

## « Foresters it's your turn to play »

# An educational game to teach primary school children about climate change in forests

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Five areas in Normandy that have signed a Territorial Forest Charter (CFT) have come together around a common observation: the need for greater coordination between players and for more communication and popularisation of the forestry practices that our society needs.

### **Eurofornorm, a regional network of normandy's forest areas**

Five signatory territories of a Forest Charter of Territory (CFT) of Normandy joined together around a common observation: the need for a greater coordination between actors and more communication and vulgarization of the silvicultural practices necessary to our society.

Created in 2018, the EUROFORNORM operational group is made up of the following players: the Centre National de la Propriété Forestière (Délégation Haut-de-France - Normandie); the Office National des Forêts; the Normandie Maine, Perche and Boucles de Seine Regional Natural Parks; the Métropole Rouen Normandie and Seine Eure Agglomération. Its coordinator is the 'Union Régionale des Collectivités Forestières de Normandie (URCOFOR)', an association of local authorities in Normandy that may or may not own forests. URCOFOR is a forum for exchanging and sharing experiences, offering services to promote and support forest areas with the aim of enhancing their value and integrating the forest environment into the heart of local development. URCOFOR has been organised as a network serving elected representatives for over 80 years, with a national federation.

The overall aim of the EUROFORNORM operational group was to create and lead a regional network of forest areas in Normandy, focusing on a common priority theme: 'The future of Normandy's forests in the face of climate change'. A three-year action programme has therefore been drawn up to meet the following objectives: - to raise awareness and encourage reflection on possible future developments in the forest in order to adapt to climate change and mitigate its effects, - to explain today's forest, forestry operations and

the methods used to try to anticipate changes, - to encourage exchanges between the various stakeholders in order to understand each party's expectations and seek compromises, in order to design the Normandy forests of tomorrow.

During the first two years of work, various actions (meeting sessions in the forest, colloquia - see image 1) and tools (forward-looking workshops based on the Foster Forest role-playing game) have enabled awareness-raising and exchanges with a large number of identified stakeholders, such as private owners, elected representatives and the general public.



Figure 1. Meeting session realized within the EUROFORNORM project.

### **Aim of the innovation**

In 2020, the consortium members agreed to work on the development of a specific teaching tool on the subject of 'forests and climate change', with the aim of targeting primary school classes as a priority. This target group was chosen because municipal elected officials are responsible for primary schools, and the URCOFOR carry out missions aimed at these councillors. It was decided to develop this tool in the form of a game, which could be used to



complement other activities and tools available in the regions, but could also be incorporated into other formats offered by Regional Natural Parks or inter-municipal bodies.

Finally, the members of the consortium were keen to get this tool up and running by the start of the next school year.

At the time of the launch of this project, most of the games already available on the market dealt with « global » issues such as deforestation or carbon emissions on a global scale. No games on a regional scale in Normandy dealing with climate change issues emerged from the survey, which reinforced the consortium's desire to develop this tool.

### Implementation of the project

On the basis of these deliberately vague criteria, in order to be able to explore a wide range of proposals, various companies specialising in educational publishing and the creation of play concepts were approached. One of the key selection criteria was the company's ability to provide support in designing the project. The service provider selected put forward proposals for game formats, and the consortium agreed on a 'board' format with questions in the form of cards. The game was chosen in a form similar to that of the game of the goose, because the rules of the game were already familiar to the target audience. From experience, games with innovative formats (such as 'Foster Forest', presented in this operational group) require a considerable amount of time to explain the rules, which could not be envisaged for a target audience in this age group. As the subject was already little known, it was important for the consortium that the rules could be easily integrated. A timetable was drawn up in agreement with the service provider, scheduling the production of the various plates and graphic proposals, with the aim of highlighting the Normandy context, climate change and the multifunctionality of forests.

The consortium was responsible for drafting the scientific and technical maps. Questions were

submitted both in advance by mailing list and at the meetings, and the answers had to be agreed at the meetings. The consortium set itself the target of drafting a certain number of question and answer sheets per meeting, which were then submitted to the service provider who, given his experience in educational publishing, could then provide advice on reformulating the content if it did not seem intelligible to schoolchildren.

This collaborative approach generated a great deal of discussion within the consortium, which included a wide range of stakeholders. Some questions, for example, although relevant, had to be set aside, as no consensus could be reached by the members on the answers to be provided. In addition, the diversity of the profiles present in the consortium meant that a wide range of forestry issues could be addressed by experts across the entire value chain. This helped to enrich the knowledge of each of the players, but also to understand each other's points of view and working methods.

