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# ANALYSIS OF THE POLICY AND MODELS FOR FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT IN BULGARIA

## ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to analyse and evaluate the models for forestry development in Bulgaria. It is important to bear in mind that the structure of forest ownership is predominantly state-owned, which requires and necessitates that the state takes on the main functions in formulating and implementing forest policy, ensuring the strategic management of the sector through the development and implementation of strategies, plans and programmes at different levels and the role of state institutions and their structures in policy implementation, management and control. In this direction, it is discussed how far the state can go without going into specific examples. Important is the structured model, which is assumed to be in line with European forestry policies. At the same time, measures and the implementation of specific activities and policies are proposed to demonstrate the better management of the sector and its vitality. In this paper we seek to develop a methodological framework for structuring and functionally managing forestry with an accompanying assessment and analysis of the management structure.

**KEYWORDS:** development, forest sector, management, ecology, forest, policy, control

**JEL:** R14, Q23, Q28

## INTRODUCTION

The Forest Policy sets out the long-term strategic objectives and the key principles underpinning the development of the forest sector. Forest policy is an element of economic policy. Forest policy can be defined as a certain approach, a method of consistent actions of the state, institutions, society, to take decisions for the harmonisation and future development of the system "forest - forestry - society", through the management process. The main objective of forestry policy should be: the development and strategic management of forests and forestry by balancing societal interests related to creating a favourable environment for economic development, maintaining the ecological benefits of the forest and ensuring the social functions of the forest. Forest policy should be closely linked to agricultural policy, regional development, industrial policy, tourism, employment and especially ecology and environmental protection (Todorova, 2016) (Paligorov, 2011, p. 10). A key principle of the policy is multifunctional forest management. The policy functions of planning, regulation, containment and support need to be implemented in a balanced and coherent manner through the application of the policy instruments of legislation, institutional structure, information provision and financing. The term 'function' in the management literature refers to a specialised type of activity characterised by the homogeneity of the work carried out and its orientation towards the achievement of a specific objective (Paligorov, 2011). This links the concept to the relationships between individual actors in a process and their actions that lead to some particular outcome. Function

in this case is an expression of the relationship between forest and human, i.e. it expresses the network of relationships in the forest - forestry - society system. The aim of this paper is to analyze and evaluate the policy, models of forestry development in Bulgaria. The main tasks are directly related to the implementation of forestry policy and activities to improve the condition of forests lead to an increase in the quantity and quality of forest products and functions - economic, ecological and social, and vice versa - when the forest area decreases (logging, drying, fires, etc.), the volume of products and functions decrease in the long term. Therefore, forestry policy, through targeted action, should aim to restore forests and, in the long term, expect from them a greater quantity and quality of forest products and functions. In methodological terms, the ways and means of implementing and developing forest management. Moreover, as a full member, Bulgaria's forestry policy is fully aligned with that of the EU and global forest management requirements. In 1987, in a report entitled 'Our Common Future', presented to the UN World Commission on Environment and Development, also known as the 'Brundtland Report', a new idea for managing natural resources and the natural environment appeared for the first time, called - Sustainable Development. There is no precise and categorical definition of sustainable development, so the understanding of development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs is accepted. This concept was later developed at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, and reflected in the document Principles for the Sustainable Management of Global Forests. This document stresses the requirement that 'forest resources and forest lands should be managed to meet the social, economic, environmental, cultural and spiritual needs of people of present and future generations'. In this direction, in this presentation, we will focus on those issues and postulates that concern the principled implementation of sustainable development policies.

## **INTRODUCING THE NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE TORRENS**

Sustainable forest management is an intrinsic element of the policy strategy for forestry development. Forests are multifunctional and fulfil economic, social and environmental objectives. They provide habitats for animals and plants and play a primary role in climate change mitigation and other environmental services. In 2013, an EU Forest Strategy was developed (A new EU forest strategy: on forests and the forestry sector, 1993), defining sustainable forest management as "Sustainable forest management means using forests and woodlands in a way and to the extent that their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and potential to fulfil, now and in the future, appropriate ecological, economic and social functions at local, national and global levels without causing harm to other ecosystems". Europe has a long tradition of sustainable forest management, which is reflected in the principles of the FOREST EUROPE programme (Marušáková, et al., 2019), implemented in Member States' policies and supported by the EU. This is a dynamic concept with international, regional and local levels that needs to be implemented by forest managers on the ground. The main guiding principles are:

- sustainable forest management and the multifunctional role of forests, balancing the provision of multiple goods and services and ensuring forest conservation;
- efficient use of resources, optimising the contribution of forests and the forestry sector to rural development, growth and job creation;
- global responsibility for forests, promoting sustainable production and consumption of forest products.

