



# FOREST RESTORATION POLICY IN DENMARK

## POLICY COHERENCE ACROSS FOREST-RELATED POLICY AREAS AND POLITICAL LEVELS



**SUPERB**  
Upscaling Forest Restoration



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## **Author(s)**

**Simon Fleckenstein and Metodi Sotirov**

## Affiliations

University of Freiburg, Chair of Forest and  
Environmental Policy

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Forest policy in Europe operates within a complex, multi-sectoral and multi-level policy framework. To effectively implement and scale up forest restoration efforts—such as those outlined in the EU Nature Restoration Law (EU-NRL)—achieving a certain level of coherence across forest-related policy areas (e.g., nature conservation, climate, agriculture, and rural development) and political levels (EU and national/subnational) is essential.

As part of the EU Horizon 2020 SUPERB project, Task 5.1 of Work Package 5 offers valuable insights into the issue of forest restoration policy coherence. Specifically, it examines coherence at the national level across forest-related policy areas (horizontal coherence) and across national and EU levels (vertical coherence). The analysis of horizontal coherence is based on a survey of national forest policy experts in the relevant countries, while the vertical coherence analysis involves a detailed review of EU forest restoration policies and regulations, as well as national forest regulatory frameworks.

This report briefly outlines the key findings for **Denmark**, where forest restoration is seen as a vital approach to promote climate adaptation and biodiversity protection in forests.



# HORIZONTAL FOREST RESTORATION POLICY COHERENCE IN DENMARK

In Denmark, the Danish Forest Act which in its original form responds to the complete collapse of Danish forest resources in 1805 aims at (i) the promotion and establishment of robust forests, (ii) ensuring forest productivity, (iii) conserving and increasing biological forest diversity, and (iv) fostering environmental and cultural awareness. The Environmental Protection Act (EPA; Consolidated Act no. 879, 26 June 2010) constitutes the key sectoral and legally binding forest (biodiversity) restoration policies. The Danish EPA aims at promoting the following objectives: (i) protection of the environment and nature, (ii) conservation of animal and plant life, and (iii) assurance of social development on a sustainable basis. In this context, both sectoral policies build on a mix of policy instruments. For example, the Danish Forest Act stipulates a mandatory obligation for all forest owners to reforest/restock clearcut and open areas of damaged forests within a certain time frame. At the same time, financial incentives are provided by the Danish Agricultural Agency, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries of Denmark to enhance biodiversity in private forests. Another financial incentive is provided by the Finance Act for 2021, which aims at contributing to the green transition in the country. To restore habitats and natural processes by open-ended restoration, it provides financial incentives to further set aside 75,000 ha (approx. 7% of the total forest area) of state-owned forests, thereby underlining the strong cross-sectoral commitment to protect and enhance forests and their biodiversity and the willingness to upscale forest restoration efforts.

Despite the somewhat static implementation of Natura 2000 areas in some regions, policy goals related to forest restoration in Denmark appear to be in line with related EU objectives. This is due to the fact that Danish environmental regulation originates mainly from EU legislation and, to some extent, from international treaties (Djurhuus et al., 2017). Consequently, all EU Directives are transposed into Danish law. Nevertheless, insights from national expert consultations stress the partly complex and time-consuming admission processes, strongly increasing demands for recreational values, and conflicting ideas



between different stakeholder groups regarding forest production and protection as major barriers for upscaling forest (biodiversity) restoration in Denmark.

Table 1: Key forest restoration policies and legislation in Denmark.

