



# FOREST RESTORATION POLICY IN CZECH REPUBLIC

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



**SUPERB**  
Upscaling Forest Restoration



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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 offers a brief overview of the key findings for the **Czech Republic**, where extensive damage has created an urgent need for the restoration of resilient, biodiverse forests.



# HORIZONTAL FOREST RESTORATION POLICY COHERENCE IN CZECH REPUBLIC

In the Czech Republic, vast damages caused by consecutive drought years and subsequent bark beetle outbreaks in recent years resulted in an urgent need for large-scale forest restoration. In addition, extensive management actions (particularly in the form of salvage logging) as a response to biotic and abiotic disturbances aggravated some of the notorious conflicts between forest management and nature conservation goals (as defined in the National Biodiversity Strategy 2016-2025) and highlighted the poor harmonization of respective policies (Hlásny et al., 2021). Nevertheless, despite the long tradition of planting even-aged spruce monocultures in the Czech Republic, a recent survey conducted by researchers from the Mendel University of Brno shows that Czech forest managers are well informed about alternative mixed stands and ameliorative and soil-improving species and that related decision-making is affected by multiple factors, including (i) the long-term experience with spruce profitability, (ii) steady and high spruce-timber tradability, (iii) a steady business-as-usual mindset of forest managers, and (iv) missing effective measures for preventing damages by wild ungulates (Janová et al, 2022).

Act No. 114/1992 Coll. of the Czech National Council on Nature and Landscape Protection plays a crucial role in regulating the management and protection of protected forest areas, including riparian forest zones, in the Czech Republic. Its main objectives are to maintain and restore the natural balance in the landscape, protect the diversity of life forms, preserve natural values and beauty, and ensure the careful management of natural resources. Additionally, the Act aims to establish the Natura 2000 system in the Czech Republic, in compliance with European Community law. To achieve these goals, the Act relies primarily on a range of regulatory instruments. It defines specially protected areas, regulates forest management practices within national parks, establishes the Natura 2000 system, and identifies other sites of European importance. The Act also imposes certain obligations on land and forest owners. For example, it mandates the protection of trees growing outside of forests and requires the demarcation of important landscape elements such as memorial trees.

In riparian forest zones, together with Act No. 254/2001 Coll. on (Water Act) last amended in 2022, the Act No. 114/1992 Coll. places particular emphasis on preventing any adverse effects on water regimes. It imposes strict requirements on the construction and maintenance of forest infrastructure within these areas to ensure that they do not disrupt

the natural flow and balance of water. Overall, Act No. 114/1992 Coll. is instrumental in safeguarding and managing protected forest areas in the Czech Republic, promoting biodiversity conservation, and complying with European Community regulations, such as the establishment of the Natura 2000 network.

The Czech Forest Act (Act No. 289/1995 coll. on Forests and amendments to some acts) adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1995 represents the basic legal framework for forest management in the Czech Republic. The purpose of this Act is to determine conditions for the preservation, tending, and regeneration of forests to enable the fulfilment of all their functions and to support sustainable forest management. Clear-cut management is regulated in Article 31: Regeneration and nurture of forest stands. The Forest Act (among others) stipulates that for planned harvests, the clear-cut area must not exceed 1 ha, and its width must not exceed either the average height of the felled stand on exposed management sites or twice the average height on other sites. On damaged sites, however, the law stipulates that salvage logging must be conducted as a matter of priority; a situation that escalated during the recent bark beetle outbreak, where the Ministry of Agriculture has been forced to issue several measures of general nature (with the weight of a general decree) to decide measures deviating from selected articles of the Forest Act. The Act further requires all forest owners and managers to manage forests properly and sustainably but minimum standards such as for closer-to-nature forest management practices are not defined.

As regards forest restoration, the Czech Forest Act obliges forest owners and managers after the final harvest to renew the forest stands with habitat-appropriate tree species within two years and forest cover must be established within seven years. The relevant state forest administration body may, in the process of approving the plans or preparing the guidelines, or at the request of the forest owner, permit longer terms in justified cases. Another key initiative of relevance for forest restoration in the Czech Republic is the Government resolution no. 166 on the concept of national forest policy by 2035 adopted in 2020. It provides financial aid to forest owners and managers to reforest calamity areas and afforest agricultural land, for the enhancement of carbon storage in soils and for deadwood retention practices. Financial support for later successional stages is provided by Government Regulation No. 30/2014 Coll. which lays down binding rules for the provision of financial contribution for forest restoration including maintenance and tending measures on forest stands of to 40 years.

