

## FORESTS AND WOODLANDS IN WESTERN BALKAN

### Importance of forestry in the Balkan region

Primary wood processing and secondary furniture production are strategic sectors in most western Balkan countries with regard to contribution to gross domestic product, exports, and employment. After abandoning a socialist business system in the post-Yugoslavia era, all countries in the region have developed transitional reforms to become free-market economies. Some of these reforms include changes in ownership structure, recapitalization and modernization, adapting to meet import standards of developed countries, and developing strategic linkages with supply-chain counterparts in developed countries

The Balkan region is important for two main reasons. First, this region is one of the richest forested areas in Europe with regard to hardwood growing stock<sup>1</sup>. The second reason is its strategic geographic location for transshipment of wood and wood products into the

European Union (EU), the Middle East, as well as other countries/regions. The infrastructure of roads and railways as well as seaports on the Black and Mediterranean seas facilitates transport of wood and wood products. For example, in 2004, Italy was the most significant partner for wood export from all Balkan countries, followed by Egypt and Israel<sup>2</sup>

Many countries from this region have either recently become members of the EU or are planning to become members. EU membership creates market opportunities as well as challenges to provide quality wood products that meet required standards for sustainability at cost/price levels that are competitive..

<sup>1</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO] 2006

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Europe [UNECE] 2006

## ALBANIA

### Woodland Coverage and woodland types



**Coverage.** Forests have played an important role in the development of the economy and society in Albania. At present, they cover an area of 1,042,790 hectares, equal to 36% of the total

area of the country.

The growth rate of Albanian forests is very low (1.4 m<sup>3</sup>/ha/year), and 88 percent of Albanian forests are managed as productive forests, although most of them are young forest stands.

**Main woodland types** The forests in Albania are divided as follows:

High Forest 294,957 ha (19.68%), from which: Coniferous 84,461 ha and Broadleaves 210,496 ha; Coppice forest 405,016 ha (27.02%); Shrubs 241,724 ha (16.13%); Open Forest 3 557,260 ha (37.17%).

Current coverage is about 1.3million ha (approximately 10% of the total land area) and only growing slowly. In 2013 the Government set a target of reaching 12% by 2060.

### Woodland Ownership

In the current ownership structure 98% of the forests in Albania are publicly owned, out of which around 50% are transferred for 'use' to the communes (the so called 'communal forests'), whereas 38% have

remained under the administration of the Forest Service, and nearly 2% have been returned to the former owners.

### Authorities in charge of Forests and Woodlands

**Transition period.** In 1990 Albania started the transition from a centralized system to a free market economy system. There was great human pressure on forest resources (fire wood and grazing) that caused forest degradation especially in high forests or forests close to settlements. Investment in forest management dropped considerably since the mid 1980's. The government undertook several reforms focusing more on the decentralization process and privatization of the economy. The preparation and implementation of the laws has been one of the main

challenges since the beginning of the transition period.

The transfer of state forests in use to Local Government units-LGU (communal/ villages) was one of the most important reforms within forestry. The philosophy behind transferring state forests to the communes is recognition of the local population's needs for forests products and services and their rights to use them. In addition, the transfer is made to



## FORESTS AND WOODLANDS IN WESTERN BALKAN

the communes, which then conclude agreements with the village or individual (family) users.

**Main actors.** The main actors are the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration (MEFWA), the Directorate Forestry and Pasture Policy (DFPP) with its local level administration called District Forest Service (DFS), and communes and villages. All forests (public and private), the so-called Forest Fund of Albania, are grouped into 36 administrative units districts.

The Forests and Pastures Users' Associations (FPUAs) are playing the main role when we talking about private forest owners.

Directorate General of Forests and Pastures: Primary responsibility for the administration and development of the forestry and pasture sector rests with the General Directorate of Forests and Pastures (DGFP)

that is directly under the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

DGFP has 3 Directorates: Forest Police, Forests and pastures, and Finance and marketing. Furthermore, DGFP district offices are in charge of managing national parks and other protected areas, which coincide with specific forest sectors. Additionally, in order to improve the decentralisation of the organisation, a series of 7 regional directorates, grouping similar and adjacent district forest services is also foreseen.

Moratorium for banning of forest exploitation for trade purposes for a 10 year period entered into force in 2016.

### BOSNIA HERZEGOWINA

Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter BiH) consist of two Entities (the Federation BiH and Republic of Srpska).



