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***Volker Sasse, Constanze Schaaff and
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Coordination of policies related to forest management

Volker Sasse, Constanze Schaaff and Franz Schmithüsen

Introduction

The subject of lacking coordination between the various forest management policies was perceived as an issue from a range of international meetings in Europe, namely from the Joint Session of the FAO European Forestry Commission and Timber Committee in Geneva October 2004 (UNECE/FAO, 2004). Also the EU forestry strategy addresses the matter explicitly (EC, 2005). An initial brainstorming meeting on the subject in February 2005 was held at FAO SEUR in Budapest. The meeting recognized that the lack of coordination between policies addressing forest management in Europe may lead to contradictions and conflicts between the respective policy instruments and hinder an adequate comprehensive respond of policies to societal demands (FAO SEUR, 2005). The paper identifies different aspects to be considered in this context as a basis for further discussion among stakeholders.

Changing societal demands influencing forest management

The demands of society towards the use of forests have changed during last decades significantly. Apart from the economic function, forests play an increasingly important role in the provision of ecological and socio-cultural externalities such as recreation, carbon sequestration, and protection against risks from natural hazards as well as water filtration, biodiversity and landscape conservation. O' Leary and Elands (2002) conducted a survey on expectations of local communities and forest owners towards forest functions and revealed that environmental benefits (the protection of air, water and soil, nature conservation) and socio-cultural functions (providing landscape conservation and recreation opportunities) are evaluated at least as high and under certain conditions even higher than economic functions (business activities including creation of jobs) in all studied groups and countries (Austria, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands and Spain).

The structure of societal demands on forestry land use varies between European countries and sub-regions, as well as among stakeholders (Elands and Wiersum, 2002). Even though sufficient data on Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) are yet missing, a general shift away from solely economic functions towards a high acceptance of the multifunctional role of forests can be observed (Rametsteiner and Kraxner, 2003). The latter study clearly states that environmental benefits from forests such as preservation of natural environment and biodiversity are widely recognized valued roles of European forests. In terms of provision of environmental values, CEEC countries play a comparatively important role as a considerable proportion of the still existing natural and semi-natural forest areas are located here (UNECE/FAO, 2003). The Central and Eastern European are at the same time of great importance for the preservation of wildlife (in particular large carnivores) and biodiversity conservation (IUCN, 2004).

Economically, forestry provides employment in rural areas, wood for industrial processing, and as an energy source, non-wood forest products, and marketable services. The forestry's sector contribution to GDP is typically more than 10 % in some Scandinavian and Baltic countries, in the EU/EFTA sub-region its share of GDP turns around 1%, whereas in CEEC and CIS countries in amounts to 3-4% (EEA, 2003). Considering the market developments the share of roundwood removals has so far generally shown a decreasing trend in a number of European countries including Scandinavia (EC, 2003, Saastamoinen, 2002). However, the

economic growth in CIS countries and partly in CEEC is expected to be much higher than in Western Europe. In light of this the use of timber resources can play in Eastern Europe, at least temporarily and mainly in rural areas, an important role for economic recovery during the transition process towards a market economy. To look into the future of the forest sector in the EU/EFTA region removals are expected to grow steadily but become less important, in comparison to social and environmental benefits from forests. Outcomes of the European Forest Sector Outlook Study (UNECE/FAO 2005), forecast a significant increase of roundwood production and net-exports of CIS countries. In Western Europe (EU/EFTA region), the production of roundwood but also of forest products in general competes increasingly with imports mainly from the East, and net-imports are expected to increase over the decades (UNECE/FAO, 2005). Partly in CEEC there are economic potentials to be recognized and a shift from net-exports of roundwood to net-imports is expected to take place here.

Blombäck et al. (2003) studied the development of employment within the forest sector in Europe. Considering the higher growth of productivity in comparison to roundwood production volumes the outlook on employment in forestry is rather gloomy, though there are regional differences. Whereas in the Western European and CEEC countries employment is expected to decrease in the forestry sector, the situation is thought to stabilize in CIS countries. The described increase of demand in social and environmental benefits together with the economic potential in the East puts the question about the future of forestry in Europe on the agenda and leads to the need of a careful analysis of how the policy framework is in a condition to balance the various interests of stakeholder groups.

