

Forest policy goals in Poland in light of the current forestry aims in Europe Part 4. Trends in forest policy of selected European countries

Adam Kaliszewski 

Forest Research Institute, Department of Forest Management, Sękocin Stary, ul. Braci Leśnej 3, 05-090 Raszyn, Poland

Tel. +48 22 7150678, fax +48 22 7153837, e-mail: A.Kaliszewski@ibles.waw.pl

Abstract. The aim of this paper was to review and analyse the main forest policy documents in terms of the priorities formulated at the European level for Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany (federal level) and Brandenburg (federal state level), as well as Finland. A total of 14 documents was covered in this research, including national forest programmes and forest strategies implemented in the period from 1997 to 2017. In all of the studied countries, forest policy documents were periodically revised and updated to account for changing political, economic, social and environmental conditions. As a result, at some point during the examined 20-year period, in each country the forestry priorities and goals were defined by a national forest programme. Furthermore, the vast majority of the priorities set by the European forest policy was reflected in the programmes and strategies of all the countries. Certain priorities concerning the illegal harvesting and trade of forest products, however, have not been included in the explored documents. Combating illegal harvesting of forest products and related trade is a corner stone of the EU FLEGT Action Plan and extends beyond forest policy issues of EU member states. The second corner stone is to ensure the contribution of the forest sector to a green economy, including a new concept of green economy, which still needs to be incorporated into national forest policies. Unlike Poland, in the studied countries the priorities of European forest policy have been included in single policy programmes or strategies, which define aims and goals, as well as means of their implementation in a comprehensive and coherent manner. This promotes strengthening the position of the forest sector within the national socio-economic system and supports active shaping of its relations to other sectors of the economy.

Keywords: policy analysis, Forest Europe, forest-focused policies, forest-related policies, forestry strategy

1. Introduction

For more than 20 years, the major programme document outlining the main directions forestry development Poland is the ‘National Forest Policy’ (PLP; MOŚZNiL 1997). For managing forest resources, it is required that objectives and tasks are set in the long-term perspective, which would be harmonised with the time scale of phenomena and changes taking place in forests (Fraser 2002). Rapid changes in natural and socio-economic environment of forests and, as a result, also in political, legal and institutional conditions in forestry functioning make that after more than two decades the ‘National Forest Policy’ can no longer respond to the current challenges faced by the forest sector.

In the previous three articles of this cycle, the most important processes shaping forest policy in Europe (Forest Europe, the EU sectoral policies) were outlined as well as forest policy priorities defined after 1997, that is, after the ‘National Forest Policy’ was adopted by the Council of Ministers, were discussed. Also the content of Polish programme and strategic forest-focused and forest-related documents, as well as general national and supranational development strategies, were analysed taking into account the priorities formulated for the past two decades at the European and EU levels. The research confirmed the far-reaching inadequacy of the PLP priorities to the current political and legal conditions of forestry activities and showed almost total absence of forests and forest management issues in the

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development strategies of our country, as well as the distribution of many issues related to forest management between numerous strategic and programme documents related to the environment, agriculture or energy policy.

The aim of this article is to analyse the content of the main forest policy documents of selected European countries in terms of inclusion of the most important priorities formulated for the past two decades in the European forest policy. The research covered the following countries: Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany (federal level) and Brandenburg (state level), as well as Finland. The listed countries (except for Finland) are characterised by natural and socio-economic conditions and the forest management model similar to the Polish ones. In turn, the choice of Finland resulted from the fact that this country – because of the socio-economic significance of forests and forestry sector – keeps developing very active forestry policy that is manifested, *inter alia*, by the adoption of the ‘New Environmental Programme for Forestry in Finland’ in 1994, which was based on the ‘Forest Principles’ adopted at the UNCED Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and of the ‘National Forest Programme’ in 1999 (Hyttinen, Tikkanen 1999), which was evaluated and reviewed in the subsequent years. In terms of geographical, natural and socio-economic conditions, the analysed countries belong to three of the six European regions distinguished within the Forest Europe process: Central-East Europe (the Czech Republic and Slovakia), Central-West Europe (Germany and Austria) and North Europe (Finland) (Forest Europe 2015). In all the countries covered by the research, the process of adapting forest policy to the changing situation has been taking place, which has been reflected in periodic updates of programme documents adjusting national-level goals and priorities to new conditions of forestry functioning.