Name	Year of adoption	Entry into force	URL
Danish Forest Act	2009		<a href="https://naturstyrelsen.dk/media/nst/Attachments/Forestact.pdf">https://naturstyrelsen.dk/media/nst/Attachments/Forestact.pdf</a>
Action plan for the close to nature forest management of state-owned forests (Handleplan for naturnær skovdrift i statsskovene).	2005		<a href="https://naturstyrelsen.dk/media/nst/Attachments/Bilag8HandlingsplanforNaturnrSkovdrift.pdf">https://naturstyrelsen.dk/media/nst/Attachments/Bilag8HandlingsplanforNaturnrSkovdrift.pdf</a>
Environmental Protection Act (last amended 2017)	2023		<a href="https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/deng9369.pdf">https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/deng9369.pdf</a>
Danish Finance Act 2021		2021	<a href="https://stateofgreen.com/en/news/danish-finance-act-2021-leads-the-way-for-green-economic-recovery/">https://stateofgreen.com/en/news/danish-finance-act-2021-leads-the-way-for-green-economic-recovery/</a>
Forest Reserve Strategy (Urørt Skov/Biodiversitetsskov). The layout of untouched forests (75.000ha) in state owned forest by 2024.	2020		<a href="https://naturstyrelsen.dk/vildere-natur/uroert-skov/faktaark-for-uroerte-skove-og-skove-til-biodiversitetsformaal">https://naturstyrelsen.dk/vildere-natur/uroert-skov/faktaark-for-uroerte-skove-og-skove-til-biodiversitetsformaal</a>
Danish Watercourses Act	2019	2020	<a href="https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/den127824.pdf">https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/den127824.pdf</a>
Hunting and Wildlife Management Act	2019		<a href="https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/den150611.pdf">https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/den150611.pdf</a>

# VERTICAL FOREST RESTORATION POLICY COHERENCE

The Danish Forest Law establishes provisions that promote the setting-aside of forests both explicitly and implicitly. Explicitly, in articles § 3 and § 14, protected forest areas are mentioned, including registered forests, Natura 2000 areas, and other specific conservation

zones under the Ministry of the Environment. Implicitly, articles such as § 9 allow limited activities in protected areas under conditions that ensure conservation, while articles § 18, § 19, § 20, and § 21 outline the administrative and operational measures necessary to implement conservation plans, emphasizing the commitment to protecting key habitats and species.

The provisions in § 8 of the Danish Forest Law implicitly promote uneven-aged and mixed-species forest management. Although the focus is not directly on promoting uneven-aged or mixed-species forests, the requirements in § 8, such as maintaining a closed forest of tall trees and restricting felling to trees that have reached a certain age or dimension, suggest a long-term forest management approach that supports uneven-aged structures.

The provisions in § 14 of the Danish Forest Law explicitly address the protection and conservation of forest birds. The article directly references the preparation of a Natura 2000 forest plan, where the Minister for the Environment is required to set objectives to ensure or restore a favorable conservation status for species listed in Annex I of the EC Birds Directive, which includes various endangered forest bird species. The plan must also outline the necessary measures to achieve these conservation objectives, providing explicit protection for forest birds in line with international commitments to biodiversity conservation.

The Danish Forest Law does not set out a general clearcutting ban, nor any concrete limits or thresholds regarding the size of harvesting or clearcut areas in Danish forests. Nevertheless, section 3 forests must be managed according to the purpose of the Danish Forest Law and continuously overgrown with trees that form, or within a reasonable period will form, densely closed forests of high-stemmed trees. The trees must not be felled before maturity, although thinning operations are permitted. The forest manager must ensure the re-establishment of new trees (by planting, seeding or natural regeneration) in clearcut areas, so that within 10 years the area will again be covered by closed high-stem forests. A certain percentage of the forest stand may stay as an open area, leaving space for nature and biodiversity features, grazing, or other extensive and biodiversity-friendly management.

## KEY FINDINGS

Danish forest restoration policies and legislation address key aspects that could support the implementation of forest restoration activities. The government's goal to further set-aside 75,000 ha (approx. 7% of the total forest area) of state-owned forests, shows its strong commitment to restore forest ecosystems and natural processes therein.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

For successful implementation and scaling of forest restoration, it will be crucial to leverage synergies across forest-related policy areas while addressing critical trade-offs. This can be achieved, for example, by better harmonizing economic interests with nature conservation goals and requirements.

# REFERENCES

Djurhuus, H., Hemmer, P., Vilsbøll, A. S. K., & Bech-Bruun, J. B. (2017). Environmental law and practice in Denmark: overview. Thomas Reuter Practical Law.





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