Sustainable development and forest management

This term has been introduced onto the international agenda with the Brundtland report (WCDE, 1987) defining sustainable development as “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The goal is to ensure long-term welfare of modern societies. With the introduction of the concept the framework of policy making on global, regional and national levels has been changed. At the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio the principle of sustainable development has been incorporated into the final declaration and its plan of action (AGENDA 21). The Rio Summit identified three Pillars of sustainable development (UNCED, 1992) to be addressed in a balanced manner:

- Social progress (Equity, Social cohesion, Social mobility, Participation, Cultural identity),
- Economic growth (Growth, Efficiency, Stability),
- Environmental protection (Healthy environment for humans, Rational use of renewable natural resources, Conservation of non-renewable natural resources, Participation, Cultural identity).

This approach was designed as a global and regional approach and does not ask for a balanced input from particular sectors, such as forestry or forest management in general.

The Forest Principles adopted at the Rio Summit have defined the measures to be taken in order to sustainably manage all types of forests: Referring to the goals of sustainable development, forests should meet the social, economic, ecological, cultural and spiritual needs of present and future generations (UNCED, 1992). Consequently, the principle of sustainable forest management was established, defining new modes of management of the forest resources (MCPFE, 1993). This approach, as widely promoted to the public as a “balanced” one, frequently neglects, however, the specific structure and the existing

imbalances between different societal demands. Society does, in fact, not request a balanced input from particular sector, but specific economic, environmental and social goods and services respectively benefits. It has been stated that the community has to decide what at what levels and what kind of mix between environmental, social and economic values can provide an acceptable balance for sustainable forest management (Mc Donald and Lane, 2004).

Forest legislation has developed and expanded over recent years according to changes in societal demands, considering particularly the increasing multi-functionality of forests and forest land (Cirelli and Schmithüsen, 1999; Schmithüsen et al., 2000; Schmithüsen 2003a and 2003b). Moreover, the diversification and accentuation of societal demands towards different kinds of uses and management has lead to an increasing number of public policy domains addressing directly or indirectly forest production and forest preservation. This is well reflected in the diverse policy instruments and institutions dealing with forest land at various political levels (Figure 1). Agriculture, energy, water management policies, for instance, do not only influence forest land through the market framework but have as well direct impacts in changing its use (Thoroe et al., 2004). The traditional forestry institutions risk to become marginalized if they are not able to satisfactorily respond to market as well as policy changes following changes in societal demands.

At the pan-European level the intergovernmental Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) elaborated the concept of Sustainable Forest Management for the European region, using the “balanced” approach, and defined its goal as using forest in such a way that they maintain their capacity to “... fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels...” (MCPFE, 1993). To evaluate progress in sustainable forest management and to inform the public adequately about the contribution of land management to overall welfare, the forestry community has identified six pan-European criteria (carbon cycles, health and vitality, production, biodiversity, protective function (soil and water), socio-economic functions), and a range of roughly 60 quantitative and qualitative indicators reflecting the actual situation in each country (Glück and Voitleitner, 2000). The European Union’s legislative and institutional framework appears to be split up into a range of policy areas respectively such as environment, agriculture, rural development and energy, all simultaneously dealing with certain forestry aspects (EC, 2005). The European Commission’s Forestry strategy (1999) clearly states that forestry policy is primarily within the competences of the member states. On an EU level there are, however, legally binding instruments which refer to the environmental function of forests, e.g. measures to maintain biodiversity of forests and to preserve habitats for endangered species (NATURA 2000). Specific forestry measures are foreseen in the framework of the Common Agriculture Policy.

