

The action “Integrated Selection, Protection and Promotion of Balkan Forest Genetic Resources with Aesthetic Value – ISPROP FORGEN”, Grant Contract No. 2011/280-355 is part of the IPA Cross-Border Programme “Greece – former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007 – 2013” aiming to strengthen and provide sustainable economic and social development in the cross-border region of the two participating countries.

The Action is related to the Priority Axis 2. Enhancement of the environmental resources and cultural heritage of the programme area; Measure 2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area. The Action is part of joint collaboration between Faculty of Agriculture from Goce Delcev University – Stip as Lead Partner (LP2) and the Laboratory of Forest Genetics and Plant Breeding from Aristotle University – Thessaloniki as Overall Lead Partner (LP1).

The Action was implemented at the Teaching Centre in Strumica, Goce Delcev University - Stip. The implementation was conducted in 17 months duration, from 22.12.2011 to 21.05.2013. The total cost of the Action is estimated at 108.140,09 EURO. The maximum amount financed by the EU is 91.919,09 EURO, equivalent to 85% of the estimated total eligible cost of the Action. Own contribution of 10 % and 5 % of the Action costs is co-financing of the state and Goce Delcev University, respectively.

The overall objective of the Action “Integrated Selection, Protection and Promotion of Balkan Forest Genetic Resources with Aesthetic Value – ISPROP FORGEN” is protection and promotion of forest genetic resources in the cross-border region. Through this project, both partners, with joint efforts, supported integration projects in the Balkan region in the area of fundamental and applicative research of forest tree populations. On one hand, forest plant heritage is introduced to the public, and on the other hand this is the first step in the attempt to transform the Balkan ornamental plant market from exporting to importing, simultaneously protecting the forest genetic resources in the crossborder area.

The specifically the objectives of the Action were:

- To select valuable natural and commercial plant genetic resources from the country,
- To protect and conserve natural plant resources through gene banks, arboreta (ex situ) and cloning of selected species in the country,
- To promote natural value and beauty of the indigenous plant species to all target groups in the country,
- To develop suitable laboratory methods (protocols) for cloning (micropropagation) that can be used at large-scale reproduction of plants encouraging entrepreneurship actions in the area of ornamental plant market so as to transform the Balkan forest ornamental plant market from importing to exporting.

The specific objectives of the project were the accomplished by the implementation of the Action activities and gaining following outputs and results:

- Collection of 290 ingenious ornamental plant species from several locations in the country;

- *Ex situ* preservation and promotion of selected ornamental species to the public community via establishment of botanical garden (arboretum) which was created with accomplishment of several tasks:

- Development of a detailed research Study for architectural planning for botanical garden (arboretum) for 3 ha area;

- 5 soil analysis of arboretum area;
- Construction and establishment of the botanical garden (arboretum):
  - ✓ Construction of 1 info kiosk;
  - ✓ Construction and placement of 800 m fences and entrances in the arboretum;

- ✓ Establishment of 1131,82 m irrigation system;

- ✓ Establishment of 1000 m visitor lanes and road net;

- ✓ Selection and supply of 5067 plant species with aesthetic value from the artificial plantations and commercial species available in the local market;

- ✓ Preparation of arboretum surface area for planting of the plant material;

- ✓ Planting of the plant material;

- ✓ Construction of nursery.

- Research and development of *in vitro* protocols for propagation and cloning of ornamental plant species;

- Production of visibility and publicity material:

- ✓ bilingual leaflet – 400 copies;

- ✓ 1 bilingual electronic newsletter;

- ✓ 2 articles for the project realisation in national daily newspapers

- ✓ 2 TV entries for the project realisation in national TVs;

- ✓ Video production.

The successful implementation of the Action was carried out by 6 sub-contractors engaged for delivering supplies, service and works assigned for the Action.

The all Action implementation process of the Action was managed and carried out by the Project Team of the Action.