At the international level, forestry objectives have been summarised in recent years in a relatively simple concept of sustainable forest development. However, the physical characteristics of forests, as well as the driving forces determining the current state of forestry in different countries, vary widely. This makes it necessary to use a variety of means to approach sustainable development. It is also important to stress that forestry is only one sector of society, while the need for sustainable development encompasses all aspects of social life. There are very strong linkages between forestry and other sectors - linkages that often have a direct impact on forest management. Solberg and Rykowski<sup>1</sup> point out that in many countries the forestry sector occupies a very small part of the overall economy of the country, but its importance is great for both regional development and the environment, i.e. the policies followed in other sectors are very important for forestry. The conclusion is therefore that policies related to land use, energy, environment, trade, transport, regional development and the economy in general have a strong influence on the functioning and potential of the forestry sector. The sustainable development of forestry lies in the complex fundamental unity of its three components - economic, social and environmental. In this respect, the opinion of some authors<sup>2</sup> can be fully accepted that when a system is economically sustainable, and therefore competitive and efficient, it implies positive social conditions and makes it possible to allocate resources to the protection and improvement of the ecological state of forests, and hence of the environment. The conclusion is that the economic prosperity of forestry enterprises in particular and the sector as a whole is a basic prerequisite and criterion for the sustainable development of the forestry sector. In the concept of sustainable development there are several indicators adopted for measurement, but it cannot be measured categorically (quantitatively), especially in the field of forestry, therefore sustainable development is not the subject of research in this thesis.

## **APPLICATION OF FOREST LEGISLATION IN SHAPING COMMON REGIONAL POLICY**

Forest legislation is a key instrument of forest policy. Since Bulgaria's accession to the EU and the adoption of the new Forest Law in 2011, the Bulgarian legislation has been fully aligned with the European legislation, including the principles of sustainable management and multifunctional forest management. The Law regulates the public relations related to the protection, management and use of forest areas in Bulgaria, with the aim of ensuring multifunctional and sustainable management of forest ecosystems and responsible institutions for the implementation of forestry policy. The main objectives set out in the Forest Act<sup>3</sup> are: to protect, improve the condition and increase the area of forests; to ensure and maintain the ecosystem, social and economic functions of forest areas and the effective and efficient use of

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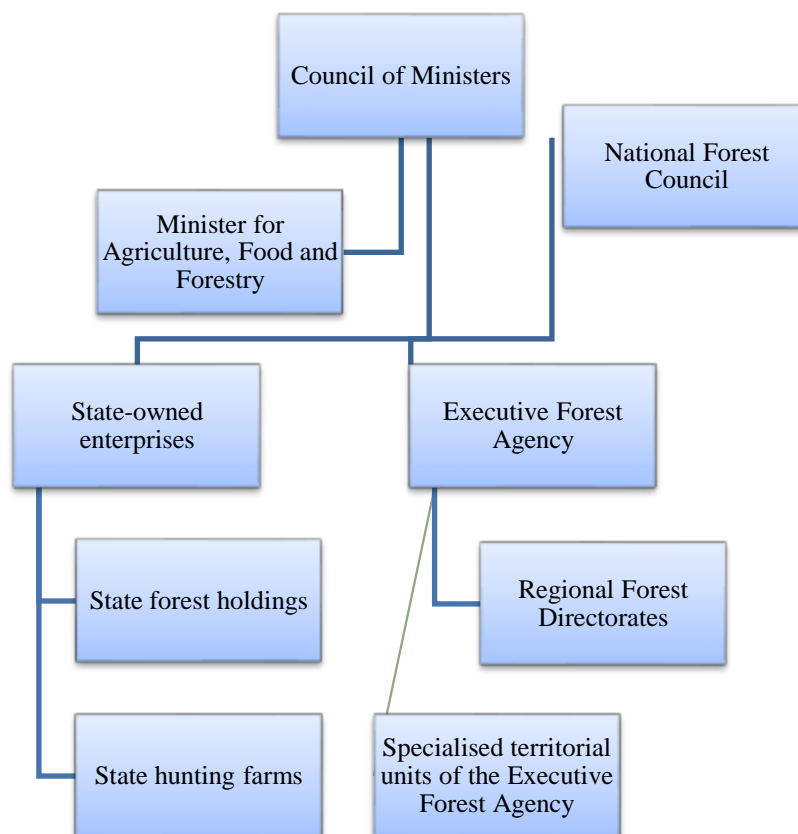
<sup>1</sup> There again

