

## Forest policy goals in Poland in light of the current forestry aims in Europe Part 5. Towards a new forestry development strategy in Poland

Adam Kaliszewski 

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

Phone +48 22 7150678, fax +48 22 7153837, e-mail: [A.Kaliszewski@ibles.waw.pl](mailto:A.Kaliszewski@ibles.waw.pl)

**Abstract.** The aim of this paper was to review and evaluate drafts of forest policy documents that have been developed for the purpose of updating the Polish “National Forest Policy” of 1997, but never entered into force. A total of 14 documents were covered in this analysis including 13 Regional Operational Programmes of the National Forest Policy and the draft of the National Forest Programme (NFP) developed in 2000–2005, as well as nearly 300 recommendations for the “second” NFP, elaborated in 2012–2016.

Very soon after the “National Forest Policy” came into force, it turned out that it needed to be adjusted to changing legal, social and economic conditions. The first attempts to revise and amend the document were made already in 2000. As a result, until 2004, 17 Regional Operational Programmes of the National Forestry Policy were developed and, on that basis, until mid-2005 a draft for a new NFP was worked out. However, the draft was neither adopted nor did it ever enter into force. The second attempt to work out the NFP was made in 2012 and resulted in the development of nearly 300 recommendations to the programme. However, to date, the NFP itself has not been finished.

Most of the documents examined here refer to the current priorities of the European forest policy, and thus they would close gaps in the Polish “National Forest Policy”. In this context, the recommendations to the “second” NFP are of great importance, because they were prepared through a wide participation of various stakeholders and they refer to a wide range of problems, propose specific legal regulations, as well as indicate directions for further development of the Polish forest sector. However, the completion of the NFP is a matter of political decision that rests with the Council of Ministers.

**Keywords:** policy analysis, national forest programme, regional forest programmes, development strategies

### 1. Introduction

The core directions of forestry development in Poland were set out by the ‘National Forest Policy’ adopted by the Council of Ministers in 1997 (MOŚZNiL 1997). The new political, legal and institutional conditions of forestry, as well as ongoing changes in the natural and socio-economic vicinity of forests make it that objectives and solutions adopted more than two decades ago can no longer respond to the current challenges faced by the forest sector.

In the previous four articles of this series, the most important processes shaping forest policy in Europe (Forest

Europe, EU sectoral policies) were characterized, priorities of forest policy after 1997 were discussed as well as Polish forest-focused and forest-related programmes and strategies and national and transregional development strategies were analysed in terms of pan-European forest policy priorities. Also the content of main forest policy documents of selected European countries was examined. This is the last article of the series and it focuses on attempts so far to develop and adopt a national forest programme (NFP) and also concludes the entire series.

The implementation analysis of the ‘National Forest Policy’ (hereinafter referred to as PLP, MOŚZNiL 1997), carried

Received: 13.06.2014 r., accepted after revision: 11.07.2014 r.

out three years after the document had been adopted by the Council of Ministers, showed that many of the objectives and tasks were not implemented at all or were performed insufficiently. Difficulties in implementing principles of the document were related to a series of problems, including incomplete institutional arrangements and a lack of relevant documents and executive programmes. The PLP corresponded with some international obligations to a limited extent, including the priorities set by the EU Council within the 'Forestry Strategy for the European Union' of 1998 (Council Resolution 1998), primarily in terms of promotion of the use of wood, cross-sectoral integration, participation of forestry in rural development, strengthening research and application of the pan-European criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. It was considered, that harmonious transfer of international regulations and obligations arising after 1997 as well as future commitments would be enforceable at national level by the National Forest Programme (Rykowski et al. 2000). The adoption of a strategic governmental programme, incorporating forestry priorities and providing a basis for implementation of long-term state forest policy, was also one of the postulates included in the 'National Forest Policy'.