Despite the split up of policies there exist common approaches in legislation throughout Europe. Bauer et al. (2004) have analyzed similarities and common approaches in European national forest legislation. The following three legal issues have been examined in 23 countries: (1) reforestation obligations after logging through final cutting or loss of forest cover due to fire and natural calamities, (2) regulations concerning public access to forests and (3) public use of non-wood forest products occurring on forest land. It turned out that all three legal issues are addressed by the studied national legislation. In most countries legislation includes regulations for obligatory reforestation. Public access to forests is allowed in most of the analyzed countries, although, forest owners have specific rights to limit such access. Limitations exist mainly with regard to nature protection in order to protect replanted

or naturally regenerated forest stands. In most of the examined countries the public has usage rights to collect some non-wood forest products.

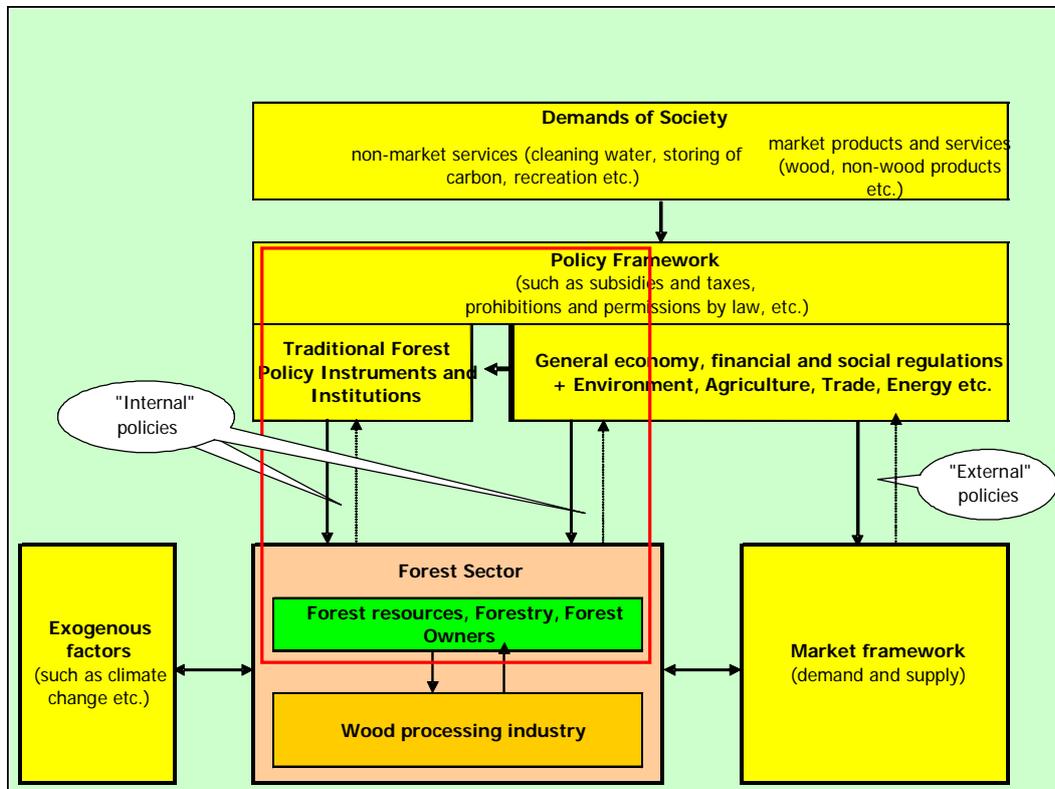


Figure 1: Policy framework of forest management as determined by internally and externally factors (Thoroe et al. 2004, modified)

At the national level there are examples, where state forest management and state administration are strictly separated. But in many countries the state has a double function: On the one hand being a significant forest owner and manager the state aims for incomes from forestry. In comparison to the private forest owners state forest institutions may be big players on the market and have potentials to influence forest management significantly. On the other hand being responsible for governance of forest land in general the state acts actively according to the public demand toward social and environmental benefits. Since state has to take care of multiple functions of forest land, its policy instruments are often residing in different policy institutions. It seems to be difficult to create distinct policy responds to societal demands thus resulting in overlapping interests and conflicts between society in general and different forest managers and stakeholders in particular.

