



FOREST RESTORATION POLICY IN SERBIA

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 provides a brief overview of the key findings for **Serbia**.



HORIZONTAL FOREST RESTORATION POLICY COHERENCE IN SERBIA

In Serbia, forest (biodiversity) restoration policies primarily derive from the fields of forestry and nature conservation. The key sectoral document in the field of forest policy is the 2010 Forest Law (last amended in 2018). This law regulates various aspects, including the preservation, protection, planning, silviculture, and use of forests. Its objectives are to ensure sustainable forest management, maintain and improve the productive capacity of forests, preserve their biological diversity, restoration capacity, vitality, and potential for climate change mitigation. However, the law does not explicitly prohibit clear-cut management but specifies criteria for allowances, such as for the construction of forest management facilities or for controlling plant diseases. While the law requires forests to be managed sustainably, it does not establish minimum standards or explicitly reference close-to-nature forest management practices.

Another significant forest policy initiative is the Forestry Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, adopted in 2006. This strategy aims to preserve and improve the state of forests, develop forestry as an economic sector, align cross-sectorally with other national strategic documents (particularly in terms of biodiversity conservation), and enhance sustainable forest management in protected natural resources. To achieve these goals, the strategy develops and applies national forest management criteria and indicators while providing guidelines for sustainable forest management.

The management of protected forest areas in Serbia is predominantly regulated by the 2004 Law on Environmental Protection (last amended in 2018). This law establishes an integrated environmental protection system that ensures the realization of the right to a healthy environment and a balanced relationship between economic development and the environment. The 2009 Law on Nature Protection (last amended in 2021) complements the Law on Environmental Protection by aiming to preserve and improve the state of protected natural assets. It prohibits activities that threaten environmental capacity, natural balance, biodiversity, hydrographic and geomorphological features, geological and cultural values, and landscape quality. The law grants the Ministry and other competent authorities and organizations the authority to control the introduction and cultivation of non-native plant and animal species to protect biodiversity and biological resources. Similar to the Forest Law,

neither the Law on Environmental Protection nor the Law on Nature Protection mandates the practice of close-to-nature forest management.

In Serbia, sectoral policies related to forestry, industry, nature protection, energy, climate, and the economy share the common goals of environmental and biodiversity protection as well as the sustainable use and management of natural resources. A major trade-off arises between environmental and biodiversity protection and energy production, particularly with the planned transition from coal and oil derivatives to biofuels and bioenergy, which may increase forest resource exploitation in the country. Additionally, the Serbian industry heavily relies on old technologies that are significant environmental pollutants, leading to higher energy consumption and waste production. Thus, one of the industry policy goals is the transition to a circular economy and the reduction of GHG emissions, which can have positive effects on national forests and their biodiversity.

Since obtaining the status of a candidate country for EU membership in 2012, Serbia's national government has been striving to align policy goals and instruments with those of the EU to strengthen its position during accession negotiations. Environmental policy goals aim to maintain and improve the productive and restoration capacity of forests, as well as their biodiversity, aligning with the objectives of the EU's new Forest Strategy for 2030. However, a significant obstacle to achieving forest and biodiversity restoration goals is the depopulation of rural areas and a shortage of land managers and forest workers to implement and maintain restoration sites.

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

Name	In force since	URL
Law on forests, Official gazzete of the Republic of Serbia No. 30/10, Belgrade (last amended 2018)	2010	https://www.climate-laws.org/geographies/serbia/laws/forest-law-ffbb97a5-d62e-4482-a7e1-97fe7de63378
FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA Belgrade, 2006.	2006	https://www.fao.org/forestry/16159-0f033f89b9da00ac3d5a3c81cda247f26.pdf
National program of rural development (RDP) for the period 2022-2024.		
NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL APPROXIMATION STRATEGY FOR THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA Belgrade, December 2011	2011	http://www.misp-serbia.rs/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/EAS-Strategija-ENG-FINAL.pdf
Law on environmental protection, Official gazzete of the Republic of Serbia No. 135/04, 36/09, 36/09 - other law, and 72/09 - other law, Belgrade (last amended 2018)	2004	https://www.zzps.rs/wp/pdf/zakoni/LAW%20ON%20ENVIRONMENTAL%20PROTECTION.pdf
LAW ON NATURE PROTECTION ("Official Gazette of RS", no. 36/2009,		https://www.pregovarackagrupa27.gov.rs/wp-



88/2010 and 91/2010 – corr. and 14/2016) (last amended 2021)		content/uploads/2021/06/LAW-ON-NATURE-PROTECTION-2016.pdf
Law on forests, Official gazzete of the Republic of Serbia No. 30/10, Belgrade (last amended 2018)	2009	https://www.pregovarackagrupa27.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/LAW-ON-NATURE-PROTECTION-2016.pdf

KEY FINDINGS

In Serbia, the planned transition from coal and oil derivatives to biofuels and bioenergy may result in increased production of woody biomass, potentially hindering forest restoration efforts. Additionally, the depopulation of rural areas, along with a shortage of land managers and forest workers to implement and maintain restoration sites, presents a significant challenge that must be addressed to improve the implementation and scaling of forest restoration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For the successful implementation and scaling of forest restoration, it is essential to leverage synergies across forest-related policy areas while addressing key trade-offs. This can be achieved by better aligning economic interests with nature conservation goals and strengthening law enforcement.