2. Methods

The content of documents was examined in terms of including, as objectives or tasks, forest policy priorities at the European level (content analysis: Buttolph Johnson et al. 2010; Weimer, Vining 2011; McNabb 2010; van Thiel 2014). The analysis covered in total 14 forest policy strategic and programme documents. In particular they included

- for Austria: ‘The Austrian Forest Programme’ (Bundesministerium 2006), ‘2020+ Austrian Forest Strategy’ (Bundesministerium 2016);
- for the Czech Republic: ‘National Forest Programme’ (Ministry 2003), ‘National Forest Programme for the period until 2013’ (Ministry 2008a), ‘Principles of the State Forest Policy’ (Zásady 2012);
- for Germany (federal level): ‘Forest Strategy 2020’ (Bundesministerium 2011);

- for Brandenburg ‘Brandenburg Forest Programme 2004’ (Ministerium 2007), ‘Forest Programme 2011’ (Ministerium 2011);
- for the Slovak Republic: ‘National Forest Programme of the Slovak Republic’ (Ministry 2007), ‘The concept of agricultural development for 2007–2013. Part: Forest management’ (Ministerstvo 2007), ‘National Programme for wood potential use in the Slovak Republic’ (Ministerstvo 2013);
- for Finland: ‘Finland’s National Forest Programme 2010’ (Ministry 1999), ‘Finland’s National Forest Programme 2015’ (Ministry 2008b), ‘National Forest Strategy 2025’ (Ministry 2015).

The research has been based on official translations of the documents into English. The exceptions were ‘Principles of the State Forest Policy’ (Zásady 2012) of the Czech Republic, the ‘Brandenburg Forest Programme 2004’ (Ministerium 2007) as well as ‘The concept of agricultural development for 2007–2013. Part: Forest management’ (Ministerstvo 2007) and ‘National Programme for wood potential use in the Slovak Republic’ (Ministerstvo 2013), for which documents in original languages were used (*i.e.* in the Czech, German and Slovak, respectively).

3. Results and discussion

Table 1 presents the results of the content analysis of strategic and programme documents in terms of including the priorities for forestry defined at the European level. It contains documents divided into individual countries, and within them, in a chronological order.

Even a rough analysis of the contents of Table 1 allows to notice that, for the past dozen or so years, major forest policy documents in all the studied countries policy were subject to revision and update. Most frequently, forest policy documents were updated and adapted to the changing socio-economic situation and priorities in Finland: ‘Finland’s National Forest Programme 2010’ (Ministry 1999) was updated in 2008 (Ministry 2008b), and, 7 years later, it was replaced by the ‘National Forest Strategy 2025’ (Ministry 2015). The ‘Austrian Forest Programme’ (Bundesministerium 2006) was also reviewed, updated and replaced by the ‘2020+ Austrian Forest Strategy’ (Bundesministerium 2016). Also the Czech ‘National Forest Programme’ (Ministry 2003) was amended after 5 years (Ministry 2008a) and also complemented by the ‘Principles of the State Forest Policy’ in 2012 (Zásady 2012). The ‘Brandenburg Forest Programme 2004’ (Ministry of 2007) was updated in 2011 when the new version of the programme was implemented (Ministerium 2011). In Germany, forest policy priorities at the federal level are set by the ‘Forest Strategy 2020’, which was adop-

Table 1. Inclusion of the priorities for forestry in Europe into forest policy documents of the studied countries

Symbols: “+” – a priority directly included; “(+)” – a priority indirectly included; blank field – a priority not included in a document