With regard to private owners, many of them hold only a few hectares of forest land and their profits, coming from forestry represent a minor share of their overall income. Larger private forest owners, whose number is limited, refer frequently to other interests from their forest ownership, such as traditions, hunting etc. They often criticize that they are forced by law to adapt their forestry management to the social and environmental requirements without adequate compensation. Some conflicts may also result from contradictory perceptions on forestry operations by different stakeholder groups. Young and Wesner (2003) measured the effects of forestry land use against public expectations in aesthetic values of forests. The

study shows that there are potentials for better education and information of the public on the background of forestry measures.

National Forest Programs (NFPs) have been developed during the last years (Humphreys, 2004a). NFPs have been introduced to put sustainable forest management into implementation. NFPs are also planned to ensure an effective policy framework through integrated and participatory approaches and policy strategies (UN, 1997). Through its principle of subsidiarity, EU is encouraging NFP processes in the member countries (EC, 2005). At the same time it should be noted that NFPs are limited to the national level and are in many European countries yet in the initial state of implementation (Humphreys, 2004a). Looking at the legal framework at country level it appears that forest management is again split up in several policy areas e.g. environmental policy and forestry policy.

Options for improved coordination

Following the above mentioned observations, it can be concluded that the future development of forest management in Europe in terms of wood production is mainly dominated by the natural resources and economic potentials in Eastern Europe, mainly in CIS. In light of this, the policy framework in CEEC and CIS should enlarge its focus towards social and environmental benefits, especially given the chance to adapt to changing demands within the transition process and its consecutive institutional reforms. Particularly in CIS countries, implementing a broader concept of forest management (adapted to changing societal demands) into the strongly traditional forestry structures may prevent the countries to go through the fragmentation process as observed for Western Europe.

In order to better coordinate the relevant policy fields at national level, an institutional bundling of the various forest management related instruments in the responsibility of one comprehensive state institution might be on the political agenda to assure the optimal provision of economic, social and environmental benefits and to avoid partly controversial decision making in various state structures. This could happen under the lead of one ministry such as Environment, Rural Development, Agriculture etc. NFPs might be an appropriate tool to improve coordination (Humphreys, 2004b). In some countries, e.g. in Czech Republic concrete steps in this direction have been undertaken combining for example forestry and environmental issues under one ministry, in this case the Ministry of Environment. Also further steps towards a separation of state forest management and state governance of the sector seem to be a relevant policy objective. With this regard, there are positive experiences and attempts in many European countries to be acknowledged (World Bank, 2005).

On an EU level, it is also recommended by the communication on the implementation of the EU forestry strategy to advance coordination activities of different policy areas in one common direction (EC, 2005). Hence, the EU Commission will further analyze over-lapping and possible contradictions between the various Directorate-General's dealing with forest sector related issues (mainly Directorate-General for Environment, Enterprise, Trade, Research, General Development, Rural development and Agriculture respectively (Puelzl, 2005)) and move ahead towards a more coordinated approach, possibly using the Standing Committee on Forestry or the Inter-Service Group of the Commission as a vehicle. Such changes could be a major input for the global dialogue on a forest management convention as well as on national coordination of forest management policies.

Another option to further coordination could be a regional forest management instrument. Such an instrument (e.g. European forest management convention) represents a tool to comprise different policy areas, mitigating overlaps and discrepancies of European policies.

In order to put up a more coordinated policy framework, the existing common aspects in national forestry related legislation could be used as a base for such a venture. A bottom up approach would be a prerequisite for an agreement and can ensure that a new instrument is widely accepted by the European governments.

A regional instrument could also be initiated on a sub-regional level, for instance, as a forest management Convention (e.g. Balkan countries, the Caucasus or the Baltic States). This would have several advantages to make an implementation easier: already existing common initiatives could be used as vehicles and the instrument could be based on a common denominator between countries with quite similar natural conditions. To combine governments' forest policies on a sub-regional level would have vertical impact, providing a raw model for a European initiative and contributing horizontally in coordinating policies on national levels.