Work on a draft of the National Forest Programme (hereinafter referred to as NFP 1) was undertaken in 2000. Acting to the order of the Minister of the Environment, a team coordinated by Professor K. Rykowski developed the first concept of the NFP 1. At the beginning of 2002, at the initiative Minister's adviser – Professor A. Szujewski – it was decided that the work should be continued. In the course of further works it was agreed that the NFP 1 should be based on Regional Operational Programmes of the National Forest Policy (RPOPLPs), developed separately for an area of each of the 17 Regional Directorates of State Forests. The RPOPLPs aimed at introducing priorities of the 'National Forest Policy' at regional level (Klocek et al. 2004). In principle, the programmes were to lead to a greater public participation in forest-related planning and programming processes in forestry at regional and local levels, to activate forestry issues on a local scale and to harmonize forest programmes with the state policy and international obligations (Szujewski 2002).

In 2002, the Director General of State Forests decreed the work schedule and guidelines for formulating the Regional Operational Programmes (Zarządzenie 2002). The first studies were elaborated by working teams appointed by individual regional directors of the State Forests, supported by the research team coordinated at the Forest Research Institute. The working teams in their studies included, among others, assessments of current implementation of the 'National Forest Policy' and problem areas to be included in the

RPOPLPs. They also developed programme propositions and made preliminary agreements with public and industrial consultative groups. The work resulted in formulation of the drafts of the RPOPLPs (Szujewski 2002).

At national level, several problem areas were identified, which should have been firstly contained in the RPOPLPs, but their final inclusion in the programmes was determined by individual teams, based on criteria of significance, urgency and irreversibility. The following issues were identified as problem areas:

- afforestation of marginal agricultural lands,
- improvement of species composition and functional structures of forests,
- enhancement of biodiversity protection,
- increase in accumulation of atmospheric carbon in forest ecosystems,
- improvement of management in private forests,
- timber marketing,
- enhancement of ties between the forest sector and other sectors in terms of regional development,
- cooperation between forestry and the public,
- recreational use and management of forests,
- cooperation of forestry with local authorities and public administration (Zarządzenie 2002).

The programmes were prepared in the short-term (up to 2010), medium-term (until 2025) and long-term (until 2050) perspectives. The conclusion of work had been planned for the end of 2003. After consultations and arrangements with various social, professional and industrial groups, the RPOPLPs were approved by the Minister of the Environment (Zajac 2005). Their contents were used for developing a preliminary version of the draft of the NFP 1. The draft was reviewed by forest scientists and researchers. The final version of the draft was developed in May 2005 (Projekt 2005), but eventually it was not adopted as an official document of forest policy.

For the second time the work on the NFP (hereinafter referred to as NFP 2) was undertaken in 2012 at the initiative of the Minister of the Environment. The aim of the work, coordinated at the Forest Research Institute to the order of the Directorate-General of the State Forests, was to create a vision of the Polish forestry in 2030 and beyond and to develop assumptions for the strategic programme of forest development and management, integrating the whole forestry sector as well as nature conservation in forests. Altogether over 3.2 thousand stakeholders were invited to participate in programme formulation, including representatives of the state administration bodies and local authorities, the State Forests organizational units of all levels, nature conservation institutions, private forest owners and their associations, scientific institutions, wood industry companies and associa-

tions, as well as NGOs. In accordance with the work scope and schedule, in 2013-2015 seven expert panels were held. They were devoted to various issues related to forests and forest management, namely: 'Climate', 'Value', 'Heritage', 'Protection', 'Development', 'Organization' and 'Cooperation'. In addition, also the eighth panel concerning science was organized. All the eight panels were supported by 193 experts, who presented 156 original studies, that provided the basis for formulating 298 recommendations for further work on the NFP. Overall, the panels gathered 700 people from 45 institutions and organizations. Moreover, expert panels were tracked online by approx. 2.1 thousand internet users (Rykowski 2016c).

The recommendations to the NFP were reported to the Minister of the Environment in 2016, but no further work was undertaken to formulate and adopt the final version of the programme. In the same year, the Parliament amended the Forest Act of 1991 (Ustawa 1991), inserting a provision (Article 5b) that empowers the Minister of the Environment to undertake activities aimed at developing the national forest programme as a strategic programme for development of forestry in Poland (Ustawa 2016), which gave legal basis for a possible future NFP.

