries seeking certification. Two national projects fall within the Eurobats area; Hungary, which achieved certification in 2016 and Macedonia, which has recently (Dec 2016) submitted an application for certification. In addition, there are regional projects in the Balkans and Mediterranean Basin, which may ultimately result in the development of national projects.

National certification can be achieved either by developing a new forestry standard, based on the PESC standard, or amending existing forestry standards to comply with the requirements of PESC. Whichever route is chosen, the submitted forestry standards will then be evaluated for compliance by PESC. If the standard is met, the national forestry standard is then PESC certified for 5 years. After this time, the national forestry standards must be re-evaluated against the current PESC standards.

All national forest standards that have been certified by PEFC, as well as their evaluation reports can be found via the PEFC website (<https://www.pefc.org/standards/national-standards/endorsed-national-standards>), so it is possible to check how each element of Criterion 4 has been translated into a national standard. These national standards provide more detail on implementation

than is possible in the PEFC high-level criteria, though they may not reach the level of referring to particular species or species groups.

Conclusions and proposals for further work

- 1 The PEFC high-level criteria track the outputs from the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), so any desired change to the high-level criteria may best be pursued through the MCPFE. However, criterion 4, the one with most relevance to wildlife conservation, already contains the most important elements needed to implement bat conservation in managed forests.
- 2 Parties to Eurobats that do not yet have PEFC certification should be encouraged to join PEFC and work towards certification. Table 1 shows the current membership in the Eurobats area, but it is possible that Eurobats Parties not included in the table may already be in negotiations to join PEFC. Scientific or Administrative Focal Points of these countries could report on this at the next AC.
- 3 Parties that are members of PESC with currently-endorsed forestry standards have already demonstrated that their forestry standards are compliant with PEFC standards and thus the MCPFE standards. However, Scientific Focal Points may wish to examine the national standards and ensure that the guidance given is compliant with the guidance given in the Eurobats forestry leaflet and that the national forestry body is correctly applying and enforcing these standards. The PEFC has a system for investigating any issues of non-compliance, with details of this scheme available here: <https://www.pefc.org/standards/national-standards/complaints-appeals>