Country	Austria		Czech Republic			Germany	Brandenburg		Finland			Slovakia		
Document	Austrian Forest Programme (Bundesministerium 2006) Austrian Forest Strategy 2020+ (Bundesministerium 2016)		National Forest Programme (Ministry 2003) National Forest Programme for the period until 2013 (Ministry 2008a) Principles of the State Forest Policy (Zásady 2012)			Forest Strategy 2020 (Bundesministerium 2011)	Brandenburg Forest Programme 2004 (Ministerium 2007) Forest Programme 2011 (Ministerium 2011)		Finland's National Forest Programme 2010 (Ministry 1999) Finland's National Forest Programme 2015 (Ministry 2008b) National Forest Strategy 2025 (Ministry 2015)			National Forest Programme of the Slovak Republic (Ministry 2007) Concept of agriculture development 2007-2013. Part: Forest management (Ministerstvo 2007) National programme of wood potential utilization in Slovakia (Ministerstvo 2013)		
Priority														
1. Conserving, protecting, restoring and enhancing forest biodiversity	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	(+)
2. Adapting forests to climate change and changing environmental conditions	+	+	+	+	(+)	+		+			+	+	+	+
3. Enhancing a role of forests and forest management in mitigating climate change including:														
Enhancing carbon sequestration and storage in forest biomass and soils	+	+		+		+		+			+	+	+	+

Country	Austria	Czech Republic	Germany	Brandenburg	Finland	Slovakia
Document	Austrian Forest Programme (Bundesministerium 2006) Austrian Forest Strategy 2020+ (Bundesministerium 2016)	National Forest Programme (Ministry 2003) National Forest Programme for the period until 2013 (Ministry 2008a) Principles of the State Forest Policy (Zásady 2012)	Forest Strategy 2020 (Bundesministerium 2011)	Brandenburg Forest Programme 2004 (Ministerium 2007) Forest Programme 2011 (Ministerium 2011)	Finland's National Forest Programme 2010 (Ministry 1999) Finland's National Forest Programme 2015 (Ministry 2008b) National Forest Strategy 2025 (Ministry 2015)	National Forest Programme of the Slovak Republic (Ministry 2007) Concept of agriculture development 2007-2013. Part: Forest management (Ministerstvo 2007) National programme of wood potential utilization in Slovakia (Ministerstvo 2013)
Priority						
Mobilization of wood resources, also from non-forested areas	+ +	+ +	+	+ +	+ + +	+ +
Substitution of non-renewable materials and products with wood	+ +	(+)	+	+ +	+ + +	+ +
Promoting use of wood as an energy source	+ +	+ +	+	+ +	+ + +	+ + +
4. Maintaining and improving forest ecosystem services (protecting water and soils)	+ +	+ +	+	+ +	+ + +	+ +
5. Combating illegal harvesting of forest products and related trade	+ +				+	+

Country	Austria	Czech Republic	Germany	Brandenburg	Finland	Slovakia
Document	Austrian Forest Programme (Bundesministerium 2006) Austrian Forest Strategy 2020+ (Bundesministerium 2016)	National Forest Programme (Ministry 2003) National Forest Programme for the period until 2013 (Ministry 2008a) Principles of the State Forest Policy (Zásady 2012)	Forest Strategy 2020 (Bundesministerium 2011)	Brandenburg Forest Programme 2004 (Ministerium 2007) Forest Programme 2011 (Ministerium 2011)	Finland's National Forest Programme 2010 (Ministry 1999) Finland's National Forest Programme 2015 (Ministry 2008b) National Forest Strategy 2025 (Ministry 2015)	National Forest Programme of the Slovak Republic (Ministry 2007) Concept of agriculture development 2007–2013. Part: Forest management (Ministerstvo 2007) National programme of wood potential utilization in Slovakia (Ministerstvo 2013)
Priority						
6. Improving economic viability of forest management including:						
Promoting production and use of wood	+	+	(+)	+	+	+
Supporting innovations in forestry	+	+	+	+	+	+
Stimulating differentiation of sources of income in forestry	+	+	+	+	+	+
Supporting private forest owners and their associations	+	+	(+)	+	+	+
7. Enhancing a role of forests and forest management in rural development	+	+	(+)	+	+	(+)

