

Nature conservation in private forests of selected CEE countries

Opportunities and constraints

Programme Paper

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IUCN - European Regional Office (ERO)

The mandate of IUCN - ERO is to contribute to a sustainable Europe by influencing policy development and implementation for biodiversity and landscape conservation, restoration and sustainable use inside and outside Europe.

The European Programme is active in agriculture, forestry and fisheries and, through its expert networks, protected areas and species conservation.

The Programme provides input to regional and global policy especially the EU enlargement to central Europe; the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy; trade and the range of multilateral environmental agreements.

Developing partnerships and networking activities with our 341 government and NGO members builds the knowledge and provides the authority for achieving the objectives of the IUCN programme in Europe.

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FOREWORD

This paper wishes to initiate a challenging area of work for IUCN in European forests. The main objective for the IUCN European Regional Office (ERO) in this area is *to integrate biodiversity concerns into the forestry policy in Europe*.

This paper provides a synthesis of the challenges posed by the ongoing process of privatisation of forest lands in Central Europe, and it opens ways for the involvement of the IUCN Constituency in this process.

The scoping activity that identified this area of work was started by IUCN in the framework of the project "Forestry- assessing the issues in Central Europe" in 1999. During a seminar in Tatranska Lomnica in Slovakia, a number of IUCN experts met to identify the issues affecting the forest ecosystems of Central Europe. The final draft of that scoping paper, edited by Jup Weber, was discussed and finalised in Mallorca, Spain (October 1999) during the Pan European Forum organised by ERO.

The issue of privatisation of forests, identified as one of the most urgent by the IUCN members in Mallorca, was the first one that the secretariat decided to address and the project "*Nature conservation in private forests of selected CEE countries*" started, with financial the support of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries (LNV).

The project, of which this paper is one of the key results, was implemented in 2000 under the direction of Dorota Metera from the IUCN Office for Central Europe.

Preliminary data collection was carried out by Frank Ven Bussel during his internship at ERO.

A number of activities, such as questionnaires, workshops, meetings and electronic circulation of information were initiated to analyse the issue of forest privatisation in the 10 Central European countries candidate for Accession to the EU.

ERO was supported by the precious technical assistance of Tamás Marghescu, who not only contributed with his experience and knowledge, but also co-ordinated the input he received from the 12 experts and 36 participants of the workshop held in Sêkocin, Poland.

During the whole process, from 1999 to now, ERO availed itself of the contribution of many experts from the IUCN secretariat as well as from its network of experts and members. They all made substantial contribution to the project by participating to the meetings, preparing papers and commenting the various stages of the project. Amongst them, I would like to thank Simon Rietbergen (IUCN Forest Conservation Programme), Tomme Rosanne Young (IUCN Environmental Law Centre), Robin Sharp, Bart Muys, Patrick Huvenne, Bart van der Aa (European Sustainable Use Specialist Group of IUCN SSC).

Through this project, ERO managed to raise awareness on the issue of forest ownership in the Accession process, and to mobilise a large network of experts and organisations from both the EU and Accession countries. With all of them -and many others- we are looking forward to continue what we have started, so that ERO can continue to serve as the platform for conservation in Europe.

Damiano Luchetti
Programme Co-ordinator
IUCN European Regional Office



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Objectives of the seminar

- ◆ Collection and sharing of information on the present **status of nature conservation** in the evolving private forest sector of ten Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, namely: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.
- ◆ Identification of possible **influences of the EU accession process** on nature conservation in the private forests of these countries;
- ◆ Identification of **opportunities** for the enhancement of nature conservation in the private forests of Central and Eastern Europe, and also of **constraints**;
- ◆ Identification of ways and means to **overcome identified constraints** on the one hand and to **utilise identified opportunities** to the maximum possible benefit on the other hand;

thus developing elements of a future strategy for the enhancement of nature conservation in these forests.

1.2. Methodology of the seminar

The seminar was designed not as a “one-shot” exercise, but as an *open-ended process*, which can be divided into:

- ◆ the *preparatory phase*,
- ◆ the *actual seminar*, and
- ◆ the *follow-up phase*.

During the *preparatory phase*, one individual expert was identified in each of the ten CEE countries which are also referred to as the EU Accession countries (ACs). The experts were requested to complete a questionnaire, which had been designed to help assess the status of private forestry/nature conservation in the selected countries. Based on the completed questionnaires, a **regional overview** (chapter 2 of the present paper) was prepared. Almost all the experts who completed the questionnaire for their respective country were invited to the two-day seminar along with representatives of NGOS, private forest owners’ associations, and nature conservation and forestry authorities.

Throughout the first day of the *actual seminar* a number of presentations were made, which provided an overview on the status of nature conservation in private forests of the region and highlighted some of the emerging issues.



The entire second day of the seminar was devoted to group discussions on a number of specific themes. The participants were grouped into three working groups according to geographical sub-regions:

- ◆ North (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland)
- ◆ Centre (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland)
- ◆ South (Hungary, Romania, Slovenia – there was no representative from Bulgaria present)

Findings and recommendations of the working groups were presented at a plenary session. A **summary of seminar findings and recommendations** is given in chapter 3 of the present paper.

The *follow-up phase* was initiated at the end of the seminar, when participants were asked to do some “homework” by providing lists of organisations/institutions (contact names and addresses) in their countries that are, or potentially could become, involved in one way or another with the private forest sector and/or nature conservation. This would be the first step towards building a regional network for the development and strengthening of nature conservation in private forests.

The findings and recommendations of the seminar could lead to a decision by IUCN to elaborate a **regional strategy for the systematic enhancement of nature conservation in the private forests of Central and Eastern Europe**.

Editor’s Remark; Information and data provided in chapter 2 of this paper is mainly based on the information contained in the questionnaires, which were completed by individual national experts prior to the seminar. Parts of chapter 2 (e.g. section 2.8, Major constraints in strengthening nature conservation in private forests and possible fields of IUCN assistance) sometimes contradict, in terms of priority-setting of constraints, the findings and recommendations of the seminar in chapter 3. This can be attributed to the result of discussions and the process of consensus-building in the plenary sessions and working groups during the seminar.



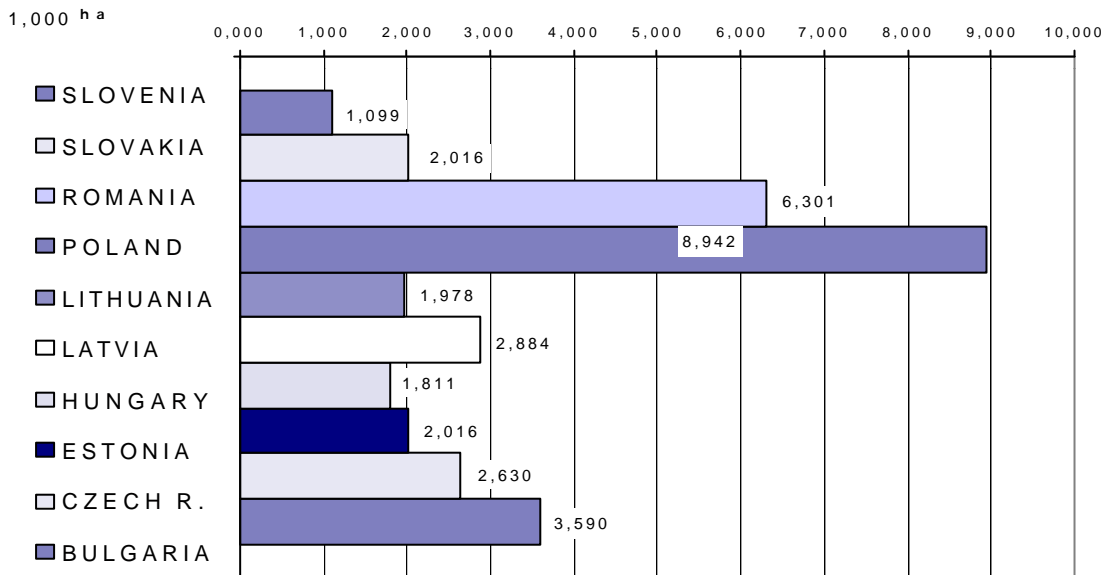
2. BACKGROUND. REGIONAL OVERVIEW.

This regional overview contains information on private forestry and nature conservation in the ten Accession countries.

2.1. Forest area

The total forest area in these countries amounts to more than 33 million ha (almost 19% of the total forest area of Europe).

Graph 1 Forest area of the ten Accession countries



Source: TBFRA 2000

The forest cover of the region (31.8%) exceeds the European average (31.1%), but not that of the 15 European Union countries together (36.4%). However, there are huge differences between the individual countries. Whereas Slovenia (54.5%), Estonia (48.1%), Latvia (46.4%) and Slovakia (41.9%) have a significantly higher forest cover than the European average, Hungary (19.9%) is one of the least forested countries in Europe (TBFRA 2000).