The aim of this paper is to discuss and analyse the Regional Operational Programmes of the National Forest Policy (RPOPLPs), the draft of the National Forest Programme of 2005 (NFP 1) and the recommendations for the NFP, developed in 2012-2016 (NFP 2) for compliance and coherence with the priorities of European forest policy. The article also summarizes of the whole series.

## 2. Methods

The content analysis of the RPOPLPs, the draft of the NFP 1 of 2005 and the recommendations for the NFP 2 were carried out based on the priorities of forest policy in Europe, analysed and discussed in the second part of this series of articles (Kaliszewski 2018a). The analysis focused on documents content in terms of including forestry priorities at European level (content analysis; Buttolph Johnson et al. 2010; Weimer, Vining 2011; Yin 2015). In particular, the following documents were analysed:

- 1) 13 Regional Operational Programmes of the National Forest Policy, formulated for Regional Directorates of the State Forests in: Białystok, Gdańsk, Krosno, Lublin, Łódź, Olsztyn, Piła, Poznań, Szczecin, Toruń, Warsaw, Wrocław and Zielona Góra (Regionalny 2003a-m);
- 2) the draft of the National Forest Programme of 2005 (Projekt 2005);
- 3) the recommendations for the National Forest Programme, developed in 2012-2016, contained in published reports

summarizing individual expert panels: 'Climate' (Rykowski 2014), 'Value' (Gołos et al. 2014), 'Heritage' (Gwiazdowicz, Rykowski 2014), 'Protection' (Borowski, Rykowski 2015), 'Development' (Kaliszewski, Rykowski 2015), 'Organisation' (Jodłowski, Rykowski 2015), 'Cooperation' (Zajac, Rykowski 2015) and 'Science' (Rykowski 2016b).

The analysis didn't cover all the RPOPLPs and focused only on those documents that were available for coordination team for NFP 2 in 2012. Already then, it turned out that the programmes had been archived as they had not been applied in the everyday activities of the forestry organisations. It should be noted that both the structure and the scope of the RPOPLPs have been largely determined in advance by guidelines set out in the decree issued by the Director-General of State Forests in 2002 (Zarządzenie 2002), which has been reflected in the schematic nature of their priorities and objectives in individual Regional Directorates of the State Forests. The presented review and analysis of 13 out of all 17 RPOPLPs (i.e. over 75% of their total number) gives the understanding of their content in terms of forest policy priorities in Europe. It should be noted that the draft of the NFP 1 (Projekt 2005) contains a synthetic approach to the problems and issues of forest management presented in the RPOPLPs and applies them to the forest sector throughout the country.

## 3. Results and discussion

Table 1 presents the results of the analysis of the RPOPLPs, the draft of the NFP 1 and the recommendations for the NFP 2 in terms of compliance and consistency with the priorities of European forest policy. As regards the RPOPLPs, numbers in brackets refer to a number of documents (out of all 13 analysed) containing a given priority. The table, as a reference, also shows the results of the 'National Forest Policy' analysis (MOŚZNiL 1997). It should be noted that one of the RPOPLPs (Regional 2003c) contains only a description of forest management and the analysis of strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats for forest management in the region, however it does not define any aims and objectives in this area.

The documents analysed here (the RPOPLPs, the draft of the NFP 1) and the recommendations for the NFP 2 differ fundamentally in terms of their orientation, content and formulation approach, which must be taken into account when discussing their content. The RPOPLPs have been developed in three time perspectives: short-term (until 2010), mid-term (until 2025) and long-term (until 2050). In the short-term perspective an analysis of trends for individual measures and indicators characterizing forests and forest management was included, while the medium- and long-

**Table 1.** Inclusion of the priorities for forestry in Europe into the “National Forest Policy”, Regional Operational Programmes to the National Forest Policy, draft of the “National Forest Programme”, 2005 (NFP 1), and the recommendations to the NFP from 2012–2016 (NFP 2). Symbols: “+” – a priority directly included; “(+)” – a priority indirectly included; blank field – a priority not included in a document; numbers in brackets indicate a number of the regional operational programs that include a given priority.