Country	Austria	Czech Republic	Germany	Brandenburg	Finland	Slovakia
Document	Austrian Forest Programme (Bundesministerium 2006) Austrian Forest Strategy 2020+ (Bundesministerium 2016)	National Forest Programme (Ministry 2003) National Forest Programme for the period until 2013 (Ministry 2008a) Principles of the State Forest Policy (Zásady 2012)	Forest Strategy 2020 (Bundesministerium 2011)	Brandenburg Forest Programme 2004 (Ministerium 2007) Forest Programme 2011 (Ministerium 2011)	Finland's National Forest Programme 2010 (Ministry 1999) Finland's National Forest Programme 2015 (Ministry 2008b) National Forest Strategy 2025 (Ministry 2015)	National Forest Programme of the Slovak Republic (Ministry 2007) Concept of agriculture development 2007-2013. Part: Forest management (Ministerstvo 2007) National programme of wood potential utilization in Slovakia (Ministerstvo 2013)
Priority						
8. Securing contribution of the forest sector to a green economy	(+)				+	+
9. Forest valuation and reflecting it in forest-related policies and programmes		+ +	+	+	+ +	+ +
10. Improving social aspects of forest management / including:						
Health and safety issues	+ +	+ +	+		+ +	+
Developing human resources	+ +	+ +	+	+ +	+ + +	+ + +
11. Securing participation of all stakeholders in decision-making, improving forest communication	+ +	+	(+)	+ +	+ + +	(+) +

Country	Austria	Czech Republic	Germany	Brandenburg	Finland	Slovakia
Document	Austrian Forest Programme (Bundesministerium 2006) Austrian Forest Strategy 2020+ (Bundesministerium 2016)	National Forest Programme (Ministry 2003) National Forest Programme for the period until 2013 (Ministry 2008a) Principles of the State Forest Policy (Zásady 2012)	Forest Strategy 2020 (Bundesministerium 2011)	Brandenburg Forest Programme 2004 (Ministerium 2007) Forest Programme 2011 (Ministerium 2011)	Finland's National Forest Programme 2010 (Ministry 1999) Finland's National Forest Programme 2015 (Ministry 2008b) National Forest Strategy 2025 (Ministry 2015)	National Forest Programme of the Slovak Republic (Ministry 2007) Concept of agriculture development 2007–2013. Part: Forest management (Ministerstvo 2007) National programme of wood potential utilization in Slovakia (Ministerstvo 2013)
Priority						
12. Fostering coordination and cross-sectoral cooperation of forestry	+ +	(+)	+	+	+ + +	+ (+) +
13. Preserving cultural values of forests and forest management	+ +		+		+ + +	(+)
14. Forest education of society	+ +	+ + +	+	+ +	+ + +	+ + +
15. Forest research	+ +	+ + +	+	+ +	+ + +	+ + +

Source: Own elaboration

ted in 2011 (Bundesministerium 2011). In this context, the situation in Slovakia looks slightly different: in 2007, the ‘National Forest Programme of the Slovak Republic’ (Ministry 2007) as well as ‘The concept of agricultural development for 2007–2013’, with a separate section on forest management, came into force (Ministerstvo 2007). Moreover, in 2013, the ‘National Programme for wood potential use in the Slovak Republic’ (Ministerstvo 2013), focusing on increasing the possibilities of using wood and developing

wood-based industries, was introduced. Against this background, the situation in Poland is unique, because the directions of forestry development have not been updated and are still defined by the ‘National Forest Policy’ adopted in 1997 (MOŚZNiL 1997).

In all the considered countries, forest policy objectives and instruments, at least for a certain period, were specified in national forest programmes (NFPs). The NFPs constitute a participatory, comprehensive, inter-sectorial and

