

50 years of FORMEC international network

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Respected readers, distinguished colleagues, dear friends,

This issue of Croatian Journal of Forest Engineering (CROJFE) is dedicated to a special and very important anniversary. In the year 1966, in former Czechoslovakia Republic, the first conference under title »Forestry Mechanization« was held, and ever since 1994 these conferences are organized under the acronym FORMEC (**F**orestry **M**echanization). This year, in Romania, Brasov, the FORMEC conference celebrates a jubilee of 50 years. Through the following pages we will bring you closer history, present situation and possibly a near future of the international FORMEC network. We will also look at the mutual co-operation between the FORMEC international network and the CROJFE journal, one of the most specialized world-leading journals in which only articles dealing with forestry engineering are being published, as well as present the current thematic issue of CROJFE.

In the beginning, the official language of conference was German, and scientists from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe whose field of scientific research work is related to forestry engineering, could have used Forestry Mechanization network as a platform for sharing ideas, knowledge and research, all in order to overcome differences in the technological development and the level of mechanization of timber harvesting operations from their home countries. The number of participants in the beginning was between 20 and 40, conference host (organizer) covered all the costs of the organization except the participant's travel expenses.

At the conference held in 1999 in Zalesina (Croatia), the introduction of English language, as a second official conference language, was intensively discussed, with the main aim of FORMEC popularisation to younger colleagues, scientists, teachers and operational foresters, all involved in forestry engineering. The idea was accepted after a lengthy discussion, but it took a while to get visible results of this great initiative. In 2003, FORMEC conference was officially transformed into an international network of forestry engineering specialists. The president elected was and still is, professor Karl Stampfer, PhD. (BOKU, Vienna), who together with his BOKU team and a strong support of leading scientists and teachers in the field of forestry engineering, primarily from Europe but also beyond, in the next fifteen years, step by step, builds, develops, and modernizes the FORMEC network by adapting to new circumstances (<https://www.formec.org/>).

Today's FORMEC conferences are the largest annual event in the field of forestry engineering for all scientists, teachers and operational foresters related to forest engineering. These are respectable events from the standpoint of forestry itself. Number of participants, now ranging between 150 and 200 (in Dubrovnik, Croatia, in the year 2012 even around 250), come not only from almost all European countries but also from all around the World. Every fourth year, FORMEC is organized in Austria, in combination with AUSTROFOMA – a vast presentation of forest machines in real working conditions. In 2019 the FORMEC conference for the first time will be organized together with the annual COFE (Council of Forest Engineering) meeting (Vienna, Austria and Sopron, Hungary).

In 2015, an international scientific conference was held in Zagreb and Zalesina (Croatia) under title »Forest Engineering – Current Situation and Future Challenges« (CROJFE 2015). Conference was held on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the CROJFE journal and thirty-eight years of publishing New Forestry Mechanization (Forestry Mechanization) journal. Namely, in 1976, ten years after the first »Forestry Mechanization« conference a journal titled » Forestry Mechanization«, a scientific and professional journal dealing with specialized in forestry i.e. forestry engineering, was published in Croatia.

The first twenty years of publishing Forestry Mechanization journal is probably one of the best and most persistent examples of excellent cooperation between forestry science and practice, not only in Croatia but also in Europe. At the very end of the twentieth century, because of some objective and understandable, but also because of some subjective and difficult-to-understand reasons, the problems in regular publishing Forestry Mechanization journal occurred. Therefore, at the meeting of the editorial board and publisher of the journal at the end of 2004, a conclusion of a more urgent (and regular) publishing, an important decision to launch two new journals in the year 2005: Croatian Journal of Forest Engineering (CROJFE) and New Forestry Mechanization (NMS), both successors of Forestry Mechanization journal was made.

While over the past 12 years of continuous development and improvement of CROJFE there were a lot of events that should be highlighted and which, each in their own way, gave a positive feedback to the journal itself. However, one of the most important ones – at the end of 2010 was a first two-year contract on cooperation between CROJFE and the international network FORMEC only to be followed by two three-year cooperation contracts, placing FORMEC international network as the co-publisher of the journal. Joint, very good cooperation over the past seven years, where there is still space for improvement, is certainly one of the reasons why CROJFE is now one of the world's leading journals in the field of forestry engineering.

During an informal conversation between several professors, including CROJFE's editor-in-chief and president of FORMEC network, during the Danube boat trip in Linz (FORMEC 2015 conference), the idea of CROJFE's thematic issue arose as a dedication to the 50th anniversary of FORMEC. After conducting consultations with colleagues in

the both management and the scientific committee of FORMEC network and having obtained the consents of the editorial board of CROJFE, realization of the subject idea started.

Invitations with framework themes of invitatory papers, which should collectively cover the whole area (or at least most of it) of forestry engineering, were sent to the addresses of 25 selected potential authors (counting on publishing about 15 papers). Finally, after the review process was carried out, 14 papers have been published in CROJFE's thematic issue. Some selected authors have not been able to respond due to various obligations, some authors could not comply with the deadlines required, and some of the papers were rejected or required a major revision during the review process and will be published in one of the following issues of the journal.

In the upcoming years there will be plenty of challenges for both CROJFE journal and FORMEC network, but with mutual cooperation difficulties should be easily overcome. Some of the upcoming questions, regarding not only FORMEC network or CROJFE journal, but overall forest engineering community/society are:

- ⇒ positioning of forest engineering as an important and well known component in forestry and life sciences as well;
- ⇒ higher quality of undergraduate, graduate, master and doctoral studies in all country members of FORMEC network;
- ⇒ inclusion of international study programs (universities from several countries) of forest engineering or in combination with other fields in forestry (for example silviculture, forest management etc.) in English language;
- ⇒ higher quality of scientific and research works, methods, procedures and equipments in all country members of FORMEC network;
- ⇒ equalization of standard procedure for gaining doctoral degree in forest engineering in all country members of FORMEC network;
- ⇒ enhancement of FORMEC conferences in terms of: 1. receiving papers/presentations/posters of higher quality and of same level, 2. introducing new forms of personal communications (workshops, seminars etc.) to discuss the most important subjects, 3. enlargement of number of participants, 4. higher share of young colleagues (both Postdocs and PhD. students), 5. more female PhD students;
- ⇒ equalization of FORMEC conferences high quality (in all components) which should be followed by any future organization committee;
- ⇒ even better cooperation between FORMEC network and CROJFE journal for future benefit not only for them, but for forest engineering community/society itself;
- ⇒ higher quality and promptitude of review process in CROJFE, as well as enlargement of reviewers' data base with world known scientists and experts in forest engineering;
- ⇒ retaining regularity of printing CROJFE, quality of technical editing as well as its financial security and independence;
- ⇒ higher quality of published papers (as a result of enhanced review process and higher number of uploaded papers) and growth of Impact factor from current 1.415 to 2.00.

Last, but not least, we would like to congratulate 50 successful years of FORMEC international network to all members which have in some way contributed in its development and progress with a wish of many more successful anniversaries in the future.