There is neither a common forest policy nor a national forest legislation at the state administrative level of

B-H. Thus, governing and management of forests resources are under the jurisdiction of the Entities.

### Woodland Coverage and woodland types

Forests in Bosnia and Herzegovina comprise a diversity of forest types from coastal Mediterranean forest to mountain forests in central B-H. Covering more than half of the country, forest resources have great importance for both national economy and local livelihood. Together with wood-processing industry and agriculture, forestry plays a key role in development and well-being of most rural areas. Total number of people employed in forestry sector in BiH is around 10.000 (about 0.5% of working population).

### Woodland Ownership

For both Entities, ownership structure is quite similar (in case of Republic of Srpska 81% of the forests are owned by the state and 19% by private forest owners while in the Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina 80.4% of forests are owned by the state and 19.6% by private forest owners).

In total, the ownership structure for the entire country is as follows: 80.7% of the forests are owned by the state and 19.32% are owned by private forest

**Coverage.** Total area covered by forests and forest lands in Bosnia and Herzegovina amounts to 2.709.769 hectares or 53.4% of the state's territory

**Main woodland types** The main types of the forests are: Beech and Beech and Fir forests about 59% of the woodland, mesophilic oak forests about 21,4%, thermophilic oak forests app. 10,5%, Spruce forests app. 4,5%, Forests of Scots and Black pines app. 2,8% etc.

owners. In many aspects there is a significant difference between state and private forests in B-H. While high forests are mainly owned by the state, private forest owners own most of the coppice forests.

Compared to state forests, wood volume and growing stock in private forests are significantly lower

### Authorities in charge of Forests and Woodlands



## FORESTS AND WOODLANDS IN WESTERN BALKAN

**Republic of Srpska.** Within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of RS the Forestry Department is responsible for the governing of the forest sector. The Public forest company “Šume Republike Srpske” is responsible for management of the state-owned forests in RS. It has a hierarchical organization with headquarter, 25 Forest Management Units (FMUs), Research Development and Design Centre which undertakes forest management planning, a Centre for Seedling Production and a Karst Management Centre. By the Law on Forests of RS (Official Gazette of RS No. 75/08), privately owned forests and forest lands are managed by their owners with professional and technical expertise of public forest enterprise responsible for forest management at the territory of RS. Furthermore, Article 40 of this law prescribes the formation of associations of private forest owners in order to improve overall conditions of private owned forests and to assure full implementation of forest management instruments. Forest management of the private forests is based on the adoption of forest management plans for all private owned forests within one municipality and executive plans for silviculture activities. Unlike situation in the Federation BiH, forest management plans must be adopted by the Municipality's Assembly before its implementation.

**Federation BiH.** In case of the FB-H, public forests are owned by the FB-H, which transfers management rights to 10 Cantons. The Cantons transfer these rights to Cantonal Forest Management Enterprises (one in each canton). This organisation is not fully implemented in two cantons: in Canton 2 (Posavina Canton) and Canton 7 (Herzegovina-Neretva Canton). The Department for Forestry within the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry and a Federal Forest Office are responsible for forest governing at the level of the FB-H. At the Cantonal level, responsibility for forestry rests with the responsible Ministry (Cantonal Forest Office) whose main functions to control activities of the cantonal forest management enterprise and provide advice and support to private forest owners. According to the Law on Forests of the Federation BiH (Official Gazette, No. 23/02), private forests are managed by their owners in accordance with the regulations and provisions laid down in mandatory forest management plans. The Cantonal forest offices are obliged to prepare forest management plans for private owned forests. The common forest management plan is prepared for all private forests within the municipality. Private forest owners are obliged to carry out afforestation, forest protection and other silvicultural activities specified in the forest management plans.

### KOSOVO

#### Woodland Coverage and woodland types



**Coverage.** Around 464.800 ha were classified as forestlands or 42,33 % of the total territory.

The total standing volume on public forestlands is

estimated at about 33.5 million m<sup>3</sup>. Out of this volume 25,9 million m<sup>3</sup> are trees with a diameter >7 cm at breast height. On private forestlands total standing volume is estimated at about 19.5 million m<sup>3</sup> out of

which 14.5 million m<sup>3</sup> are trees with a diameter >7 cm;

The annual increment of trees on the area surveyed, and with a diameter >7 cm at breast height, is calculated to 1.165 million m<sup>3</sup>

**Main woodland types** Broadleaved forest, created through natural seeding, covers more than 90% of the forest area. Dominating broadleaved species are oak and beech. Coniferous forest, covering 7% of the total forest area, is dominated by *Abies alba*, *Picea abies* and *Pinus* species. Remaining 3% consist of a number of broadleaved species.