Forests are relatively evenly distributed in the Baltic region (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Northern Poland). In the south/eastern part of the region, forests are concentrated in the mountains. Historically existing forests on the foothills and the plains had been converted here through expansion of agriculture.

Due to a large variation in climatic conditions, there is a wide range of different forest types to be found. The boreal forests of the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, northern Poland) are dominated by Scots pine, Norway spruce and birch, with a mixture of aspen and alders. Further south (southern Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria), forests on the plains and foothills are dominated by broad-leaved species, whereas conifers (spruce, fir) are to be found in the mountain areas. Hungarian forests consist almost exclusively of broad-leaved species.



When describing the natural condition of forests in a country, one should differentiate between man-made plantations, man-made to semi-natural forests, predominantly planted, semi-natural forest predominantly naturally regenerated and natural or virgin forests, undisturbed by man.

Table 1 Natural condition of forest resources

Country	Year	Plantations (%)	Predominantly planted (%)	Predominantly naturally regenerated (%)	Virgin forests (%)
Bulgaria	1995	6	21	72	1
Czech Republic ⁽¹⁾	1996		94	6	0.05
Estonia ⁽²⁾	1996	8	11	80	1
Hungary	1996	8	53	39	0
Latvia ⁽²⁾	1994	5.3	10.3	84.2	0.2
Lithuania ⁽²⁾	1996	14.7	9.8	74.4	1.1
Poland ⁽³⁾	1992	2.2	88.2	7.4	2.2
Romania	1985		29	71	<0.1
Slovakia	1996	1.3	42.7	55	1
Slovenia	1996	0.1	15	84.9	0.03

Source: Phare, 1999

- (1) No separate record for the category "plantations".
- (2) Figures given for the "predominantly naturally regenerated" category seem to be overestimated.
- (3) Area of virgin forests also includes semi-natural types.

In some of the countries, a small proportion of virgin forest, undisturbed by man, still exists. These virgin forest areas are of enormous value for nature conservation and forestry research. Special attention has to be given to these treasures to protect them from any interference. Slovenia has the highest proportion (84.9%) of semi-natural forests (predominantly naturally regenerated) whereas the Czech Republic (6%) and Poland (7.4%) have the lowest.

In most of the ACs, semi-natural forests may consist of naturally regenerated, indigenous species and with local provenance, but the structure of stands is often even-aged due to the management system. An exception are the forests in Slovenia, where forest structures are close to their natural condition due to the widely used selection and group selection cutting system in 80–85% of forests. The wide use of this system in Slovenia is also possible due to the favourable, close-to-natural or species composition of forests, especially in the mountain areas (spruce/fir/beech forests). In the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland clearcutting systems prevail. (Phare, 1999).

Comparative data show that the area of forests has increased in the last 50 years in the region. This trend is likely to continue, since some countries, such as Poland and Hungary, are pursuing ambitious afforestation programmes, and abandoned agricultural lands are slowly turning into forest due to natural succession (e.g. Baltics).

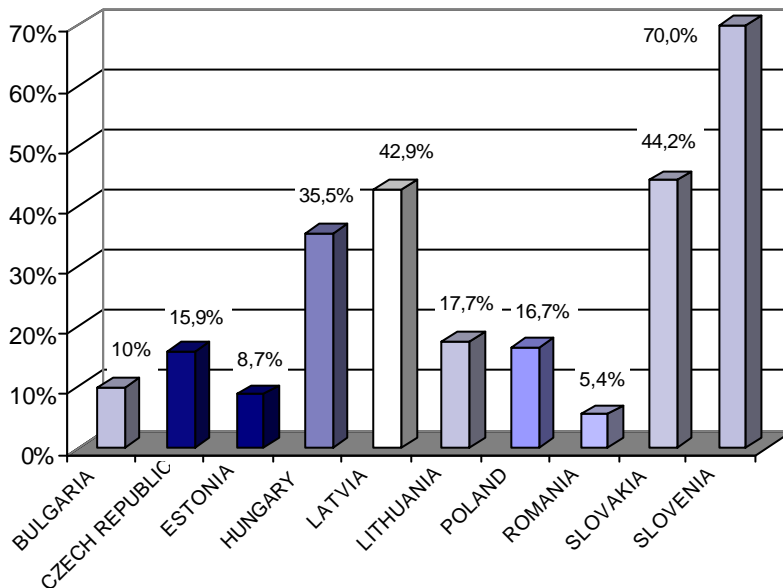


2.2. Private forest area

The drastic political, economic and social transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe had an effect on the forest sector as well. The most important transformation to take place in the forest sector was the change in ownership patterns.

After World War II, almost all private forest holdings in the region were nationalised and collectivised. The exceptions were Slovenia (only 20% of private forests were nationalised while 2/3 of the forest area remained private throughout the socialist period) and Poland (only large and medium-sized properties were nationalised; 16% of the total forest area remained private throughout the socialist period).

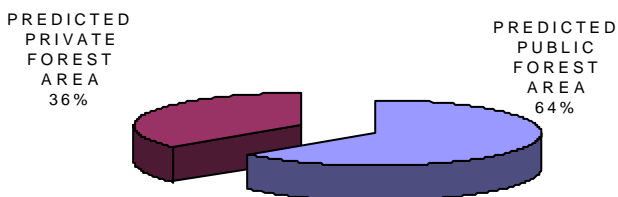
Graph 2 Private forest area as a % of total forest area



Source: TBFRA 2000 and Background Report, 2001

With the political changes at the beginning of the 1990s, governments started to privatise (restitution, compensation) forest resources along with everything else. Graph 2 shows the status of the share of private forests as reported by countries in the framework of the TBFRA 2000 exercise. In the ten ACs as a region, 20% of the total forests or almost 7 million ha of forests are privately owned. Data provided is in most cases from around the middle of the 1990s. This means that since the privatisation process of forest resources is not yet finalised in most countries, the share of private forests is already higher in 2001 and will become higher in the future.

Graph 3 Predicted share of private forests in the ten countries (data calculated from TBFRA 2000 and Phare, 1999)



The prediction is derived from a calculation based on unchanged forest area figures of the TBFRA 2000 and the predicted percentage of private forest area to be expected after the forest privatisation process is finalised. The later data were submitted by the countries within the framework of the Phare Multi-Country Forestry Programme in 1998 (unpublished draft Multi-Country Report).



The rise in private forest area is also attributed to the fact that a number of countries have afforestation programmes and afforestation is taking place in the majority of cases on private land.

Table 2: National afforestation programmes

Country	Presence of afforestation programme and details
Bulgaria	Yes. Afforestation rate 7,000 ha per year.
Czech Republic	No. Afforestation of marginal lands can be supported under programmes providing support to landscape maintenance activities and to less productive regions. The government subsidised afforestation of 433 ha in 1997, 403 ha in 1998 and 493 ha in 1999, about 70% of which was on private land.
Estonia	No. There is no national afforestation programme, only individual projects. A national programme is being prepared as part of the Estonian SAPARD Programme (see section 2.7).
Hungary	Yes. According to the National Afforestation Plan, a total of 150,000 ha should have been afforested between 1991 and 2001. However from 1991–1999, only 60,000 ha was achieved. The government would like to speed up the programme but there is a lack of funds. Funds promised by the EU did not materialise. According to the draft National Land Development Plan (1999), there are 778,000 ha of low productive agricultural land suitable for afforestation, most of which is private. (Editor's remark: Nature conservation authorities need to screen suitable areas for afforestation in order to avoid the afforestation of areas with high conservation value.)
Latvia	No.
Lithuania	Yes. The government wishes to afforest 13,200 ha between 1999 and 2003. They have a pilot and demonstration project, supported by the Danish government and implemented by the Department of Forests and Protected Areas. Technical assistance is provided by the Danish Forest Owners Association and a Danish consulting firm.
Poland	Yes. Annual planned afforestation rate between 1995–2000 is 16,000 ha (8,000 ha state/8,000 ha private); between 2001–2010, 24,000 ha (10,000 ha state/14,000 ha private); and between 2011–2020, 26,000 ha (10,000 ha state/16,000 ha private).
Romania	Yes. According to the Sustainable Development Strategy of Romanian Forestry, the expansion of the forest area and other forest vegetation should reach 240,000 ha by 2010, and 950,000 ha by 2020.
Slovakia	No. Programme of afforestation of lands unavailable for agriculture was cancelled in 1999.
Slovenia	No. Already very high forest cover.

