

# 50 Years of FORMEC International Network

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 the former Czechoslovak Republic, the first conference entitled »Forestry Mechanization« was held, and ever since 1994 these conferences have been organized under the acronym FORMEC (**F**orestry **M**echanization). This year, in Romania, Brasov, the FORMEC Conference celebrates a 50-year jubilee. Through the following pages, closer history will be presented, as well as the current situation and possibly the near future of the international FORMEC Network. Mutual co-operation between the FORMEC International Network and CROJFE journal will also be presented, as well as the current thematic issue of CROJFE, one of the world-leading journals exclusively specialized in articles dealing with forestry engineering.

The initiators of the idea of organizing »Forestry Mechanization« conferences were distinguished professors: Stevan Bojanin (Croatia), Franz Hafner (Austria), Jozsef Kaldy (Hungary), Amer Krivec (Slovenia), Gabor Pankotai (Hungary), Ernst Pestal (Austria), Hans Bruno Platzer (Germany), Eugen Rónay (Slovakia) and others. In the beginning, the official language of the conference was German. Scientists from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, whose field of scientific research was 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. In the beginning, the number of participants was between 20 and 40, and the conference host (organizer) covered all the costs of organization except the participants' travel expenses.

At the Conference held in 1999 in Zalesina (Croatia), the introduction of English, as a second official conference language, was intensively discussed, with

the main aim of popularizing FORMEC among 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). For fifteen years, 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, step by step, he has been building, developing, and modernizing the FORMEC Network by adapting it 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 involved in forest engineering. These are respectable events from the standpoint of forestry itself. The 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 AUSTRO-FOMA – a vast presentation of forest machines in real working conditions. In 2019, the FORMEC Conference will be organized for the first time together with the annual COFE (Council of Forest Engineering) meeting (Vienna, Austria and Sopron, Hungary).

In 2015, an international scientific conference, entitled »Forest Engineering – Current Situation and Future Challenges« (CROJFE 2015), was held in Zagreb and Zalesina (Croatia). The Conference was held on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the CROJFE journal and forty-eight years of publishing New Forestry Mechanization (Forestry Mechanization) journal. Namely, in 1976, ten years after the first »Forestry Mechanization« Conference, a journal entitled »Forestry Mechanization«, a scientific and professional

journal dealing with a specialized field of forestry i.e. forestry engineering, was published in Croatia.

This journal played a very important and irreplaceable role, especially in the period of the most intensive mechanization of forestry operations in the Republic of Croatia in the seventies and eighties of the last century, primarily in the field of timber harvesting. Research results of domestic and foreign scientists and domestic forestry practitioners were presented, development of new forestry machinery of Croatian producers were presented and promoted, and in some way the introduction of different types of forestry machinery and vehicles was encouraged, directed and publicly followed, adapted to biodiversity of Croatian stand and habitat conditions. Guidelines were also given for a sustainable management in Croatian forests.

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, due to some objective and understandable reasons, but also some subjective and difficult-to-understand reasons, the problems in regular publishing of Forestry Mechanization journal occurred. Therefore, at the meeting of the editorial board and publisher of the journal at the end of 2004, it was concluded that publishing needed to be quicker (and more regular), and decision was made 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.

Over the past 12 years of continuous development and improvement of CROJFE, there have been a lot of events that should be highlighted and which, each in their own way, have given 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 FORMEC International Network, only to be followed by two three-year cooperation contracts, whereby FORMEC International Network became the co-publisher of the journal. 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 tribute to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FORMEC. After conducting consultations with colleagues in both the management and the scientific committee of FORMEC Network and having obtained the consents of the editorial board of CROJFE, the implementation of this 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 the entire 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 of forestry (for example silviculture, forest management, etc.) in English
- ⇒ 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 the same level, (2) introducing new forms of personal communications (workshops, seminars, etc.) to discuss the

- most important topics, (3) increasing the number of participants, (4) higher share of young colleagues (both Postdocs and PhD. students), (5) more female PhD students
- ⇒ equalization of quality of FORMEC conferences (in all components), which should be met by any future organization committee
  - ⇒ even better cooperation between FORMEC Network and CROJFE journal, not only for their benefit, but in the interest of the entire forest engineering community/society
  - ⇒ higher quality and efficiency of review process in CROJFE, as well as expansion of reviewers' database 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 increase of the Impact Factor from the current 1.415 to 2.0.

Last, but not least, we would like to congratulate 50 successful years of FORMEC International Network to all members who have contributed in some way to its development and progress, wishing many more such anniversaries to come.

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