#### Woodland Ownership

Out of the total area of forestlands, 278 880 ha are classified as public forestlands and 185 920 ha as private forestlands

#### Authorities in charge of Forests and Woodlands

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD) is the highest authority in



## FORESTS AND WOODLANDS IN WESTERN BALKAN

charge of forestry. At central level it has two main forestry branches – the Department of Forestry (DoF) and the Kosovo Forest Agency (KFA).

KFA has four central directorates (directorates for forest management, directorate for pasture management, wild animals, hunting and ecotourism, directorate for silviculture, research and seedling production and directorate for administration), six coordinating directorates which are forest activities through 25 municipal units, where one the main task is to cooperate with local governments (municipalities). KFA operates a nursery in nearby Peja town. Mainly conifers seedlings are produced and provide the planting material for the 300 to 500 ha that are afforested annually.

DOF has the role of developing the policy and regulatory framework as well as controlling/inspecting

forest operations leading to the enforcement of the law. Forests Inspectors are responsible for controlling the forest activities in both public and private forests.

The structure and mandates of the two Government branches was influenced by factors as the size of the forest sector, availability of competent human resources, ownership structure, needs for policy changes and needs for combating unlawful practices.

KFA is the administrator and manager of public forestlands, and is also responsible for law enforcement in both public and private forests. In the future, and in consistency with other legal processes and development, the Government may consider the possibilities of discharging KFA responsibilities which might be in contradiction to its responsibility for enforcing forest legislation.

### MONTENEGRO



#### Woodland Coverage and woodland types

**Coverage.** The total size of the Republic of Montenegro is 1,381.200 ha, of which, according to the statistical indicators 743.609 ha or 54% is

under forests and forest land, and about 60% of population is connected to villages and areas that are abundant in forests.

According to the value of forest areas, level of conservation, regulation, diversity, management and impact on environmental protection, even taking into account areas damaged in the past, our forests are among the best quality forests in Europe.

Montenegro, with 0.9 ha of forest per capita, has one of the highest areas of forest cover in Europe, similar to some Scandinavian countries, with enormous

potential for sustainable tourism – Slovenia has forest coverage of 58% (0, 6/ha per capita); Croatia 37% (0,447 ha per capita); Serbia 25% (0,3 ha per capita); B&H 41%; Spain 30%; Austria 38%.

According to functions, the forests intended for timber production involve 348.000 ha or 81% of all forests.

Protection forests cover 66 thousand ha or 16%, while forests within National Parks cover 12.975 ha or 3%. The total increment in all forests is estimated to be 1.5 million m<sup>3</sup>

**Main woodland types** Total growing stocks in forests of Montenegro are estimated to around 72.000, 000 m<sup>3</sup>, of which 29.5 million m<sup>3</sup> or 41% are conifers and 42.5 million m<sup>3</sup> or 59% of broadleaves.

#### Woodland Ownership

State owned forests and forest land cover 500.000 ha or 67%, while private forests make 244.000 ha or 33%

#### Authorities in charge of Forests and Woodlands

The Forest Administration is the state administration body responsible for forest management.

According to authorizations given by the Forest Law, the Forest Administration manages state forests and executes professional activities related to private forests management (planning, tree marking, protection, etc.). The Forest Administration is divided into 15 regional units and the Headquarters in Pljevlja.

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment is responsible for nature protection, including establishment of Natura 2000 network, environment protection and tourism development in Montenegro.

Municipalities:

The **Law on Local Government** does not define municipal responsibility for forests and forestry, but generally prescribes that municipalities are



## FORESTS AND WOODLANDS IN WESTERN BALKAN

responsible for environment protection, municipal services and spatial regulation.

The **Law on Public Administration** also prescribes that certain functions of the state administration, for the purpose of their more efficient and more economic implementation, are legally decentralized to

local government, i.e. entrusted to the local government, institutions and legal entities. According to the Law on Local Government, municipalities receive 30% of fees paid for utilization of forests in their territory.

### MACEDONIA

#### Woodland Coverage and woodland types



**Coverage.** Total forest area in RM amounts to 1.091.857,59 ha, from which 835.055,82 ha are totally forest covered area and 256.801,77 ha of the forest is non-covered forest area (bare lands).