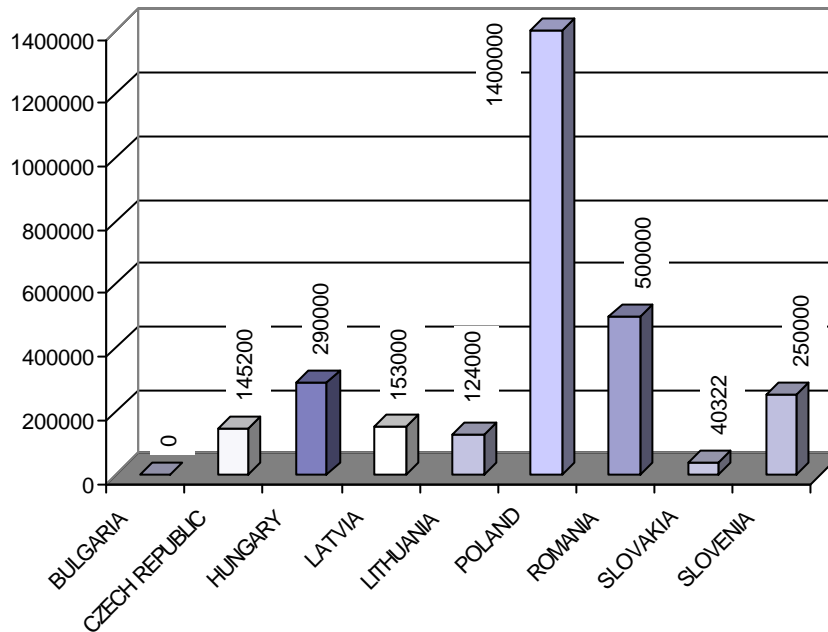
Source: Background Report, 2001



2.3. Private forest owners/ownership structure

The number of private forest owners in the ten ACs is approaching three million.

Graph 4 Numbers of private forest owners



Sources: For Czech Republic, Romania, Slovenia: FAO, 1997.

For Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia: Ilavsky, J., 2000.

According to statistics, the average size of forest property per owner is somewhat more than 2ha. With the exception of Slovakia, where more than 60% of the private forest area belongs to forest estates larger than 100 ha (in the Czech Republic more than 30%), the size class <5 ha dominates.

Table 3 Estimated percentage of private forest area belonging to size class <5 ha

Country	Percentage of forest area in <5 ha
Bulgaria	No data
Czech Republic	27%
Estonia	No data
Hungary	36%
Latvia	No data
Lithuania	Calculated average property size between 6–7 ha
Poland	100%
Romania	100%
Slovakia	0.1%
Slovenia	44%

Source: FAO, 1997



«For comparison, in France, 75% of the area in private ownership is in tracts larger than 4 ha. In the former Federal Republic of Germany, 58% of the private forest holdings are under 5 ha (2% under 1 ha) and 15% over 1,000 ha. In Sweden, 87% of forests that are privately owned are in holdings of 25 ha or more (Grayson, 1993).» (FAO, 1997)

«Overall the structure of private forest ownership in many places in the CEE does not appear favourable for sustainable¹ and efficient² forest management, especially if the lack of private forest management tradition in most CEE countries is taken into account. Forest tracts divided in many small individual properties require the association of forest owners to form larger management units irrespective of individual property boundaries. However, there are psychological barriers with new forest owners, because association brings up memories of expropriation and forced collectivisation.» (FAO, 1997)

2.4. Forest protected areas and natural condition of forests

The need to place forest resources under protection, and therefore the forest protection status, varies greatly in different countries due to a combination of factors.

First of all the forests have to possess natural values. If, for example, man-made monoculture forest plantations only have minimal ecological value, there is no need to protect them. If, on the other hand, specific forest ecosystems with high natural value are rare, then there is an urgent need to protect and safeguard them. If a given country has high forest cover, a low population density and sustainable forest management regimes, there is not much negative pressure on forest resources and no reason to protect a large percentage of the resource. Countries with a high percentage of private forest ownership have difficulties in placing private forest resources under protection, unless the state has sufficient means to compensate the private owners for economic losses incurred through nature conservation management restrictions. If close-to-nature forest management practices are widespread in a country, the necessity for protecting forest resources is relatively low.

There are also historical reasons for the present figures of forest protected areas. In formerly centrally governed, socialist countries of the CEE, it was relatively easy to establish a protected area network, if the political will was there. Charismatic and politically influential leaders in nature conservation could achieve a great deal.

The available data on protected forest resources are very inconsistent due to the fact that definitions of protection categories vary from country to country and that different methods are applied to collect the data. This creates difficulties in comparing country data.

The most frequently used protected area definitions are the IUCN categories I–VI. The most reliable and newest data source is the TBFRA 2000, which used the IUCN protected area categories in assessing the percentage of nature protected forest resources. If we compare the country data of the ten Accession countries, the highest percentage (IUCN categories I–VI) of protected forest resources can be found in Slovakia (41.2%) and the lowest in Slovenia with 7.2%. Among EU member countries, the country with the highest percentage of protected forest resources is the Federal Republic of Germany (67.1%), the countries with the lowest percentage are Ireland (1.2%) and Luxembourg (0.8%). It is important to note that the protection categories I–VI of IUCN stand for different intensities

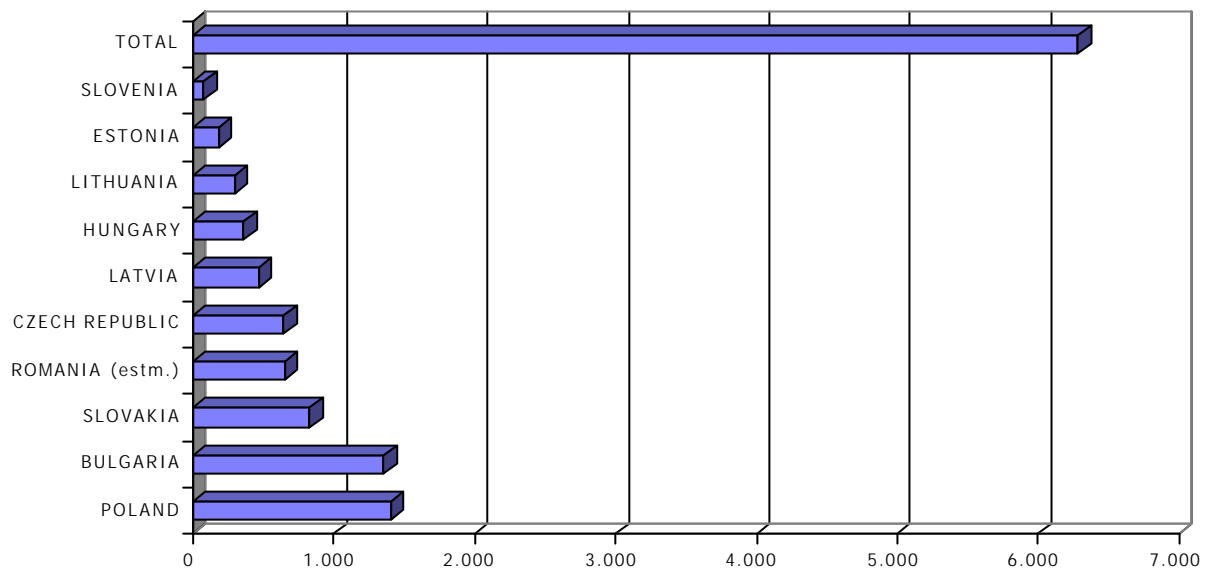
¹ “Sustainable forest management” means that the forests with all their diverse values and functions will be maintained for future generations and will never be lost.

² “Efficient forest management” means that the forests are managed in such a way, that the functions of forests are sustainably secured and the costs of management approach the optimal relation between inputs and benefits (tangible and intangible).



of protection. The above figures do not give any information on the ratio of the different categories. The high percentage figure for IUCN categories I–VI in Germany, for example, is due to the large area classified under IUCN categories III to VI.

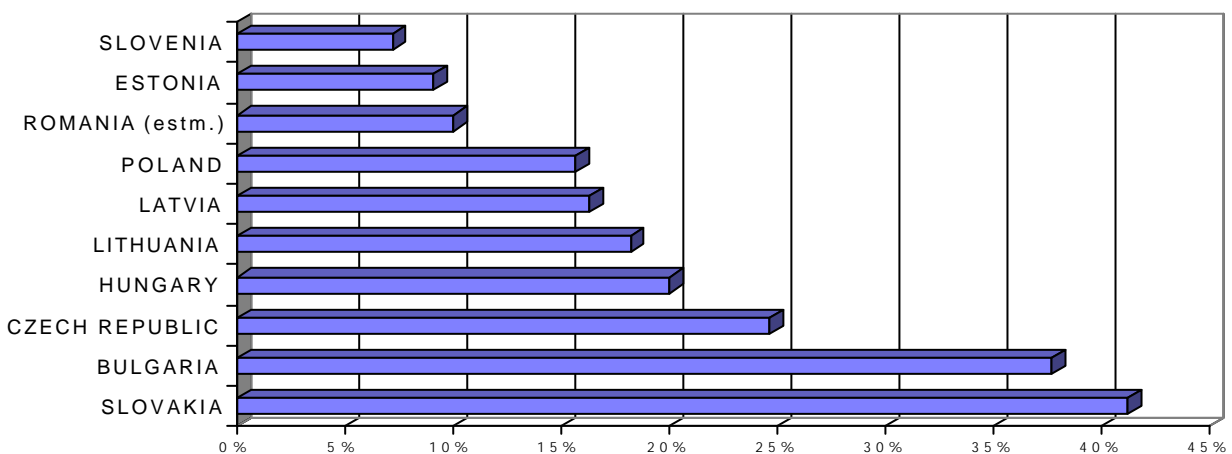
Graph 5 Protected forest area (IUCN categories I–VI) in 1,000ha



Source: TBFRA 2000 and Background Report, 2001

In the ten ACs, more than 6 million ha of forests, or 18% of the forest area belong to IUCN categories I–VI.