Aiming for better cooperation and coordination among the countries in the Carpathian Region the Ministers of Environment of Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovak Republic and Ukraine signed on May 2003 the "Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians", also known as "Carpathian Convention", which entered into force on 4 January 2006 (www.carpathianconvention.org). The Convention addresses issues of forest land use in Article 4 "Conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity" as well as in Article 7 "Sustainable agriculture and forestry".

A meeting of the Heads of Forestry, which took place in Budapest in May 2005, addressed the issue of coordination of forest management related policies on the national and international level to ensure the appropriate contribution of forest management to sustainable development in Carpathian region. With the aim to harmonize forest policy approaches of the Carpathian region countries the meeting discussed various ground rules in the relationship between forest and society, identified common issues and formulated key items for a draft Protocol on forest management. The coordination between the two major policy areas "Forestry" and "Nature conservation" remains a reasonable objective to be addressed in future activities on the implementation of the Carpathian Convention.

Conclusions

- Public demands in social and environmental benefits of forests, in particular with regard to carbon storage, bio-energy, biodiversity and landscape protection are increasing. Forestry can make important contributions providing essential environmental and social services. In a number of regions and for certain groups of forest owners the production of roundwood is losing its relative importance as a source of income and inputs to employment are decreasing.
- Public demands for goods and services change differently in the various countries and sub-regions depending on national traditions and the overall policy framework. There is a high focus on forestry and wood production in Eastern Europe, in particular in the CIS countries, leading to significant net-exports of forest products. These exports will impact competitiveness of and income from roundwood production in Western Europe.
- Traditionally the principle of sustainability has focused on long-term income opportunities from wood production. During the 1990s the principle of sustainable development was introduced on the international political agenda with the goal to

ensure long-term welfare of modern societies emphasizing a balanced development of economic, social and environmental values.

- Frequently traditional forestry institutions emphasize sustainable forest management as the main policy approach balancing a priori the economic values for society with the social and environmental benefits. However, society does not request a balanced input from a particular sector, but demands specific economic, environmental and social inputs depending on the prevailing concrete conditions.
- During recent decades a policy vacuum on social and environmental issues evolved which is increasingly filled by interventions from policy domains and stakeholder groups, beyond the traditional forestry community, claiming the governance over issues related to social and environmental aspects of forest management. Environmental institutions and instruments that have been considerably empowered at the global level become an important cross-sector policy area with rising impact at the national level as well.
- International political instruments related directly to forestry are mainly based on non-legally binding commitments. Other policy areas developed strong international commitments and legally binding instruments dealing increasingly with forest and forestry related issues. The split-up of the policy framework for forestry development and the lack of coordination between the various policy approaches leads to an unsatisfactory contribution of forestry to overall sustainable development.
- National forest programs go in line with the general trend in environmental policy to reach more coordination through integrated approaches among stakeholders and policy strategies. A special focus has to be put on the development of a consistent forest management policy framework in CEEC and CIS countries in which the transition process gives the chance to adapt policies to changing demands in society.
- Besides structural differences in public demands there are common approaches in forest related legislation in Europe. This refers in particular to reforestation obligations assuring a permanent forest cover and productive forest stands; regulations concerning public access to forests, and rights of the public to use certain categories of non-wood forest products subject to certain conditions specified by the forest legislation.
- On the whole there is need to enlarge the focus in Eastern Europe towards social and environmental benefits, to bundle forest related public policies institutionally, to foster coordination of forest related regulations within EU institutions, and to explore the possibilities of arriving at a Pan-European forest management instrument.

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Useful Links

Carpathian Convention

http://www.ceeweb.org/workingareas/conventions/carpathian/docs/carpathian_conv.pdf

UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

<http://www.unccd.int/main.php>

United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

<http://www.un.org/esa/forests>

NATURA 2000

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/home.htm>

Common Agricultural Policy

http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/lisbon/index_en.htm

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

<http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity

<http://www.biodiv.org/default.shtml>

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