The forest covered area occupies 255.444,74 ha high trunk forest plants, 546.179,40ha low trunk forest plants, 14.459,50 ha forest herbs and 18.978,18 ha are under bushes.

Total forest reserve according to the same data base amounts to 75.939.573 m<sup>3</sup>, that is 91 m<sup>3</sup>/ha. Total annual growth amounts to 1.616.782 m<sup>3</sup>, that is 1.93 m<sup>3</sup>/ha.

It must be taken in to account that the last forest inventory in Macedonia has been done in 1979.

**Main woodland types: beech (59%), oak (25%), other broadleaves (5%), pine tree (9%) and other Coniferous (2%).**

#### Woodland Ownership

Ownership of the woodland: 90,14% of the total forest area in RM are in public ownership, while in the total wood reserve the Public sector participates with 92,20%. Private forests participate with 9.86% of total forest area and participate with 7.8% of the total

wood reserve. The area of private forests in Macedonia is small but it is significant in terms of the socio-economic well-being of 65,000 families who own forests

#### Authorities in charge of Forests and Woodlands

The public enterprise for managing with forests is in ownership of "Makedonski Sumi" and operates with public forests in Republic of Macedonia. Since year 2000 the public enterprise had various complex periods with numerous problems and contradictions. This is a continuous problem and in order to be a successful company the public enterprise needs

restructuring and transformation. This however haven't happened yet.

The public enterprise "Makedonski Sumi" was established with decision of the Government on December.15.1997 and began to operate on July.1.1998 as legal successor of more economic entities which up to the establishment were managing with forests.

### SERBIA

#### Woodland Coverage and woodland types



**Coverage.** According to the National Forest Inventory, the total forest area in Serbia (excluding Kosovo and Metohija) covers 2.252.400 ha or about

29.1% of the territory of the whole country making Serbia an averagely forest-covered country comparing to the European average.

The Private forests in Serbia today occupy an area of 1,058,400 hectares, which is 47% of all forests in Serbia.

The total growing stock of forests amounts to 362,487,000 m<sup>3</sup> of wood, and the annual increment of timber is 9,079,000 m<sup>3</sup> of wood..

**Main woodland types** Hardwood species dominate the forests of Serbia, of which the most significant is beech with approximately 47%, followed by oak at 25%, other hardwood species at 16%, and poplar at about 1%. For the softwood species, the most significant is pine (black and white) with a share of



## FORESTS AND WOODLANDS IN WESTERN BALKAN

2%, followed by spruce 5%, and fir 3%. Other softwood and some hardwood species account for a

mere 1%.

### Woodland Ownership

Regarding the ownership structure in Serbia, there are two types of ownership: state (53%) and private (47%). After 2006 (i.e. after the adoption of Law on Restitution of property to churches and religious communities), a new sub-category of private forests - church forests occurs in the private forest ownership category (around 1% of all forests). Private forests can be characterized by big number of forest owners, small to average area of forest property and a lot of small forest parcels

In the period after World War II, there were great social changes both in the state system and in the system of ownership and in the legal and property

structure of forests. At this time, there were predominantly two categories of ownership of forests in Serbia: social and private forests (which changed their name in "forests with the right of ownership"). The ownership category of social forests was introduced after WWII. According to The Law on Agrarian Reform and Colonization (1945), social property included public forests originating from state, communal, private, monastery and church forests, with the area larger than the maximum legal area: i) for monastery and church forests max area was 30 ha; ii) for private individuals max area was 5-10 ha.

### Authorities in charge of Forests and Woodlands

The state is the biggest forest owner in Serbia. It delegates management services to several public enterprises. Public enterprises manage state forests and give technical and advisory services to small private forest owners all round Serbia. State companies have not defined time span for management rights with the state. State companies were established 20 years ago and their duties and rights are very similar to the ones that existed when they were established.

Small private forest owners (estimated at around 900,000) are dispersed without any strong association or voice. They are not represented in the forest policy arena. This stagnant situation exists for quite a long time.

Private forest owners are used to their property being dominated by state forest administration.

After the restitution process (2006), private companies in forest management made an arrangement with churches and monasteries to manage their forests and with the obligation of paying concession fees for doing this job.

The management of forests is still based on old national legislation and forest acts although a new private forest owner entity has emerged. There are two types of organization in church forest management. The first type of organization is represented by church-owned limited companies within the eparchy where the forest is. The second

model exists when the management rights are given to a private company with qualified staff. Both management approach types require ten-year management plans for the property they manage. Private companies that have won the right to manage a church forest sign a ten-year contract with the church authority.