Graph 6 Protected forest area in IUCN categories I–VI and in % of total forest area



Source: TBFRA 2000 and Background Report, 2001

It is estimated that more than 500,000 ha or more than 8% of protected forests in the Accession countries are privately owned. The area of privately owned protected forests will probably increase overall in the future, since the privatisation process is not yet finalised in most countries. However, in Hungary, the state no longer privatises protected areas but, on the contrary, re-buys and even expropriates protected areas which had previously been privatised (following a decision of the



Constitutional Court of Hungary). In fact, most of the countries (with the exception of Bulgaria) have a policy that the state can buy or expropriate private forests in protected areas where this is perceived to be in the public interest.

Table 4 Policy for state buying/expropriating private, protected forests

Country	Policy for state buying/expropriating private, protected forest and details
Bulgaria	No.
Czech Republic	Yes. There is the possibility to expropriate land and the government has a pre-purchase right in the interests of nature conservation. The Forestry Policy concept also talks about considering the possibility of buying forest with non-productive functions, however there is no explicit programme to do so.
Estonia	Yes. Pre-emptive right of state (Law on Protected Natural Objects, art. 9 (5)) Expropriation right of state (Law on Protected Natural Objects, art. 9 (6))
Hungary	Yes. On the basis of a Constitutional Court decision, protected areas which had been privatised are being bought back by the state. If the owner does not want to sell, expropriation is possible. For this purpose, a sum of money is yearly (until 2003) made available from the state budget. In the year 2000, the plan is to buy back 2,700 ha of forests.
Latvia	Yes. There is an ongoing project on land consolidation (Gauja National Park).
Lithuania	Yes. The principle of the state buying private land for public needs is set out in Land Law and in the Government Decision: "The Land Taking for Public Needs". If an owner wants to sell private forest in protected areas, the state has a pre-purchase right according to the Law on Protected Areas.
Poland	Yes. The government has been buying land (mainly agricultural) within the borders of national parks. However, activity is limited due to shortage of funds. The target is 45,000 ha, including forests.
Romania	Yes. The Forest Code provides the forest authorities with a pre-purchase right in the forest real estate market. Maybe there will be a coherent plan for the state to buy privately owned protected forest as restitution progresses.
Slovakia	Yes. Upon the request of a private forest owner, proposed forestry policy and forest law oblige the state to buy or exchange private forest land which has dominant public-beneficial functions.
Slovenia	Yes. The National Land Fund as a trustee of the national lands has pre-purchase rights in the forest real estate market. Besides that, the state is obliged to purchase lands classified as protected upon request of the owner.

Source: Background Report, 2001

Privately owned protected forests could also increasingly be affected by the designation of new protected areas (e.g. within the framework of establishing the EU Natura 2000 network).

Special attention should be given to the privately owned forest protected areas to enable them to achieve protection objectives. However, non-protected private forests should also receive adequate attention from a nature conservation point of view, so that they are able to sustain their multiple benefits.



Table 5 Protected forests in private ownership

Country	Protected forest area in private ownership (ha)
Bulgaria	No data
Czech Republic	No data
Estonia	13,400 (estimate)
Hungary ⁽¹⁾	50,000 (estimate)
Latvia ⁽²⁾	157,000 (estimate)
Lithuania	No data
Poland ⁽³⁾	7,655
Romania	No data
Slovakia ⁽⁴⁾	183,000
Slovenia	30,000

Source: Background Report, 2001

- (1) 23,000 ha of the estimated 50,000 ha have no real owner as yet.
- (2) Figure includes formally protected forests and areas not available for timber supply.
- (3) Figure represents area of private forests within borders of national parks. Area of private forests in nature reserves and landscape parks available from regional authorities only.
- (4) Figure contains individually owned forests and forests owned by associations, churches and companies. Also included are 950 ha whose ownership has yet to be clarified.

2.5. National policy, strategic and legal framework in relation to nature conservation in private forests

Forestry requires long-term, consistent policy objectives, which are not changed continuously due to fashion and short-term political influences. It is interesting, that even after a decade since the change of political systems, some of the ACs (Hungary, Lithuania and Romania) still do not have a parliament-approved forest policy although the elaboration process is now at least ongoing in Hungary and Lithuania. The formulation of a forest policy should be a process of intensive consultation between all stakeholders, such as forest and nature conservation authorities, forest owners, environmental NGOs, hunters, the public etc. Existing conflicts between stakeholders can only be managed and resolved through the full participation of all stakeholders in the policy formulation process. If individual stakeholders do not regard a forest policy as “theirs”, the necessary “joint forces” for policy realisation are weakened and energies are wasted with conflict situations.

A forest policy cannot be formulated in a vacuum. It has to be harmonised with other sectoral policies (e.g. agriculture, rural development) and the overall development policy of the country. Since all ten countries wish to join the EU as full members, their forest policies should be in line with relevant EU policies, such as the so-called Bird and Habitat Directives (a separate EU forest policy does not exist). As signatories of forest-related international conventions (e.g. the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Climate Change Convention), national policies should contain the planned, national contributions to the conventions.

A very inclusive approach to forest policy formulation has been demonstrated by Estonia, where nature conservation groups and NGOs participated fully in its development. By contrast, the “commissioning” of the “formulation” (not process-oriented “negotiation”) of a forest policy in Poland effectively excluded NGOs. However, this does not necessarily mean that NGOs cannot identify with the resulting policy.



Table 6 National forest policies: participation of nature conservation authorities and NGOs in policy formulation

Country	Forest policy in place	Involvement of nature conservation authorities and NGOs
Bulgaria	Yes	No information.
Czech Republic	Yes	«Limited».
Estonia	Yes	Yes. Nature conservation bodies and NGOs participated in formulation.
Hungary	No	In progress. Forest policy principles are contained in the Forest Act and different interest groups participated in its formulation.
Latvia	Yes	Yes. Consensus among government authorities, and seminars held with various NGOs.
Lithuania	No	In progress. Draft to be sent to NGOs for comments and suggestions, then presented for public discussion.
Poland	Yes	Yes/no. Formulation commissioned by Environment Ministry, no NGOs involved.
Romania	No	No. Nature conservation authority is the same ministry as forestry, professional NGO Forestry Progress involved in law formulation.
Slovakia	Yes	Yes. Participation in formulation working group.
Slovenia	Yes	Yes. Information collection, discussions, public hearings.

Source: Background Report, 2001

In most of the already existing forest policies, no mention is made of nature conservation issues specific to private forests. These forest policies are regarded as "sector neutral", meaning that they are equally valid for all forests, independently of the form of ownership. An EU pre-accession policy paper in the Czech Republic (*Sector Policy Conception of the Ministry of Agriculture*) and the forest policy of Slovakia contain a section which deals with the compensation of private forest owners for restrictions due to nature conservation.

Table 7 Content of forest policy with respect to specific nature conservation issues in private forests

Country	Policy contains specific issues on nature conservation in private forests
Bulgaria	Yes. Principle of sector neutrality applies.
Czech Rep.	No. Pre-accession paper: "Sector Policy Conception of the Ministry of Agriculture" contains section on compensation of forest owners for limitation by nature conservation act.
Estonia	No.
Hungary	No. Principle of sector neutrality always applies.
Latvia	No. Principle of sector neutrality applies.
Lithuania	Maybe it will.
Poland	No. Only in very general manner.
Romania	No.
Slovakia	Yes. Principle of sector neutrality and compensation of private forest owners, if management limited through public interest.
Slovenia	No. Principle of sector neutrality applies.

Source: Background Report, 2001



A “strategy” outlines the way in which one hopes to achieve an objective. A forest strategy, therefore, would describe the ways in which to achieve the set forest policy objective.

Most of the ACs (with the exception of Bulgaria and Poland) have, or are in the process of developing, a forest strategy. Some countries have used different terms to describe their forest strategies, for example, *Forest Development Plan* (Estonia), *Forest Development Programme* (Slovenia) or *National Programme for Development of Forestry and Forest Industry* (Lithuania).