Priority	National Forest Policy	Regional Operational Programmes	NFP 1	NFP 2
1. Conserving, protecting, restoring and enhancing forest biodiversity	Yes – one of the policy goals	+ (12)	+	+
2. Adapting forests to climate change and changing environmental conditions	No – adapting to climate change Yes – improving resistance of forests	+ (11)	+	+
3. Enhancing a role of forests and forest management in mitigating climate change including:	Yes – expected effect of policy implementation			
Enhancing carbon sequestration and storage in forest biomass and soils		+ (10)	+	+
Mobilization of wood resources, also from non-forested areas	No	+ (3)		+
Substitution of non-renewable materials and products with wood	No	+ (6)		+
Promoting use of wood as an energy source	No	+ (9)	(+)	+
4. Maintaining and improving forest ecosystem services (protecting water and soils)	Yes – one of the policy goals	+ (12)	+	+
5. Combating illegal harvesting of forest products and related trade	No	+ (4)		
6. Improving economic viability of forest management including:				
Promoting production and use of wood	Yes – one of the policy goals	+ (12)	+	+
Supporting innovations in forestry	No	+ (5)		+
Stimulating differentiation of sources of income in forestry	No	+ (9)	(+)	+
Supporting private forest owners and their associations	Yes – one of the policy goals	+ (12)	+	+
7. Enhancing a role of forests and forest management in rural development	Yes, but mentioned indirectly	+ (8)	+	+
8. Securing contribution of the forest sector to a green economy	No			+
9. Forest valuation and reflecting it in forest-related policies and programmes	No		+	+

Priority	National Forest Policy	Regional Operational Programmes	NFP 1	NFP 2
10. Improving social aspects of forest management including:	Partially mentioned			
Health and safety issues	No	+ (3)		+
Developing human resources	Mentioned as a condition for policy implementation	+ (7)	+	+
11. Securing participation of all stakeholders in decision-making, improving forest communication	Mentioned as a condition for policy implementation	+ (10)	+	+
12. Fostering coordination and cross-sectoral cooperation of forestry	Mentioned as a condition for policy implementation	+ (11)	+	+
13. Preserving cultural values of forests and forest management	Mentioned as a condition for policy implementation	+ (1)	+	+
14. Forest education of society	Yes – one of the policy goals	+ (11)	+	+
15. Forest research	Yes – one of the policy goals and condition of its implementation	+ (3)	+	+

Source: Own elaboration

term objectives were in principle upholding the activities set for 2010. The draft of the NFP 1, developed on the basis of the regional programmes (Projekt 2005), has been structured likewise, based on target indicators until 2010, while long-term goals have been characterized in a very general way. According to Rykowski and Zaleski (2018a), ‘by defining three perspectives and planning appropriate indicators for each of them made that the entire undertaking lost its strategic character and was reduced to indicative planning’. In addition, the RPOPLPs were developed at a time when other comprehensive and politically stronger regional programmes already existed, hence their importance was rather insignificant. Also the lack of public consultations during preparation of the regional programmes and the draft of the NFP 1 was a major disadvantage, leading to formulating documents by foresters, which did not meet standards set for national forest programmes as defined in international documents (Rykowski, Zaleski 2018a).

On the other hand, the recommendations for the NFP 2 cover a wide range of economic, environmental and social issues that are significant currently and predictably are going to be important for the forest sector from the 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective (Rykowski 2016c). They aim at

two major matters: to indicate directions of changes that allow adjusting the entire forest-related sector and nature conservation in forests to current and future civilizational challenges; and to enhance the role of forests in development of the Polish economy as well as to use the potential of forestry to foster the bioeconomy (Rykowski, Zaleski 2018b). The recommendations refer to a wide spectrum of problems, taking into account their importance, detailedness and urgency. They include proposals for specific legal regulations, indicate future directions and describe trends of changes taking place within forest management and its vicinity (Rykowski 2016a). The work on the NFP 2 was carried out with the widest possible participation of various social representations.