There are two main public enterprises (PE) responsible for the management of state forest resources. PE `Srbijašume` is responsible for the management of state forests in the central part of Serbia and PE `Vojvodinašume` in the autonomous province of Vojvodina. The responsibility for the autonomous province of Vojvodina was delegated according to The Law on Establishing Certain Competencies for the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (2002). Apart from these two enterprises, state forests are also managed by five public enterprises that are responsible for the management of national parks. Furthermore, PE `Borjak` manage state forests in one municipality in central Serbia and The Faculty of Forestry has the use right of state forest with the main purpose of education and research.

Other organizations, mostly agricultural, water or military entities have management rights for a small part of state forests. In the table below we can see the percentage distribution of different management entities.

### CHALLENGES

The main challenges in forestry sector are:

- Public forestlands and private forestlands have been subject to uncontrolled or illegal harvesting activities. By all standards these figures are very high. The situation is most critical in coniferous

forest where the entire existence of large forest areas is put at risk if no strong and immediate actions are taken. The inventory results also confirm that coppice forest, especially on public forestlands, is exposed to heavy harvesting. The results also



## FORESTS AND WOODLANDS IN WESTERN BALKAN

show that many young and middle-aged forests are in an urgent need of management interventions, ranging from cleaning/pre-commercial thinning to commercial thinning.

- The collaboration of the countries in the region has to be more intensive at institutional level and in fields as education, training and research.
- Regional development projects (infrastructures, tourism facilities, etc) must keep always in mind the environmental problems especially those linked to forestry (i.e. deforestation, floods etc.).

- Co-operation through conjoint projects on transboundary problems or items of common interest will be helpful as well as sharing information and experience gained in dealing with the new challenges of the forestry sector.
- Countries where the Forest Extension Service (i.e. advisory services for forestry development) is operating successfully must support other countries in the region in developing the necessary structures for and formulate the basic design of the Extension Service Section within the Forest Management and as a guide to the re-orientation of the role of foresters in the country.

### CONCEPTS OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

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Laws, policies and strategies for forestry, in draft or adopted by national authorities, mostly mention the application of Sustainable Forest Management principles as an important goal. Tradition of forest management is high in the region. Forest organisations, structures and responsibilities are clear. Forest Management Plans are elaborated and used as the base for implementation. Forest inventory databases exist or projects are being implemented to develop this. Beneath, overview data on forest cover provided by the country baseline reports are presented.

Main priorities for regional cooperation expressed by the forest sector:

- Cooperation across borders and in the region on integrated water and forest management including IRBM planning with incorporation of forest management measures such as the protective functions of forests to prevent erosion and flooding and to secure water quality;
- Improved system for controlling forestry and logging operations and combating illegal logging in the region;

- Controlling forest fires and pest attacks and establishing early-warning alarm and/or monitoring systems for the region;
- Counteracting erosion; setting erosion control measures and identifying the key problems causing the erosion risk;
- Managing and setting measures for (protective) forests in relation to flood retention, water supply and erosion;
- Counteracting loss of forest biodiversity and managing and setting measures for forests in unprotected areas, including protection of forests in mountain/border areas in their role as protective forests for soil, water and biodiversity;
- Exchange of experience and best practices from EU Member States on integrated management and harmonisation with EU legislation;
- Increasing human and institutional capacities in sustainable forest management;
- Improving stakeholder consultation and involvement.

### Links

- Forum Synergies: Report of the 1st Workshop on Sustainable Forestry Management ([link](#))
- Forum Synergies: Report of the 2nd Workshop on Sustainable Forestry Management (to be completed)
- The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South Eastern Europe <http://seerural.org/>
- Albania <http://www.bujgesia.gov.al/>
- Bosnia and Herzegovina <http://sumerepublikesrpske.org/> ; [http://fmpvs.gov.ba/V\\_1/federalna-uprava-za-sumarstvo](http://fmpvs.gov.ba/V_1/federalna-uprava-za-sumarstvo) ; <http://www.usitfbih.ba/>
- Macedonia [www.mkdsumi.com.mk](http://www.mkdsumi.com.mk)
- Montenegro <http://www.sumins.me/>
- Kosovo <http://kosovoforests.org/>
- Serbia [www.srbijasume.rs](http://www.srbijasume.rs)

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