Romania has no separate forest policy, but is developing a forest strategy. Unless the forest strategy contains long-term policy goals approved by parliament, the development of a strategy does not make sense.

In their draft forest strategies, Romania and the Czech Republic do not deal with nature conservation issues specifically in private forests (principle of sector neutrality).

In the formulation of their forest strategies, the EU Accession countries have to use the EU Forestry Strategy, relevant EU pre-accession programmes and relevant EU structural programmes as a framework. The participation of stakeholders in the formulation of these strategies is a very important issue for their viability. However, it seems that the principle of participation in the process does not always get the necessary attention.

Table 8 National forest strategy: participation of nature conservation authorities and NGOs in formulation

Country	Forest strategy
Bulgaria	No.
Czech rep.	No. Pre-accession paper: <i>Forestry Sector Strategy</i> in preparation, nature conservation tasks included, not specifically for private ownership (sector neutrality). Nature conservation authorities and NGOs not involved yet.
Estonia	No. There is a <i>Forest Development Plan</i> , presently being reviewed.
Hungary	No. <i>National Forest Strategy</i> (2000-2010) under preparation with the participation of the Hungarian Academy of Science, nature conservation authorities and NGOs.
Latvia	No. Process of its preparation at the very beginning.
Lithuania	No. <i>National Programme for Development of Forestry and Forest Industry</i> with action plan (up to 2023). Separate forestry strategy paper under preparation.
Poland	No. Data not available.
Romania	Yes (draft). Draft <i>Development Strategy for the Forestry Sector in Romania</i> (2001-2010), publicly discussed in regional and national meetings, written comments solicited by advertising in national newspapers and on national TV. Contains issues on nature conservation, but sector neutral.
Slovakia	Yes. Nature conservation authority and NGOs participated in formulation working groups. Contains measures and objectives, which create "platform" for nature conservation in private forests (e.g. create conditions for associating private forest owners and create a stable extension system)
Slovenia	Yes. Contained in the <i>Forest Development Programme</i> .

Source: Background Report, 2001

Laws are regarded as strategic tools, which one chooses throughout strategy development and bearing in mind the policy goals to be reached. However, most of the countries developed their nature conservation and forest legislation prior to the development of forest policies and strategies. It can be predicted that the present development of forest policies and strategies will be followed in many cases by a necessary review/revision of legislation which may also occur due to the necessary harmonisation of national legislation with the EU legal framework.



With the exception of the Slovakian *Law on the Protection of Nature and Landscape* (Art. 47: Compensation of private owners) and some specific issues on private forests in the Romanian nature conservation and forest legislation, all nature conservation and forest laws in the ten ACs seem to follow the principle of sector neutrality.

Table 9 Forest and nature conservation laws relating to specific nature conservation issues in private forests

Country	Forest/nature conservation laws containing references to nature conservation issues in private forests
Bulgaria	No. (Answer based on judgement by editor). Principle of sector neutrality applies.
Czech Republic	No. Principle of sector neutrality applies. Forest act mentions compensation for limitation of management by nature conservation authority (§ 11 and § 36).
Estonia	No. Principle of sector neutrality applies.
Hungary	No. Principle of sector neutrality applies.
Latvia	No. Principle of sector neutrality applies.
Lithuania	No. Principle of sector neutrality applies.
Poland	No. Principle of sector neutrality applies.
Romania	Yes. Forest Code has special section on private forests: Title III "Private Property Forest Fund". Government Ordinance No. 96/1998, approved by law 141/1999 (regulates forestry regime and administration of Nat. forest fund) sector neutral. Law on Environment Protection No. 137/1995 (Art. 53).
Slovakia	Yes. <i>Law on the Protection of Nature and Landscape</i> (art. 47): Compensation of private owners, forest law sector neutral.
Slovenia	No. Principle of sector neutrality applies

Source: Background Report, 2001

2.6. Forestry extension systems in relation to nature conservation in private forests

Extension requires a systematic approach. The system consists of several elements, such as the extension service (with organisational network and trained personnel), defined and organised target group (in our case private forest owners), extension message and incentives/subsidies to facilitate implementation of extension messages.

In general, one can say that extension systems for the support of the private forest sector are still in the process of development in the CEE countries. Through the privatisation of forest resources a large number of clients for extension were created in a time of general economic transformation. Naturally, the main concern of governments was to prevent the over-utilisation of privatised forest resources, thus "policing" was more important than building institutional networks for extension.

By now, most governments have recognised the importance of extension and are creating different forms of extension service organisations. The types of considered or chosen organisational forms range from private extension consultant systems (e.g. Slovakia) to government-operated forestry extension services (e.g. Latvia).

The primary objective of these extension organisations is to provide private forest owners with knowledge about, and assistance for, sustainable yield forest management.



Table 10 Provision of extension services to private forest owners on nature conservation issues

Country	Services provided by govt.	Services provided by NGOs	Remarks
Bulgaria	No	No	
Czech Republic	Yes	No	Nature protection mentioned in leaflets and booklets published by Ministry of Agriculture. State Forest Enterprise founded by Ministry of Agriculture is very active in nature protection issues. Has long-term <i>PR Programme 2000</i> , which includes nature conservation.
Estonia	No	No	
Hungary	No	Yes	NGOs are active in extension of nature conservation issues: e.g. Pro Silva Hungaria, WWF Forest monitoring programme since 1997, Birdlife Hungary prepared a booklet on nature conservation and afforestation and published a book recently on close-to-nature forest management in a very easy-to-understand style.
Latvia	Yes	Yes	Extension Service of the State Forest Service, Latvian Society of Ornithologists (during establishment of micropreserves etc.), WWF in collaboration with State Forest Service in the Mezole forest.
Lithuania	Yes	Yes	State Forest Enterprise, national parks, Forest Owners Association of Lithuania, Research Institute and many others providing extension services. The Department of Forests and Protected Areas under the Ministry of Environment approves the agendas of courses and seminars for private forest owners.
Poland	Yes	N.A.	Provision of extension services regarding forest management issues to private owners is the responsibility of State Forest Service. However, no data is available on the scope of this activity, especially with regard to nature conservation.
Romania	Yes	No	Extension is provided by qualified experts used to preparing forest management plans. It would be desirable if an NGO with appropriate expertise could develop a profile in this area.
Slovakia	Yes	No	Government indirectly providing extension services on nature conservation, since the scope of extension is aimed at management and protection of forests. Draft forest policy proposes system of private extension/consultancy services.
Slovenia	Yes	No	Forest Service of Slovenia is also transferring and sharing ecological and nature conservation knowledge and information through educational activities, such as seminars etc.

Source: Background Report, 2001

Nature conservation is widely regarded as having little or no relative importance. One could say that it is the responsibility of the nature conservation authorities to provide conservation-related extension assistance to private forest owners.

The cooperation of the nature conservation authorities is regarded as essential in many aspects, however, a separate extension system for private forest owners run by the nature conservation authorities would not be cost-effective and would be a duplication of effort.

Some of the ACs have already selected methods of incorporating nature conservation issues into forestry extension.

The Czech Republic has developed a *PR Programme 2000* and published leaflets/booklets with nature conservation content.

In Lithuania, the Department of Forests and Protected Areas under the Ministry of Environment is responsible for clearing/approving the agendas of training courses for private forest owners, thus having the opportunity to include nature conservation issues.



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In some countries (e.g. Hungary), NGOs are active in providing conservation-related information to private forest owners. However, the organisational standard of forestry extension service organisations in the ten countries is still very low, especially in relation to the incorporation of nature conservation issues.

Forest owners have started to organise themselves. They are forming different types of associations. The level of organisation, however, is still low, since there are bad memories connected with forced collectivisation in the past. Effective forestry and nature conservation extension, however, would require a high level of organisation among private forest owners. Through associations at local, regional and national levels, forest owners (also political voters) could increase their lobbying power for support of the private forest sector.

An important issue for forestry and nature conservation extension is government support in the form of subsidies and incentives.

Table 11 shows that with the exception of Bulgaria, Latvia and Poland, governments of the other Accession countries support nature conservation in both protected and non-protected private forests. In Latvia, the government provides no financial support to owners of either protected or non-protected private forests.

Table 11 Government support of nature conservation in private protected and non-protected forests

Country	In protected private forests	In non-protected private forests
Bulgaria		
Czech Rep.	Yes	Yes
Estonia	Yes	Yes
Hungary	Yes	Yes. No normative support, but possibility to apply for funds from Environment Fund.
Latvia	Not financially	Not financially
Lithuania	Yes	Yes
Poland		
Romania	Yes	Yes
Slovakia	Yes	Yes. By means of the State Fund of Improvement of Forests.
Slovenia	Yes	Yes

Source: Background Report, 2001

In Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia and Poland, no subsidies/compensation are paid to owners of private forests for economic losses incurred through nature conservation provisions.