Analysis of goals of the ‘National Forest Policy’ from their consistency with the European forest policy point of view indicates that this document, to a large extent, does not reflect the current international trends and overriding goals in forestry (Kaliszewski 2018b). For this reason, it is important to look at the extent to which European forest policy priorities not present in the PLP have been included in the documents resulting from the works on the National Forest Programme.

One of the most important issues, almost completely omitted in the PLP, is enhancing a role of forests and forest management in mitigating climate change (priority no. 3) and adapting forest ecosystems to climate change (priority no. 2). The objectives of the NFP 1 draft include 'measures for the permanent storage of carbon in forest ecosystems and a steady increase in amount of carbon stored in forest ecosystems throughout a year'. Increasing atmospheric carbon accumulation in forest ecosystems as well as wider use of energy wood were also recognized as a goal in most of the RPOPLPs. Some RPOPLPs also postulate to undertake measures aimed at replacing non-renewable materials with wood and promoting short-rotation forest plantations for energy generation purposes. Both the draft of the NFP 1 and the RPOPLPs also place great emphasis on tree stands conversion in accordance with habitat conditions and adapting forest ecosystems to harmful factors, but these activities are not directly related to the issue of climate change and the resulting threats.

During the work on the NFP 2, the issues of climate change and forest adaptation were formulated as one of the main themes. The first expert panel – 'Climate' – was entirely dedicated to those issues and they were also a matter of concern often referred to in subsequent panels and discussions. Numerous recommendations in this regard relate to, among others, verifying procedures and plans for tree stands conversion, dispersing management risk, creating a system for monitoring climate change impact on forests, developing silvicultural measures for protecting forests against biotic and abiotic threats, enhancing the use of wood as a raw material, a substitute for energy-consuming materials and a renewable source of energy, or developing short rotation forest plantations, which would complement and relieve ecosystem forestry (Rykowski 2014).

Another important area of interest in the work on the NFP, only indirectly mentioned in the 'National Forest Policy', was to enhance a role of forestry in rural development (priority no. 7). In the draft of the NFP 1 'the strongest involvement of forest management in sustainable development of rural areas' was recognized as 'an important economic and social challenge for Polish forestry for the coming decades'. The 'National Programme for Expanding of Forest Cover' (KPZL) was to become the main tool for this task. The draft of the NFP 1 also sets goals in, among others, activating and developing rural areas, increasing employment in the forestry sector, and intensifying recreational and educational forest services. These objectives are also present in most of the analysed RPOPLPs.

The impetus for placing a strong emphasis in the draft of the NFP 1 on a need to enhance a role of forests and fo-

resty in rural development was provided by the upcoming Poland's accession to the European Union and related adaptation of national legal regulations to EU regulations and strategies, including those adopted by the 'Forestry Strategy for the European Union' in 1998 and other forestry-related regulations. In practice, the more important factor was the KPZL itself, approved by the Council of Ministers in 1995. A gradual increase in the area of annually afforested lands unsuitable for agricultural production was taking place since the beginning of the 1990s, however, following the adoption of the programme and the provision of financial support for afforestation this process was intensified. Research carried out during the KPZL modification (2000–2002) indicated that this trend had been expected to continue in the coming decades (MŚ 2003). However, after the annual area of afforestation had reached its climax in 2003, it began to decrease rapidly, which was related to social and economic changes in rural areas resulted in rapid drop in the supply of land for afforestation after Poland's accession to the European Union (Kaliszewski 2012; Kaliszewski et al. 2016).

The issue of increasing the role of forestry in rural development has been strongly emphasized in the recommendations for the NFP 2. They include suggestions for activating rural population, promoting production and multilateral uses of wood and development of its processing, stimulating the sources of income for farmers and forest owners, further development of tourism and recreation in forests and supporting development of private forests. An important postulate is to verify the 'National Programme for Expanding of Forest Cover' so that it would take into account the topic of climate change, the need to increase wood production (new resource bases in cooperation with the wood-processing industry), creating ecological corridors and reducing fragmentation of forests. It also suggest to undertake formulation of the national tree planting programme (Rykowski 2014; Kaliszewski, Rykowski 2015).