<sup>2</sup> Khadzhieva, V. et al. State and opportunities for sustainable development of agriculture. Management and Sustainable Development, issue 1-2, 2004, p. 249

<sup>3</sup> SG 19 of 8.03.2011, in force from 9.04.2011, amended by SG 43 of 7.06.2011, SG 38 of 18.05.2012, in force from 1.07.2012, amend. and suppl., issue 60 of 7.08.2012, amend., issue 82 of 26.10.2012, in force from 26.11.2012, issue 102 of 21.12.2012, Art. 15 of 15.02.2013, in force as of 1.01.2014, amended and supplemented, Art. 27 of 15.03.2013, amended, Art. 66 of 26.07.2013, in force as of 26.07.2013, Art. 109 of 20.12.2013, as amended, Art. 28 of 28.03.2014, as amended, Art. 53 of 27.06.2014, Art. 61 of 25.07.2014, Art. 98 of 28.11.2014, in force as of 28.11.2014, amend. and supplemented, issue 60 of 7.08.2015, in force as of 7.08.2015, amend. 79 of 13.10.2015, in force from 1.08.2016, amend. and supplemented, issue 100 of 18.12.2015, amend., issue 13 of 16.02.2016, in force from 15.04.2016, issue 15 of 23.02.2016, issue 57 of 22.07.2016, issue 61 of 5.08.2016, in force from 5.08.2016, issue 57 of 22.07.2016, issue 61 of 5.08.2016, amend. 95 of 29.11.2016, amended and supplemented, issue 13 of 7.02.2017, amended, issue 58 of 18.07.2017, in force from 18.07.2017, amended and supplemented, issue 103 of 28.12.2017, in force from 1.01.2018, issue 17 of 23.02.2018, in force from 23.02.2018.

forest resources, production of wood and non-wood forest products through environmentally sound management of forest areas.

**Figure 1.** Forest governance and policy structure



*Source: author's representation.*

The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry is the central sole body of the executive power that manages, coordinates and controls the implementation of the state policy in the field of forestry and hunting and forest land protection. It exercises the rights of the State as the owner of the capital in commercial companies with State participation in the capital and in State enterprises in the field of forestry. In exercising his powers, the Minister shall interact with other ministers and with the bodies of the executive power to pursue a unified State policy and shall be accountable for his activities to the Council of Ministers and the National Assembly. A National Forestry Council<sup>4</sup> is established as an advisory body to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry to discuss major forestry issues. The National Forestry Council shall include representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests, the Ministry of Environment and Water, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Justice, the Executive Forestry Agency, state enterprises, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, municipalities and other forest owners and non-profit legal entities whose activities are related to forest management and conservation. The main function of the Council is to assist the Minister in the implementation of state policy in the field of forestry.

<sup>4</sup> See Art. 155. (amend. - SG 58/2017, in force from 18.07.2017)

## SPECIFICITY OF STATE POLICY IN THE FIELD OF FORESTRY

State policy in the field of forestry is implemented by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry through the Executive Forestry Agency<sup>5</sup>. The EAG supports the development and coordinates the implementation of the strategic documents in the field of forestry, manages and supervises the activities of the RFG and the specialised territorial units. The EAG and the RDGs are legal entities with budgetary support and are managed by executive directors. The EAG supervises the implementation of state policies for sustainable management of the forestry sector, coordinates and supervises forest conservation and protection, supervises forest reproductive materials, implements international and national forestry programmes and projects; participates in the work of the European Commission's subsidiary bodies supporting its activities in the field of forestry and liaises with other international organisations; provides information, advice and assistance to forest owners, legal entities and other stakeholders. The activities of the EAG are organised in 9 directorates. There are 16 IAG territorial units - the Regional Forest Directorates (RFDs). The structure of the IAG also includes the Forest Seed Control Stations (FSS) in Sofia and Plovdiv, the Forest Protection Stations (FPS) in Varna, Sofia and Plovdiv and the publishing house of the magazine "Forest". The Executive Forestry Agency is responsible for the management of the nature parks through 11 specialised territorial divisions established for this purpose - nature park directorates, which are third-level budget administrators and function according to the structural regulations. For the purposes of sustainable management of these areas, 10-year management plans are developed and adopted. The eleven directorates of nature parks are: SPN Bulgarka, SPN Belasitsa, SPN Persina, SPN Rila Monastery, SPN Rusenski lom, SPN Shumensko Plateau, SPN Sinite kamani, SPN Strandja, SPN Vitosha, SPN Vrachanski balkan, SPN Golden Sands. The IAG has a key role in mitigating the effects of climate change and a significant contribution through the Programme of Measures for Adaptation of Forests in the Republic of Bulgaria and Reduction of the Negative Impact of Climate Change on them. The Forest Act (FA). Thus, the legislation provides for the establishment of State Forest Enterprises, which operate in accordance with the provisions of the Forest Act, the Commercial Law and the Regulations on the Organisation of the Activities of State Enterprises under Article 163 of the Forest Act<sup>6</sup>. For the management of state-owned forest territories that are not assigned to departments or legal entities, 6 state enterprises have been established (North-Eastern State Enterprise, North-Central State Enterprise, North-Western State Enterprise; South-Eastern State Enterprise, South-Western State Enterprise and South-Central State Enterprise). The enterprises are legal entities with the status of state-owned enterprises under Article 62(3) of the Commercial Law. The areas of operation of the State Enterprises shall be determined by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. They have a two-level structure: 1) central administration; 2) territorial subdivisions - State forestry holdings and State hunting holdings.