### Implementation of the project

The « Foresters, it's your turn to play » game (see image 2) is based around ten main themes: old trees, the forest, young trees, cutting down trees, harvesting wood, woodworking professions, leisure activities in the forest, plants and animals, and finally the uses of wood. One important point to bear in mind was to maintain the link with climate change, which is dealt with in specific 'bonus' and 'pitfall' cards.



Figure 2.  
Presentation of the «Foresters, it's your turn to play » game.  
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The aim of the game, which can be played by between two and six players (or teams), is to reach the finishing square first. The player takes on the role of a forester, whose mission is to manage the Normandy forest in his or her care as best as possible in order to preserve it in the face of climate change. To do this, each team rolls the die and moves forward the corresponding number of squares, choosing their path to reach the finish.

The squares on the board are circled in colour, each corresponding to a different theme, and the team stopping on a square must answer a question on the associated theme (10 question cards per theme). Depending on the question, there may be one or more correct answers. If the team makes a mistake, it must move back one square; if it gives an incomplete answer, it does not move; and if it answers correctly, it is entitled to move forward one more square. A maximum of two teams can share a square; if a third team arrives on that square, it must stop at the previous square. When a team stops on a 'bonus' or 'pitfall' square, it draws a corresponding card, performs the action indicated on the card and ends its turn (20 bonus and pitfall cards in total). Some of these cards indicate an action that can affect all the teams.

The winning team is the one that reaches the 'finish' square first, using a fair count on the dice. If a team exceeds the number of squares to the finish, it must retrace its steps.

Variations can make the game easier or faster, for example by replaying a correct answer or reaching the finish square without a correct count. For an older or more experienced audience, the questions can be asked without a suggested answer, or the game master can set a specific objective for each team at the start of the game, such as rejuvenating the forest, conserving biodiversity, or answering at least one question from each of the ten themes.

### **Difficulties and opportunities encountered in developing this innovation**

No major difficulties were encountered by the consortium. First of all, the budget was

respected. The planning and timing were tight, which was both a challenge and an opportunity for the development of this innovation. This enabled the group to work dynamically and maintain a steady pace, which prevented the participants from losing focus on the work at hand. This was made possible by the commitment and responsiveness of the partners in the consortium, who responded to the various requests in a very short space of time, with no member working full-time on the project.

### **Distribution, feedback and future developments for the game**

The game was distributed to 350 primary schools and 50 copies were given to partners in the project and the regional forestry/wood industry. It can be used as part of an educational programme in schools, media libraries, associations, local authorities, or at special events such as trade fairs to raise awareness. The game is not currently on the market, but many users have expressed a desire to acquire it. It is also distributed and used to support other national initiatives, such as the national '1000 communes, la forêt fait école' programme, in which local authorities make plots of land available to a school to manage.

The game was presented and passed on to the other regional forest Communities units. Its relevance and the interest shown by the other delegations in the network have led to plans for a national version of the game (currently being studied). The plan is to keep the same game board, but for each regional delegation to adapt some of the 'forest' theme cards to its own specific needs. A national version featuring all the cards from the different regions could therefore be envisaged.

### **European application**

It may be possible to spread this game throughout Europe, but a direct translation of the game does not seem appropriate, as the questions and answers depend on the



legislation of each member country, which may have different regulations. In France, the forestry code simplified the work, as it provided a framework on which the consortium could work. Nevertheless, if some countries wish to develop a similar game, exchanges or partnerships could be discussed, if this would save the actors time and allow them to draw inspiration from the work already done.

players involved, to learn from each other and to maintain a collaborative dynamic within the regions. And finally, it encourages the development of new partnership projects in the future: perhaps a future EIP?

## Interview with the Eurofor norm operational group coordinator

Mrs Ferrier, what is your vision of operational groups and innovation in the forestry sector in general? What is the value of working in partnership to achieve these innovations?

For me, cooperation between different players has always been a way of creating a very interesting emulation between people and particularly effective for developing collective actions. As co-ordinator, our aim is to build up a habit of exchange between the members of the operational group; we establish a climate of trust that allows everyone to express themselves freely and to be a source of ideas. Working in partnership in this way encourages the stimulation and emergence of new ideas that enable us to innovate in our field. I'm a great believer in the African proverb: 'Alone we go faster, together we go further'.

So, beyond the creation of this game, it's the development of working relationships between the partners that I find particularly interesting. It allows them to get to know and understand the

### Further information

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