In Hungary, restrictions relating to nature conservation in protected areas have to be compensated if the restrictions exceed the provisions of the Law on Nature Conservation. Outside protected areas, nature conservation restrictions also have to be compensated. However, the decree on compensation has not been passed yet, which is illegal.

In Latvia, the only "compensation" is the reduction of property tax, if final felling is prohibited. There is a lack of financial resources and political will to provide financial resources. It seems that Slovakia is in a similar situation.

The Slovakian Law on Nature and Landscape says that private owners are to be compensated for restrictions to do with nature conservation but no payments have ever been made.



Table 12 Government subsidies/compensation to private owners of protected forests

Country	Subsidies/compensation
Bulgaria	No.
Czech Republic	Yes. <i>Landscape Care Programme</i> by Ministry of Environment and nature conservation authority or local governments can sign agreement with private owner on management of their land for which subsidies can be claimed.
Estonia	Yes. <i>Key biotopes</i> (The Forest Act, art. 31 (4) and (5)) Substitution of Real Estate Located within Protected Areas (Law on Protected Natural Objects, art 28 (1)) Compensation for Economic Losses Caused by Protection Regime (Law on Protected Natural Objects, art. 28 (1), (2), (4), (5)) Expenditures related to the Designation and Management of Protected Natural Objects (Law on Protected Natural Objects, art. 27 (1) and (2)) Management support for semi-natural habitats (State budget support from Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Environment)
Hungary	No. In protected areas, private owners are supposed to be compensated for restrictions or prohibitions imposed by the nature conservation authority, but only if these restrictions and prohibitions exceed the restrictions and prohibitions prescribed by law. Outside protected areas, prohibitions and restrictions are to be compensated. However, the government decree regulating compensation has unlawfully not been passed yet.
Latvia	No. The only compensation is reduction of property tax, if final felling is prohibited. There is a lack of financial resources and also the political will to provide them.
Lithuania	Yes. Normal subsidies and credits, also for owners of non-protected forests. In addition, according to the Regulations on Management and Use of Private Forests, the preparation of management plans for owners of protected forests are free of charge. All private owners can receive free expert advice.
Poland	No. Reasons are: relatively small number of owners of protected private forests and lack of state budget resources.
Romania	Yes. National Forest Fund provides that state budget pays for the preparation of management plans for individual private forest owners and supports individual owners of private forests with special functions by granting subsidies which represent the value of the goods not harvested due to restrictions imposed by management plans for forests with special protection function.
Slovakia	Yes. According to the Law of Nature and Landscape (Art. 47), compensation should be paid to private forest owners for increased costs or losses resulting from fulfilling obligations in protected forests. However, no compensation has been paid so far on the basis of this legal provision. Normal subsidies are paid to all private forest owners from the State Fund For the Improvement of Forests, aimed also at the enhancement of the ecological management of forests.
Slovenia	Yes. Basic provisions given by Forest Law (1993). The most commonly applied instruments are: income tax relief, compensation (to cover restricted forest utilisation), financing of silvicultural activities.

Source: Background Report, 2001

Governments do not give priority to the support of certain management practices in private forests which would be important from a nature conservation point of view. Only the Czech Republic pays subsidies for the use of horses for “skidding” (hauling logs – horses have a much less negative impact on forest soils compared to large machines) and for not burning timber harvest residues in forest stands. Hungary doesn’t subsidise forest owners for particular management practices, but the owners can apply for funds from the Central Environment Fund. However, the outcome of applications is very uncertain and because considerable work has to be invested in the formulation of applications, the attraction of the Fund for small private forest owners is very low.



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A number of countries have ambitious afforestation programmes which will increase the private forest area, since most afforestation efforts are taking place on private lands. In order to ensure that the new forests are not counter-productive for nature conservation, governments should first of all examine whether the land earmarked for afforestation is at all suitable. Non-forest ecosystems and biotopes of high nature conservation value should not be afforested. If the afforestation site is suitable in principle from a nature conservation and forestry point of view, a government subsidy scheme should encourage the planting of species which are not only site-adapted, but also indigenous, and avoid monocultures.

There seems to be a lot of room for improvement in the development of incentive, subsidy and compensation schemes for nature conservation in existing protected and non-protected private forests as well as in support of afforestation programmes.

One possible solution could be to extend the scope of existing subsidies for forestry to take into account aspects of nature conservation. This would obviously require financial contributions from nature conservation authorities as well.

Table 13 Subsidies for sustainable management practices taking into account nature conservation issues

Country	Keeping to marked skid rails during skidding	Using horses for skidding	Not using pesticides	Not burning residues in stand	Relatively more subsidies for using natural regeneration methods than for replanting	Leaving old trees standing	Complementing reforestation areas with rare and endangered tree and shrub species	Other practices
Bulgaria	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	
Czech Republic	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Skyline skidding, chipping and disbursing logging residues
Estonia	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	For keeping "key biotopes"
Hungary	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No normative support, but one can apply for funds to the Environment Fund
Latvia	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	None
Lithuania	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	None
Poland	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	None
Romania	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	None
Slovakia	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Facultative contributions provided by State Fund for the Improvement of Forests.
Slovenia	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Improvement of wildlife habitat conditions

Source: Background Report, 2001

Table 14 Measures taken in afforestation schemes to consider nature conservation issues

Country	Suitability of land checked by nature conservation authority as part of afforestation permit procedure	More government subsidies for using indigenous rather than non-indigenous species	More government subsidies for creating forests with mixture of species rather than monocultures	Remarks
Bulgaria	No	Yes	Yes	
Czech Republic	Yes	No	Yes	No real afforestation programme.
Estonia	No	No	No	
Hungary	Yes	Yes	Yes	Subsidies for afforestation from Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and possibility to apply for funds from the Environment Fund.
Latvia	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	No afforestation programme.
Lithuania	Yes	No	No	There are no government subsidies for afforestation as yet. Within the EU SAPARD programme, afforestation should be supported. Priority will be given to those applicants who plant indigenous species and no support will be provided for the establishment of pure conifer stands (there should be at least 20% of broad-leaved species).
Poland	Yes	Yes	No	Only the use of indigenous species is supported by government subsidies. No difference in subsidy payments, however, usually mixed stand composition planned for low productive soils.
Romania	No	Yes*	Yes*	*These are basic requirements within the forest management/afforestation planning and authorisation process. (Editor's remark: No information given regarding level of subsidies).
Slovakia	N.a.	N.a.	N.a.	No afforestation programme.
Slovenia	N.a.	N.a.	N.a.	No afforestation programme.

Source: Background Report, 2001



2.7. The influence of EU accession on nature conservation in private forests

SAPARD (EU **S**pecial **A**ccession **P**rogramme for **A**griculture and **R**ural **D**evelopment) is an EU programme financing major agricultural and rural development projects.

It «aims to help candidate countries deal with the problems of the structural adjustment in their agricultural sectors and rural areas, as well as in the implementation of the *acquis communautaire*¹ concerning the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) and related legislation. SAPARD would come into effect on January 1, 2000, and is budgeted until the end of 2006. However, candidate countries may only benefit through SAPARD between the year 2000 and the time they join the Union.» (European Commission website)

SAPARD aims to support the efforts being made by the CEE applicant countries in the pre-accession period as they prepare for their participation in the Common Agricultural Policy and the single market. It involves two major objectives. Firstly, it aims to contribute to the implementation of the *acquis*; secondly, it aims to solve priority and specific problems in the area of agriculture and rural development.

The overall budget for each year of the programme's seven-year run (2000-06) amounts to 520 million Euro, allocated to the EU accession countries according to certain parameters.

Each accession country has prepared its National SAPARD Programme. In principle, there was the opportunity to include the forestry sector in the programme. However, governments either gave no consideration to forestry at all or only assigned it a marginal role. The reasons for this are clearly connected to the low lobbying capacity of the forestry sector. The numerous private forest owners could potentially improve this lobbying capacity, but the present low level of owners' organisation is the main limiting factor in this respect. Especially in regions with high forest cover where forestry plays an important economic role, a well-organised rural institutional network of forestry could play an important role in coordinating rural development projects. It seems that private forest owners and their properties in particular are left out somewhat from the main-stream developments and are not regarded as important actors in rural development.

Table 15 (*Background Report, 2001*) shows that the level of information on SAPARD and its relevance to forestry is relatively low and that the consequences of forestry being left out or being only marginally included have not been fully understood. There would have been a chance, at least at a demonstration level, to use funds from SAPARD to incorporate nature conservation issues into the management of private forests and into the afforestation programmes of private lands. Maybe Poland has a chance to do this with its pilot afforestation programme of 3,000 ha to be funded by SAPARD.

¹ The Community *acquis* or Community patrimony is the body of common rights and obligations which bind all the Member States together within the European Union.