interactive process of policy planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation at the national and/or subnational level (MCPFE 2003). In Poland, despite two attempts (in the years 2000–2005 and 2012–2015), the NFP was finally not developed and implemented. The NFPs were, however, adopted in Finland (in 1999), the Czech Republic (2003), Brandenburg (2004), Austria (2006) and Slovakia (2007). The NFPs in the Czech Republic, Brandenburg and Finland have been revised and updated after several years. NFPs, although usually not legally binding, have a strong impact on shaping legal regulations and their amendments and also help to integrate forest law provisions with regulations concerning forest-related industries (MCPFE 2005). However, in the recent years, a shift away from NFPs to sectoral forestry strategies has been observed. This is the case in Austria, Germany (federal level) and Finland. It can be attributed to the observed lack of permanent and significant influence of NFPs on the way policy is formulated in terms of giving this process a more participatory and pluralistic character, as well as a smaller than previously assumed impact on a real change of forest policy directions. Thus, more and more often, a new way of policy formulating can be observed: sectoral forestry ‘strategies’ are adopted as a part of a streamlined or pseudo-participatory process – forest policy documents are prepared within the ministerial walls and are discussed with the participation of selected stakeholders to give them a final form (Winkel, Sotirov 2011). Regardless of what the form of forest policy formulation ultimately takes, in all the studied countries, forest policy priorities have been regularly adjusted to the current situation of the forest sector.

Before starting to analyse the content of the discussed documents in terms of including European forest policy priorities, it should be noted that the objectives and priorities expressed in those documents are very diverse in the considered countries, as they result from very diversified natural, socio-economic, legal, institutional, historical, cultural and other circumstances of forestry operating. In each case, particular importance was given to national (‘local’) forest-related issues. For example, in Austria, high importance has been given to protection and maintenance of forest functions in mountainous areas, whilst in the Czech Republic, the necessity to reduce air pollution and related damage in forest ecosystems as well as the reorganisation of forest administration and support for private forest owners has been emphasised; in Finland, the need for introducing innovations, developing entrepreneurship and improving competitiveness of the forest sector has been highlighted. All the discussed documents simultaneously reflect the most significant trends in forest policy at the European level, transferring them to the national level and adapting to local conditions. The analysed documents also have very diverse structures. For example, all Austrian and Finnish programmes

and strategies are very extensive, detailed and characterised by significant hierarchy of goals (division into priorities, objectives, tasks). On the other hand, the Czech NFPs are characterised by considerable conciseness, and the ‘Principles of the State Forest Policy’ constitute very general, framework rules, so the latter document was omitted later in the discussion of research results.

Almost all identified forest policy priorities at the European level have been transferred to the national programmes and strategies. In some cases, certain significant issues were not present in older documents, but they have been included in newer ones, which seem reasonable given the nature of the development of European forest policy and national-level policies. An example of this is the issue of adapting forests to climate change (priority no. 2), which was absent in older forest programmes of Brandenburg and Finland but has been incorporated in the later documents in both the countries. The priorities included in all current forest policy documents of the considered countries cover

- conserving, protecting, restoring and enhancing forest biodiversity (priority no. 1),
- adapting forests to climate change and changing environmental conditions (priority no. 2),
- enhancing the role of forests and forest management in mitigating climate change (priority no. 3, with some exceptions as regards substitution of non-renewable materials and products with wood),
- maintaining and improving forest ecosystem services (priority no. 4),
- improving economic viability of forest management (priority no. 6, excluding Brandenburg as regards supporting innovations in forestry),
- securing participation of all stakeholders in decision-making, improving forest communication (priority no. 11),
- fostering coordination and cross-sectoral cooperation of forestry (priority no. 12),
- forest education of society (priority no. 14),
- forest research (priority no. 15).

A much smaller group consists of priorities that are not included at all in the analysed policy documents or are included in only some of them. One of the priority actions at the EU and pan-European levels is combating illegal harvesting of forest products and related trade (priority no. 5), which has been included only in the ‘2020+ Austrian Forest Strategy’ (in a section concerning international cooperation of the country) and in the ‘National Programme for wood potential use in the Slovak Republic’. The intention to address this issue at the pan-European and EU levels was to reduce and eliminate trade of illegally harvested timber, mainly from the South, which has been supported by the EU legal regulations for many years (under the ‘FLEGT Action Plan’) and

goes beyond the forest policy of individual member states of the European Union.