Among the main activities that SOEs perform are<sup>7</sup> :

- a) implementation of forest management plans for forest areas - state ownership;
- b) implementation of hunting management plans in state hunting farms and in state forest holdings;

<sup>5</sup> See Art. 154. 154 of the Law on Forests (amend. - SG 58/2017, in force from 18.07.2017)

<sup>6</sup>See Art. 163 of the Law on Forests, SG No. 19 of 8.03.2011, amended and supplemented by SG No. 17 of 23.02.2018, in force since 23.02.2018;

<sup>7</sup>See Art. 165 of the Law on Forests, SG No. 19 of 8.03.2011, amended and supplemented by SG No. 17 of 23.02.2018, in force since 23.02.2018;



- c) implementation of maintenance and/or restoration activities in state-owned forest areas, as provided for in the management plans of the protected areas;
- d) organizing and conducting activities for the protection of state-owned forest areas;
- e) organising and conducting anti-erosion measures;
- f) maintaining ecosystem diversity and conserving biological diversity in them;
- g) creation of new forests on agricultural land; and
- h) protection of forest areas - state property.

For the implementation of the activities of the state-owned enterprises, the state provides for the use and management of property - state property. It consists of property granted to them by the Council of Ministers, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, international institutions, local and foreign natural and legal persons and other organisations, as well as property acquired by the enterprises as a result of their activities. The Minister shall exercise the State's ownership rights in State-owned enterprises, take decisions on the distribution of profits and the coverage of losses, and approve the annual financial statements and annual reports on the activities of State-owned enterprises. The Minister for Agriculture, Food and Forestry shall carry out the management of the enterprises by approving the decisions of the board of directors of the State enterprise concerned. The board of directors of State-owned enterprises shall consist of three members, including the director of the enterprise, and the Minister shall conclude a management contract for a period of five years with each member of the board of directors. Similarly, the Management Board shall be assisted by a Business Council, which shall consist of the directors of the territorial divisions of the SOE concerned. The economic council has advisory functions, such as: discussing the draft financial plan of the State enterprise and the draft financial plans of the territorial subdivisions, making proposals to the management board on the spending of the funds created and managed by the enterprise. The Director of the State Enterprise shall manage the overall activities of the State Enterprise in accordance with the powers conferred on him by law, propose to the Management Board a draft annual financial plan and an annual financial statement of the State Enterprise, be responsible for and exercise control over compliance with the regulatory enactments, financial discipline and the safeguarding of the assets of the State Enterprise and of the territorial subdivisions of the State Enterprise. The activities of the Director in the management of the SOE shall be coordinated with the Minister and the Board of Directors.

State forestry holdings and state hunting holdings are territorial subdivisions of state enterprises that carry out the functions of the state enterprise in their defined area of operation<sup>8</sup>. Territorial subdivisions of State-owned enterprises shall conclude commercial and other contracts in their own name, on their own account and under their own responsibility, within the powers conferred on them by law and by the Director of the State-owned enterprise. The management of the territorial units is carried out by a director who concludes management contracts for a period of 5 years with the director of the State enterprise. The new Law on Forests of 2021 provides for an inventory of the forest areas to establish the state of the resources and prepare their assessment. The National Forest Inventory project is being developed to carry out the inventory, in line with international and national experience. The EAG is responsible for the implementation of the National Forest Inventory, which has not yet been launched.