One of the issues missing in the 'National Forest Policy' is support for innovation in forestry. This topic was not addressed in the draft of the NFP 1, although it was included in five of the analyzed RPOPLPs. Innovation in forest management has been given a lot of attention in the recommendations for the NFP 2, which contain postulates of its broad perception, not only in terms of new technological solutions or products, but also as a continuous process occurring as a result of adjustment of rules, instructions or guidelines, both within the State Forests and scientific centers and as the interface between the economy and research centers (Rykowski 2016b). The importance of supporting and developing innovation is particularly important in the

context of the bioeconomy and challenges the entire forestry sector face, including the projected increase in demand for products and services in this sector (Jodłowski, Rykowski 2015). The recommendations for the NFP 2 also repeatedly refer to the need to develop principles for the development of the ‘green economy’ (bioeconomy) as the leading economic, social and environmental development strategy of the country in the coming decades (Kaliszewski, Rykowski 2015; Zając, Rykowski 2015).

The draft of the NFP 1 found it necessary to ‘create a rational financial basis for forest management based on full economic calculation, internalization of externalities and valuation of public forest functions’, which refers to the priority no. 9. The recommendations for the NFP 2 emphasize the urgent need to start work aimed at valuating all forest functions and services. Consequently, such assessment would contribute to the effective use of all forest resources and forest management, as well as to creating and maintaining living conditions (Gołos et al. 2014).

It is also worth paying attention to two priorities of European forest policy, listed in the PLP as conditions for policy implementation, and in later studies postulated as a goal. The first one is to secure participation of all stakeholders in forest decision-making and to improve communication (priority no. 11), while the second one concerns fostering coordination and cross-sectoral cooperation in forestry (priority no. 12). The draft of the NFP 1, the RPOPLPs and the recommendations to the NFP 2 emphasize the need to increase forest socialization and enhance public participation in forestry planning and decision-making processes, and postulate the need to develop cooperation with other sectors of the economy and public administration bodies. The very fact of undertaking work on updating the ‘National Forest Policy’ in the formula of the national forest programme, which in principle should result from a broadly conducted social dialogue, based on partnership and participation of various stakeholders, aiming at mitigating and resolving conflicts, and focused on a comprehensive approach to forestry issues and cross-sectoral cooperation, demonstrates the recognition of the importance of these issues and attempts to include them in the process of creating forest policy in Poland. Despite the declared socialization and cross-sectoral cooperation, the RPOPLPs and the draft of the NFP 1 have been formulated by small groups of experts in forestry and wood-processing industries. The approach adopted did not allow the NFP to be built in accordance with accepted international standards and procedures (Rykowski, Zaleski 2018a). The attempt to develop a comprehensive National Forest Programme, with assumptions formulated in cooperation with

stakeholders representing various professional and social environments, were in fact achieved only during the works carried out in 2012–2016, which resulted in recommendations constituting a broad material for the preparation of a strategic programme for the entire forestry sector, integrating forests and forest management in the national development strategies (Rykowski 2016a).

## 4. Summary

One of definitions of forest policy describes it as ‘a purposive course of action or inaction followed by an individual or group in dealing with a matter of concern regarding the use of forest resources’, setting out ‘how forests will be used, usually to achieve some stated or implicit objective’ and stating ‘who will benefit from forest use and who will bear costs associated with forest management and use’ (Cubbage et al. 1993). The goal of sustainable, multifunctional forest management is to meet various social needs and ensure a proper balance between forest functions. The growing importance of non-productive – natural and social – forest functions and services often stands in opposition to production of wood – the main product and source of income for forestry. The development of civil society means that decisions on forests and forest management are increasingly influenced by social organizations and groups from outside the traditionally understood forest sector. Relationships between various stakeholders are becoming more and more complex, which makes that a process of forest policy formulating can no longer be limited to experts and representatives of the forestry and wood-processing sectors, but has to take into account also a wide spectrum of expectations and demands regarding the use of forest resources. Because many forest issues are of a transboundary nature, the matters of forest management and forest protection are no longer limited only to national level, but more and more often and increasingly become the subject of discussion at supranational and international level (Krott 2005).