Some documents also comprise a matter of securing contribution of the forest sector to a green economy (priority no. 8). This subject is discussed only in the Finnish ‘National Forest Strategy 2025’ and the ‘National Programme for wood potential use in the Slovak Republic’, as well as indirectly in the ‘2020+ Austrian Forest Strategy’, that is, only in the latest documents. The absence of the issue of a green economy in other analysed documents stems probably from the fact that this is a new concept and it has been disseminated following the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20 in 2012 and it has been present in the EU documents since 2011. A vision of a resource-efficient and low-carbon economy was included in the strategy ‘Europe 2020’ of 2010, and only in course of preparations for the RIO+20 Summit, the concept has been defined in the EU documents as ‘the economy that generates growth, creates jobs and helps reduce poverty through sustainable management of natural capital, on which long-term survival of the planet depends. It is a low-carbon economy that efficiently uses resources and ensures social integration.’ (Ryszewska 2013). The green economy domain is to prevent climate change and ensure rational management of natural resources, which – differently named – is actually included in the forest-related strategic and programme documents of the countries concerned.

The issue of forest valuation and reflecting its value in forest-related policies and programmes (priority no. 9) has not been included in the ‘2020+ Austrian Forest Strategy’ and the Brandenburg ‘Forest Programme 2011’. In turn, the question of preserving cultural values of forests and forest management (priority no. 12) has not been contained in the Czech, Slovak and Brandenburg documents. Similarly, the health and safety issues in forestry have not been addressed in the Slovak and Brandenburg forest programmes. It may result from qualifying this problem to labour market and employment issues; hence, it is rarely included in forest policy documents.

The above presented results of the content analysis of documents in selected countries reveal shortcomings of the Polish forest policy. The ‘National Forest Policy’, which has been in force for more than 20 years, is an outdated document that does not take into account changes that have taken place in Europe and in the world over that time. The strategic goals and directions of forestry development, outlined over more than two decades ago, do not take into account the most important challenges for forestry in Europe today, which include adaptation of forests to climate change and incorporation of the forest sector in climate change mitigation (Streck et al. 2010), as well as many other important problems (Kaliszewski 2018). Forest policies in the analysed countries are subject to periodic revisions and adaptation

to the new environmental, socio-economic or legal situation. Thus, forestry can better adapt to the changes and respond to new challenges and social expectations.

One more issue deserves attention. In the analysed countries, the priorities of European forest policy have been included in national forest policy documents. These documents are usually comprehensive, contain a thorough analysis of the forestry situation and define a wide range of activities and instruments to implement specific objectives and support development of the forest sector. A coherent approach to forestry issues favours – at least in principle – strengthening the forestry sector’s position in the socio-economic system of a country and allows for active shaping of this position in relation to other sectors of the economy. In Poland – because of the lack of revisions and updates of the ‘National Forest Policy’ – new issues in the field of forest management and forest policy emerging after 1997 have been, to some degree, included in some strategic and programme documents developed in other forest-related areas (environmental protection, biodiversity protection, agriculture, spatial planning, energy production). As a result, forestry issues have been dispersed between numerous documents of various areas of the state policy (Kaliszewski 2018). The lack of a broad, comprehensive and consistent definition of forest management priorities included in a single document opens the door for gradual marginalisation of the forest sector in the economy as well as political and social space, opening the way to subordinating forestry goals to the goals of other sectors of the economy.

4. Conclusions

1. In all the studied countries, forest policy documents were periodically revised and updated. As a result, at some point during the examined period, in each country, forestry priorities and goals were defined by an NFP.

2. In the studied countries, current forestry programmes and strategies reflect the European forest policy priorities adapted to the local natural, economic and social conditions.

3. The priorities that have not been included in or have been included only in a few forest policy documents of the studied countries include combating illegal harvesting of forest products and related trade and ensuring the contribution of the forest sector to a green economy. The first one is a corner stone of the EU FLEGT Action Plan and extends beyond forest policy issues of the EU member states, whilst the latter concerns the new concept of green economy still requiring a transfer to national policies.

4. In the studied countries, the priorities of European forest policy have been included in single policy programmes or strategies, which define aims and goals, as well as means of their implementation in a comprehensive and coherent manner. This

promotes strengthening the position of the forest sector within the national socio-economic system and supports active shaping of its relations to other sectors of the economy.

Conflict of interests

The author declares lack of potential conflicts.

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