*Table 1: Key forest restoration policies and legislation in Czech Republic.*

| Name  | Entry into force | URL   |
|---|------------------|---|
| National Biodiversity Strategy of the Czech Republic 2016–2025                                    | 2016             | <a href="https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/cz/cz-nbsap-v2-en.pdf">https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/cz/cz-nbsap-v2-en.pdf</a>                                 |
| Act of 3 November 1995 No 289/1995 Coll., on Forests and Amendments to some Acts (the Forest Act) | 1995             | <a href="https://www.cizp.cz/en/legislation/legislation-of-forest-protection">https://www.cizp.cz/en/legislation/legislation-of-forest-protection</a> |

# VERTICAL FOREST RESTORATION POLICY COHERENCE

In the Czech Republic's Forest Act, the provisions related to the setting-aside of forests are explicitly found in Article 8, which defines special purpose forests, highlighting areas such as national parks and national nature reserves, as well as those necessary for maintaining biodiversity, reflecting commitments to international biodiversity conservation. These forests are managed primarily for non-productive functions, such as the protection of landscapes and specific natural elements. Additionally, Articles 11 and 15 implicitly reinforce forest protection by requiring the preservation of forest functions and limiting the use of forest lands through restrictions or withdrawals, which can only be temporary or permanent with state authorization, thereby protecting forest areas important for biodiversity.

The Czech Republic's Forest Act addresses the management of deadwood in Article 33, which explicitly states that forest owners are required to leave an appropriate amount of harvest residues and trees or parts of trees in the forest to ensure the preservation of non-productive forest functions and the protection and conservation of forest biodiversity. This provision directly aims at enhancing deadwood accumulation by promoting the retention of woody biomass, though the exact amounts and methods are left to be defined by further regulation from the Ministry. Additionally, Article 22 implies that landowners may need to remove deadwood or fallen trees if they pose a danger to people or property, indicating an implicit limit on deadwood retention when public safety is at risk.

The Czech Republic's Forest Act contains several provisions that indirectly promote uneven-aged and mixed-species forest management. Articles 23 and 24 emphasize the development of regional forest management plans that guide species composition, particularly with respect to native and non-native species such as larch and Douglas-fir, aligning with principles of mixed-species management. Article 27 further reinforces this by requiring that forest management plans are approved only after evaluating the impact of non-native species on native habitats and species, ensuring that species introductions do not harm biodiversity, including native tree species. Article 29 regulates the use of reproductive material, ensuring that reforestation uses habitat-appropriate species, thereby supporting biodiversity and mixed-species forest structures. Article 31 encourages natural regeneration in appropriate conditions and the systematic renewal of forest stands with diverse species to enhance resilience and forest function. Article 32 obligates forest owners to maintain forest stability by optimizing species composition and distribution, reinforcing the idea of uneven-aged and mixed-species management. Article 33 plays an important role by regulating the



age at which forests can be logged, prohibiting logging in high forest stands younger than 80 years and low or medium forest stands younger than 20 years, thereby promoting uneven-aged structures and allowing forests to develop diverse age classes. Additionally, Article 46 incentivizes ecological forest management, including increasing the proportion of ameliorative tree species and converting forest stands with inappropriate species composition.

Czech Republic's Forest Act allows for clearcutting in Article 31: Regeneration and nurture of forest stands. The Forest Act (among others) stipulates that during a main planned felling, the clearcut area must not exceed 1 ha and its width must not exceed either the average height of the felled stand on exposed management sets or twice the average height on other sites. There is no restriction on clearcut width for the felling of stand remains and for stands of under 1 ha in size. In justified cases the relevant state forest administration body may, in the process of approving the plans or preparing the guidelines, or at the request of the owner of the forest, grant the following exemptions from the specified area or width of clearcutting: i) on natural pinewood sites on sandy soil, and on natural floodplain sites, up to 2 ha of clearcuts with no width restrictions; or ii) on mountain slopes inaccessible for transport longer than 250 m, provided that they are not exposed, up to 2 ha of clearcutting.

A cleared area on forestland must be reforested within two years and a forest stand established within seven years. The relevant state forest administration body may, in the process of approving the plans or preparing the guidelines, or at the request of the forest owner, permit longer terms in justified cases.

## KEY FINDINGS

Czech forest legislation and policies play a key role in forest restoration by promoting sustainable management practices aimed at enhancing forest health and biodiversity. The policies focus on restoring degraded ecosystems, improving resilience to climate change, and addressing issues like forest fragmentation and species loss, ensuring long-term ecological stability across the country's forested areas.

## 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

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