This series of articles is aimed at analysing the directions of changes in the ‘National Forest Policy’ that have been in force since 1997, based on review of the processes shaping forest policy in Europe, including policy trends observed in several European countries. Over the past two decades, there has been a dynamic development of forest policy at European level, both within the Forest Europe process and in the European Union – in relation to its Member States. The absence of a common EU forest policy means that the issues related to forests and forestry remain primarily with the competences of the Member States. However, certain regulations in this area are adopted at EU level, under various

sectoral policies (related to environment, biodiversity conservation, climate, energy, agriculture, industry and trade) and apply to forests in all the Member States.

The research has identified 15 main priorities adopted for forests and forest management at European level after 1997. An analysis of forest policy documents in selected European countries has shown that these priorities are systematically included in national forest programmes and strategies. It is noteworthy that in all the studied countries the objectives and instruments of forestry policy implementation were defined, at least in a certain period, in national forest programmes, developed within a process of broad cooperation of various stakeholder groups, based on broad cross-sectoral approach and assuming their periodical revision and update. These documents are comprehensive, contain a thorough analysis of the forestry condition and define a wide range of activities and instruments supporting the development of the forest sector and provision of multiple services performed by forests.

The ‘National Forest Policy’ has remained unchanged since 1997. The document largely does not refer to current international trends and objectives in forestry, primarily as regards adaptation of forests to climate change, enhancing a role of forests and forest management in mitigating climate change, a role of the forest sector in the ‘green economy’, supporting rural development, valuing all forest functions and services, the need to secure broad public participation in forest decision-making, enhancing forest communication, and developing coordination and cross-sectoral cooperation in forestry. Although the listed issues have been included in numerous strategies and programmes of forest-related sectors (nature and environmental protection, agriculture, spatial planning, energy), they are presented fragmentarily and strongly dispersed. Particular attention should be paid to the fact that issues related to forests and forestry are consistently omitted in subsequent national and supra-regional development strategies, which means that natural resources occupying about 30% of the country's area are not actually considered to be a factor of socio-economic development of the country.

The need for ‘National Forest Policy’ updating was quickly recognized and as early as in 2000 the Minister of the Environment initiated works on formulation and adoption of the national forest programme. Its draft formulated in 2005, as well as the regional operational programmes of the ‘National Forest Policy’, did not meet requirements set for national forest programmes at international fora, mainly due to the lack of its strategic nature and vision of forest development, as well as the absence of real public consultations during its formulation. The work undertaken again on the NFP, conducted with the widest possible par-

ticipation of various social representations, resulted in the preparation of several hundred recommendations relating to a wide range of problems, broadly describing the trends of changes in forest management and its environment and containing proposals for action.

The lack of a forest policy document adapted to the current environmental, economic and social challenges that forestry sector faces suggests gradual marginalization of forestry in the economy and political and social space taking place in Poland. The omission of forests and forest management in the country's most important development strategies and sectoral policies practically excludes forestry from a broader political debate and public awareness, which as a result must bring negative consequences for the entire sector. A necessary, though insufficient, remedy is to formulate in the coming years a new vision for the development of forestry in Poland for the next decades. Such a programme, regardless of its final formula (national forest programme, forestry development strategy, etc.) must be comprehensive, integrated with the country's development strategies and sectoral policies, developed with the participation of all interested stakeholders. So as it would not remain existing merely on paper, it must obtain real financial, legal, institutional and political support. Important steps have already been taken towards this direction: with the wide participation of stakeholders, recommendations for the National Forest Programme have been formulated. In 2016, a high rank to the future document was given by its introduction to the Forest Act (Ustawa 2016). Thus, only a political decision to complete work on the programme and replace the ‘National Forest Policy’ needs to be taken.

## Conflict of interests

The author declares lack of potential conflicts.

## Acknowledgments and source of funding

The paper presents the results of research realized within the project ‘New developments of the national forest policy in the context of changing conditions for forest management in Europe’ (no. 240406) financed in the years 2012–2014 by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (statutory activity).

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