Another important point in the Forest Act is the assessment and validation of forest management practices using a set of standards - forest certification. Certification gives importance to environmental, social and economic aspects in forest management. Forest certification can be

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<sup>8</sup> See Art. 173 of The Forestry Act, SG No. 19 of 8.03.2011, amended and supplemented by SG No. 17 of 23.02.2018, in force since 23.02.2018;

defined as the process of issuing a certificate by an independent body certifying that forest areas are managed to a certain standard.

Inventory and certification is an important prerequisite for the implementation of the policy of multifunctional management and strategic management in the forest sector also affects the policy of sustainable forest management. These two instruments are poorly addressed in Bulgarian legislation.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of forestry policy is realised through the preparation and implementation of strategic documents - strategies, plans and programmes to achieve the identified strategic objectives in the long term. They define the strategic framework of state policy for achieving long-term and sustainable management, multifunctional management and development of the forest sector. The prerequisite for the development and management of forest areas are the three levels of forest planning regulated by the Forestry Act - national, regional and local, reflected respectively in the National Forest Sector Development Strategy, the Strategic Forest Sector Development Plan, the Regional Forest Territory Development Plans and the Forestry Plans and Programmes. At the same time, in view of Bulgaria's EU membership, it is necessary to underline that the policy in the field of sustainable development and strategic forestry management in Europe also has numerous and topical problems, which are generally expressed in several main points:

- economic processes focused on achieving short-term economic goals and applying intensive management methods;
- the harmful effects of air, water and soil pollution on the state of Europe's forests;
- Global climate change, which affects all forest types, remains an unexplored factor of major importance for European forestry problems;
- the need to establish a system for the protection of all nature, integrated with human social and economic activities in all forests, taking into account local and regional conditions and the rights and interests of local people. Such a system must be embedded in the sustainable and balanced development of all economic activities.

The documents presented by the UN<sup>9</sup>, related to forest policies and institutions, identify some of the vital issues that hinder sustainable and multifunctional forest management in Europe related to the decline in wood prices and forest benefits towards environmental and social values not being valued by the market. In this context, forestry plays a peripheral role in national economic planning. At the same time, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have experienced specific difficulties related to the development of forestry in recent years. The Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment Section of the European Committee on Economic and Social Affairs examines the role of forestry and the forest industry in 13 countries<sup>10</sup> (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus, Malta, Turkey) and the changes this enlargement will bring with it for the EU forestry sector.

A policy of sustainable and multifunctional forest management should have the following economic, environmental, social and international cooperation (especially within the EU) dimensions and tasks:

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<sup>9</sup> UN (2001), Forest Policies and Institutions in Europe 1998-2000. Geneva Timber and Forest Study Paper, United Nations, New York, USA and Geneva, Switzerland.

<sup>10</sup> Options of the Eastward enlargement of the European Union and the forestry sector [www.esc.eu.int/scripts/avis.asp?type=en](http://www.esc.eu.int/scripts/avis.asp?type=en)

- Economic - consists of development towards economically sustainable conditions for the forest sector. In order to achieve it, it is necessary to solve the following tasks:
- Ecological - is expressed in support of efforts to protect biodiversity, protect the environment, preserve and develop forests as a base for forestry production. The resulting tasks are:
- Social - formulated as an increase in the role of forests on the one hand as a general public good, through the uses of forests, and on the other hand through the public use of forests for health and recreation.
- International cooperation in support of sustainable forest development at local, regional and global levels and integrating forest biodiversity and environmental protection with forest mobilisation for social and economic well-being. To this end, the following tasks need to be addressed:

Special emphasis in forest policy should be placed on increasing the forest area in Bulgaria by increasing the country's forest cover and stimulating afforestation in abandoned agricultural areas. To this end, it is possible to expand the use of funds under the various EU-funded programmes. The long historical experience in forest management and use shows that large-scale and compact forest enterprises function effectively. Through forest legislation, the state should motivate small private forest owners to voluntarily associate in freely chosen institutional forms and to manage private forest areas responsibly. In this respect, some specific legislative measures could be taken to support the process of establishing and operating forest owners' associations. A review of the literature on models of institutional structures and policy shows that, despite the diversity of global forms of forest governance and forestry, models can be

Bulgaria's forest policy and forestry management can be classified as a conservative model of management, although the presence of private forest land owners, companies, firms and associations is regulated in legislation, yet the functions of forest management are in the hands of the state - through its institutional structure and state-owned enterprises.

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