Table 15 The SAPARD programme and nature conservation in private forests

Country	Influences
Bulgaria	A "forestry" measure is planned under SAPARD.
Czech Republic	The SAPARD programme has not been approved yet. Courses for private forest owners are planned under the <i>Country and Agriculture Development Programme of the CR</i> .
Estonia	Difficult to say at this stage, since the SAPARD programme doesn't start until 2002/2003.
Hungary	None of the EU pre-accession programme in Hungary (SAPARD) deals with supporting forests as yet.
Latvia	? ⁽¹⁾
Lithuania	No financial means for afforestation so far. The SAPARD programme may provide more motivation to private land owners to afforest. With subsidies, one can introduce nature conservation conditions.
Poland	In 2001, a pilot project on afforestation of 3,000 ha of privately owned agricultural land is to be started with funds from the SAPARD programme.
Romania	"A positive influence"
Slovakia	Programmes are bringing necessary financial means and knowledge on mechanisms (economic, control, management...) applied in EU member countries.
Slovenia	No influences. Harmonisation of legal framework was continuously done.

Source: Background Report, 2001

(1) Editor's remark: Given answer not understood

In the course of harmonising the national legislative frameworks of the ten ACs with the EU *acquis communautaire*, two EU directives could be of importance for nature conservation in private forests. One is the so-called "Habitats Directive" (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora), the second is the so-called "Birds Directive" (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds).

The ten countries are in the process of selecting proposed sites under the two above-mentioned directives, which together will form the national Natura 2000 network. Many countries are trying to propose sites which are already part of the country's protected area system. However, especially if so-called "priority sites" of special importance fall outside the existing protected area system, additional areas will have to be placed under protection and be managed accordingly.

At this stage no prognosis can be made as to what extent private forests are going to be affected. Only Poland states that private forests will be part of the protection system. However, if private forest areas are affected, then an effective compensation scheme has to be worked out for the economic losses incurred by the private forest owners because of conservation restrictions. The process of site selection has not been without opposition, sometimes serious, of private landowners in EU member countries either.



Table 16 The consequences for private forests of harmonising national nature conservation legislation with the *acquis communautaire* (e.g. "Habitats Directive" and "Birds Directive")

Country	Influences
Bulgaria	No specific information provided.
Czech Republic	Improvement in consulting and education activities for forest owners provided by state forestry and nature conservation authorities. Purification of legal procedures on financial compensation for reduction of owner rights. Private forest owners will be involved in management of SPAs and SACs of the NATURA 2000 network.
Estonia	New Act on Nature Conservation being drafted (to be adopted in 2001), but no specific information given on consequences for nature conservation in private forests.
Hungary	Among others, that private forest owners in Hungary will get the same financial support as private forest owners in EU countries.
Latvia	No consequences predicted, for establishment of new protected sites requested anyway (not depending on EU requirements); Latvian legal restrictions are much stronger than EU demands.
Lithuania	NATURA 2000 network will affect private forests, compensation mechanism for restrictions has to be introduced.
Poland	Private forests will be in the NATURA 2000 network, thus there could be a need for accompanying supporting measures such as subsidies, compensation, extension services.
Romania	No serious inconveniences.
Slovakia	A system of compensation of forest owners has to be introduced with the implementation of the NATURA 2000 network. Opportunity for better and more frequent communication between owners and authorities.
Slovenia	No consequences.

Source: Background Report, 2001



2.8. Major constraints in strengthening nature conservation in private forests and possible areas for IUCN assistance

The experts completing the IUCN questionnaires were also asked to identify the major constraints in strengthening nature conservation in their countries' private forests. The answers given can be summarised as follows.

Six out of the ten (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia) stated that lack of awareness and knowledge/education is the major constraint. Four countries (Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Slovakia) identified the lack of financial resources for subsidies and compensation as a major constraint. Staying on the subject of finance, three countries (Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia) stated that the weak financial position (even «poverty» in the case of Bulgaria) of private owners is a major constraint. Lithuania, Poland and Slovenia cite the fragmentation of forest properties and the large number of private forest owners as a major problem.

Table 17 Major constraints in strengthening nature conservation in private forests

Country	Bulgaria	Czech Republic	Estonia	Hungary	Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Slovakia	Slovenia
Lack of financial resources for subsidies and compensation			x	x	x				x	
Lack of financial means of owners	x							x	x	
Lack of awareness and education	x		x	x	x	x		x		
Owner not trusting ⁽¹⁾ state		x								
No method to assess value of restrictions and losses		x								
No definitions of restricted management		x								
Fragmentation and large number of owners						x	x			x
Lack of legal base and instruments for law enforcement	x									x
Lack of associating owners									x	
Weak institutional framework to administer private forestry sector	x					x				

Source: Background Report, 2001

- (1) Owner does not trust that he/she will be compensated for losses and restrictions incurred through implementing a nature conservation regime.

Editor's remark: The above constraints were identified by the individual national experts completing the IUCN questionnaire prior to the seminar in Sekocin/Warsaw. Additional constraints were identified by the editor in the course of formulating the regional overview (chapter 2) and by the participants of the seminar (see chapter 3). The findings and recommendations of the seminar in chapter 3 represent the consensus of seminar participants, having considered both the questionnaires and the regional overview.



3. SEMINAR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. EU policies, strategies and legislation, forest-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements and international fora

Is the issue of nature conservation in private forests adequately covered in the EU policies, strategies and legislation on forestry and nature conservation?

Do international, multilateral fora, like the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and the Convention on Biological Diversity adequately deal with the issue of nature conservation in private forests?

Findings

Although all seminar participants are involved on a daily basis with forestry and nature conservation issues in their countries, the level of knowledge of participants about the above questions was very varied. Some participants could not respond at all while others were well-informed. In some countries there seems to be a serious communication and information gap on international forestry issues. Participants reported that certain professionals at their institutions are in charge of dealing with a specific international subject area (e.g. for one international convention). These professionals are very well-informed about the subject area they are in charge of, but information is not passed on in many cases, even within their own institution/organisation.

Most forestry professionals in rural areas and private forest owners are not sufficiently informed about nature conservation/forestry-related EU policies, strategies and legislation or of legally binding forest-related multilateral environmental agreements and their implications. Commonly, members of this social group are not aware of any international forest policy agreements at all, let alone their implications for practical forest management.

EU policies and international fora are sector neutral. They do not take into account the specific characteristics of the private sector. However, seminar participants felt that the EU forestry policy/legislative framework was poorly developed as compared to the nature conservation and agricultural policy/legislation. Although seminar participants were aware that the EU had consciously decided not to develop an EU forest policy, seminar participants expressed a need for an EU Private forestry policy, and felt that forestry policy in general should be better elaborated at EU level.

Participants also found that the EU institutional structure for forestry is very weak. The private forest sector is in general not sufficiently involved in the processes of policy/legislation formulation at EU level and is often neglected in international/multilateral forest-related fora.

Recommendations

IUCN should lobby for the appropriate consideration (possibly using some of the present findings and recommendations) of nature conservation issues in private forests to be included in the framework of the EU Forest Strategy. The participation of private forest owners (also from the EU accession countries) should be ensured in any EU forest strategy formulation or modification process.

IUCN could assist in translating the relevant implications of EU nature conservation and forestry policies, strategies, legislation and legally binding decisions of international fora into the national languages of the EU accession countries. The dissemination of this information to national policy-makers, professionals in state administrations/NGOs down to individual private forest owners (information/communication strategy) has to be organised.

There is a need to run pilot projects in the private forest sector which integrate the implementation of objectives, goals and decisions set by different forest- and conservation-related EU policies/strategies/legislation and by numerous nature conservation/forest-related international fora. This is important to demonstrate the expectations from private forest owners, to develop the necessary incentive schemes and to provide feedback to national, EU-level and international policy-makers.



3.2. National policies, strategies, programmes and legislation

Are national forestry and nature conservation policies, strategies, programmes and legislation encouraging nature conservation in private forests (including afforestation areas on private land)?

Findings

Strategies, or strategy elements for nature conservation in specifically private forests and related implementation guidelines are generally missing. In most countries, forestry and nature conservation policies, strategies, programmes and legislation are sector-neutral. They are valid both for private and state-owned forests. In some countries (e.g. Poland), general prescriptions for site-adapted silviculture are regarded as sufficient to ensure nature conservation both in state and private forests. Whereas it is absolutely necessary that legislation is sector-neutral, there is felt to be a need for specific policy, strategy and programme elements. These could support nature conservation in private forests (including nature conservation measures in afforestation programmes on private land). It is justified to give up sector neutrality here, since the private forest sector is in a disadvantageous situation (structure, finance) when compared to the state forest sector.

In many countries, forest and nature conservation policy/strategy formulation or revision is ongoing. However, the level of stakeholder participation (including private forest owners) in this process is very poor or non-existent.

Provided that there are policies and programmes aimed at supporting nature conservation in private forests, there is a need for incentives for private forest owners to encourage implementation of nature conservation measures. The ability of countries to provide financial support for nature conservation is limited due to the general economic situation and due to the low priority given to the forestry sector.

Recommendations

IUCN should use the opportunity of ongoing forest and nature conservation policy/strategy/programme formulation and revision in Central and Eastern Europe to promote the participation of all stakeholders (including private forest owners and NGOs) to thereby ensure adequate incorporation of nature conservation issues. IUCN could support the process of identifying problems and intervention points for solutions in relation to nature conservation measures in private forests of the CEE region. This could be done, for example, through developing guidelines for the promotion of nature conservation which could then be used in national forest and nature conservation policies, strategies and programmes.

IUCN could further elaborate options for incentive schemes serving the effective implementation of planned measures (e.g. eco-certification combined with a reduction in value-added tax on certified forest products).

Since a number of participating countries have plans for varying scales of afforestation, IUCN could assist, if there is an interest, in developing a "check-list for afforestation". This check-list could provide guidance to decision-makers in assessing the suitability of land for afforestation from a nature conservation view (e.g. to avoid the afforestation of valuable natural, non-forest habitats) and in developing a planning framework for the incorporation of nature conservation measures into afforestation schemes.



3.3. Extension assistance

Do state bodies in charge of forestry on the one hand and in charge of nature conservation on the other hand provide formal extension assistance specifically on nature conservation to private forest owners?

Do NGOs dealing with forestry issues on the one hand and with nature conservation issues on the other hand provide specifically nature conservation extension assistance to private forest owners?

Findings

In general, private forest owners lack knowledge of silviculture, but the lack of knowledge is even more severe in the field of nature conservation. One reason for this lies with the owners themselves, who are almost exclusively interested only in the economic function of their forest, sometimes without even taking into account the sustainability of this forest function.

Forest owners are also sceptical of the aims and motivations of government extension agents. In addition, forest extension services are often not provided or services are not effective. If they do exist and work, the extension messages do not contain enough nature conservation elements, but focus almost exclusively on general silviculture. Extension agents are often not sufficiently trained and are not well motivated due to a lack of career opportunities in the field. The state forest administrations/management units provide better career development opportunities. Nature conservation authorities do not generally provide direct extension services to private forest owners and do not cooperate with existing forestry extension services.

There is little or no NGO involvement in providing extension services to private forest owners, especially on nature conservation.

Recommendations

There is an urgent need for education of private forest owners, both in silviculture and nature conservation. In order to avoid duplication and achieve coordination in extension efforts, national stakeholder meetings should be held (with representation of forestry administrations, nature conservation authorities, NGOs and private forest owners). These stakeholder meetings should determine, via a partnership approach, the status and development needs of an effective extension system (consisting of organisation/institution, trained personnel, extension messages, extension methods, extension tools, incentive system etc.). Such national stakeholder meetings could be initiated and facilitated by IUCN.

IUCN could develop an attractive nature conservation training package for private forest owners in collaboration with national nature conservation and forestry authorities and relevant national NGOs, which – translated into national languages – could then be made available to national extension services.

IUCN could encourage and further support national/local NGO action in the private forest sector.

Since close-to-nature forest management practices can harmonise conflicts between nature conservation and economic interests, the training of private owners on close-to-nature forest management should receive adequate attention.



3.4. Forest management

Existing and possible measures to incorporate nature conservation issues into the silviculture of afforestation programmes.

Existing and potential silvicultural measures to foster nature conservation in private forests.

Findings

The existing measures for incorporating nature conservation issues into the silviculture of afforestation programmes are insufficient. In many cases they are not even identified. In most countries, few if any incentives are given for e.g. planting mixed stands rather than monocultures, creating layered plantation edges with shrubs, using at least partly natural succession as a means of afforestation and increasing biodiversity, paying attention to small biotopes etc.

Existing silvicultural standards in the private forest sector do not take adequate account of nature conservation concerns.

One of the biggest constraints for silviculture and nature conservation in relation to existing forests and afforestation is the problem of overly high game populations in most of the participating countries. High game populations lead to a loss of biodiversity. The state forest sector is in a position to solve this problem at least partly by fencing. The private forest sector is economically unable to build costly fences. The fencing of the state forest sector even increases the game pressure on the unfenced private forests and afforestation areas.

Recommendations

Participants identified the need for networking on the subject of afforestation and nature conservation.

Models of best silvicultural practice should be developed for private forests in cooperation with the forest owners (IUCN could facilitate this) to ensure that their motives and objectives are taken into consideration. Some participants even suggested that these models of best silvicultural practice should be elements of a national forest strategy document. IUCN could take up the task of promoting these models in the region.

Close-to-nature forest management, as promoted by the European NGO Pro Silva, seems to be acceptable to both the forestry sector and nature conservation bodies. Close-to-nature forest management is able to harmonise conflicts between economic and nature conservation interests. The *LÖWE Programme* of Lower Saxony in Germany is an example where close-to-nature forest management has been introduced and is practised on a large scale by the state forest authority. In order to avoid reinventing the wheel, the existing national networks of the Pro Silva association could be used for the purpose of close-to-nature forest management promotion in the private forests of Central and Eastern Europe. Seminar participants proposed that IUCN should take up formal discussions with Pro Silva Europe, in order to investigate the possibility of signing a cooperation agreement.

Identified nature conservation measures in afforestation should be effectively implemented through attractive incentive schemes. Good silvicultural practice should be encouraged and rewarded. Incentive schemes should be of a long-term nature to guarantee a certain financial security for forest owners. Continual changes in incentive scheme objectives and content do not create the environment for investments in nature conservation measures.

The conflict between hunting (with their strong political lobby) on the one side and forestry/nature conservation on the other side concerning excessive game populations has to be tackled. This could be done through public information campaigns, through confronting politicians with the economic and ecological consequences of excessive game populations and through public discussion of the issue. Fencing is costly and inappropriate to solve the problem. A "healthy" balance between forest and game has to be created. If hunters have to pay landowners for damage done by game, it will be in their interest to reduce game populations. Payment schemes for game damage, however, have to be fair to both landowners and hunters. IUCN should lobby for an integrated management concept, where game is a resource to be managed as part of the overall forest landscape.



3.5. National and EU financial mechanisms

Existing and desirable national financial mechanisms to strengthen nature conservation in afforestation programmes on private land and in private forests.

Existing and desirable EU/international financial mechanisms to strengthen nature conservation in afforestation programmes on private lands and in private forests.

Findings

Forest-related national financial incentive mechanisms exist in all countries but they are uncertain and ineffective in promoting nature conservation objectives within the private forest sector. Even though compensation mechanisms for nature conservation restrictions resulting in economic losses exist in some countries (e.g. Slovakia), no payments have been made as yet. In other countries (e.g. Hungary), a compensation scheme is prescribed by law, but has not come into effect due to a lack of political will combined with lack of financial means.

The principal opportunity for forestry to be incorporated into national EU pre-accession funding for agriculture and rural development (SAPARD) has been given. However, most accession countries gave a low priority or only a marginal role to forestry, due to the low lobbying capacities of forestry administrations and low organisational level of interest representation of the private forest sector, which has a potential high political bargaining power.

There are national funds like the National Foundation for Environmental Protection and Water Management in Poland or the Central Environment Fund in Hungary, which are supported by money paid as eco-taxes, paid by industries for the use or pollution of natural resources. The distribution of these moneys should be reorganised in such a way that sufficient financial means are available to compensate private forest owners for economic losses incurred by implementing nature conservation measures. Furthermore, incentives should be provided to private forest owners for engaging in nature-friendly practices on a voluntary basis.

In most countries, the concepts of “Debt for Nature Swap” or “Contractual Nature Conservation” are not really achieving the desired results or living up to expectations.

Recommendations

An existing database on different financial mechanisms in Europe exists in Estonia. Its completion, updating and dissemination could be a task for IUCN.

Private forest owner representation should be better organised in order to lobby for more financial support from redistributed international and national resources.

Financial mechanisms should be planned and integrated into national forest strategy documents in consultation with all stakeholders. Incentives supporting best practices should thereby receive a high priority.

IUCN could support the preparation and implementation of pilot projects on contract nature conservation. IUCN could assist in encouraging NGOs and sponsors to engage in such solutions.

IUCN could carry out a survey on financial mechanisms used in other parts of the world and assess their applicability for Central and Eastern European countries, if this has not been done already. The dissemination of the survey results or of the existing information could provide a very useful tool for national decision-makers.

IUCN could establish pilot eco-labelling projects, where forest products produced in a nature-friendly way are taxed at a lower rate (e.g. lower VAT) than forest products from conventionally managed forests. IUCN could further consider supporting the use of existing forest certification schemes, like the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

Participants further suggested that existing international funding opportunities, like the Global Environment Facility could be used at a regional level for the strengthening of nature conservation in private forests.



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