

Development of the Concept and Implementation of National Forest Programs with Reference to Croatia

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Abstract

***Background and purpose:** National forest programs have been promoted by the international forest policy sphere as a preferred form of policy process by which the sustainable forest management should be reached on national level. As such, it has received a lot of attention in the international legislation and has been important part of the forest policy dialogue. This paper examines the national forest programs from the side of its theoretical development, and how it has been transposed from the international sphere onto the national domains.*

***Materials and methods:** Paper examines international legislation referring to the national forest programs, and provides an overview of its development. Comparative analysis of national forest program processes in Europe has been made, along with presentation of different national approaches to it. Topic-related scientific literature has been analyzed, with special emphasis on its procedural elements.*

***Results and conclusions:** International legislation shows great coherence regarding the development of the concept of national forest programs. The same coherence is present in the scientific community, but not among the forest policy practitioners, which is reflected by a great variety of developments of national forest programs across Europe. This variety is not as important as are the procedural aspects of the process, which promote mode of governance in line with the new general paradigm of forest planning. The article critically reviews the procedural and outcome elements of national forest programmes, which are then analysed in the context of Croatian perspectives for a formal process of a national forest program.*

***Keywords:** National forest program, participation, power relations*

INTRODUCTION

National Forest Program (NFP) does not have a clear-cut definition, for it is a “generic expression for a wide-range of approaches towards forest policy formulation, planning and implementation at the sub-national and national levels” [1]. In a broader understanding it is not even a document, but an iterative process of goal setting, policy planning and implementation within a wide participatory context [2-4]. This is also in line with the position of the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), which defines NFP as a “...participatory, holistic, inter-sectoral and iterative process of policy planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation at the national and/or sub-national level in order to proceed towards the further improvement of sustainable forest management...” [5]. More narrow definition of it, stemming from the review of NFP documents in Europe, would state that NFP is a mid-term strategic planning document of (usually) ten year validity in which actions set by the long-term Strategy are disseminated through a participatory process into concrete indicators, which have its financial resources, deadlines, implementing agencies and verifications of completion.

The goal of NFP process is country-driven forest sector development, in which the implementation of international forest-related obligations is embedded in. Although the country-leadership is one of the basic principles of NFP, there is a wide range of global initiatives to support its development [4]. In this context NFP is a policy process, and in which there are outputs to each phase of its policy cycle (analysis, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). The aim

of the paper is to review the scientific literature on the NFP, its national implementation in selected countries and to critically review its procedural and outcome characteristics. These findings are then commented in the context of Croatian perspectives on a formal NFP process.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

International legislation that has references to NFPs has been analyzed on global, pan-European, EU and Croatian level. Analysis shows the development of the concept on different levels and the similarities between the approaches.

The data base of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) of reports on the pan-European Qualitative indicators for sustainable forest management and national implementation of commitments of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe has been analyzed. Elements of the analysis were: relation of the strategic documents to a formal NFP process; inclusion of stakeholders in the policy formulation; balance of economic, social and environmental sides of the sustainability in the policy; uptake of MCPFE instruments. A comparative analysis of development of the NFP processes in 32 European countries has been made. The NFP documents referenced in the UNECE's data base have been analyzed, and a short overview of examples of different development paths of the national NFP processes has been presented, i.e. the cases of Kirgizstan, Finland, Switzerland, Slovenia, Serbia, and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Scientific literature on NFP has been analyzed, and emphasis has been given on the definition, principles and rationale of the NFP. Critical discussion on the concepts related to procedural elements of the NFP has been made, notably the participation, legitimacy and power. Article ends with a series of recommendation for improving the formulation of NFP documents, with special reference to Croatia.

On the concept of NFP

There is broad common understanding on what the principles of a NFP are, both on the global [1] and on the European [5] level. The presence of these elements in national forest policy is what defines an NFP, and summed up, these principles are [6]:

- *Public participation* is the key to the coordination of participants who seek to use forests for their specific interests.
- *Holistic and intersectoral co-ordination* should ensure that those sectors affecting, and those affected by forest management have an input to the policy process.

- *Decentralization* refers to the co-ordination of actors operating at different levels.
- *Long term, iterative and adaptive planning* takes account of failure to achieve goals, as well as of the changing environment and allows for flexibility and adjustment in NFPs.

Along with the principles of NFP, there is also an understanding on what the goal of NFP is, and it can be defined as "... to promote the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources to meet local, national and global needs, through fostering national and international partnerships to manage, protect and restore forest resources and land, for the benefit of present and future generations" [7].

However, in the international processes referring to NFP (IPF/IFF/UNFF and MCPFE) there is no mention on the reasons why the "principles of NFP" should be used in order to reach vague goals as defined by FAO. This lack of explanation makes NFP and its theoretical foundation a normative and politically defined concept [3]. The abstract and imprecise nature of goals and principles of NFPs is the reason why there is no general understanding on the role and the specific content of NFP among the forest policy practitioners in Serbia [8], Germany and Bulgaria [9], or even across Europe [10]. However, this is not the case with the scientific community. Although it is not possible to draw a causal relation to the NFP, there is nonetheless a direct complementary link [11] to the new general paradigm of forest planning [12], in which policy process is characterized by a bargaining system with participation of all relevant actors that strive for a consensual solution within an iterative, fragmented planning process. These are the characteristics of policy process through which international forest policy sphere is trying to incorporate itself onto the national forest policy sphere. The strong international focus in NFP process may be caused by many reasons. Aside from the reason of increasing the rationality of management of forests resources, other reason could be expansion of influence of international organizations onto the national forest policy domain, which should be viewed in the context of failure to produce so far an internationally binding document on forests. And yet another reason could be the inclusion of interests of environmentalists groups onto the national forest policy formulation [13].

Whatever the underlying causes for NFPs are, it can be stated that theoretically the essence of NFP is about policy change in usually hierarchical governmental organizations, which consists out of redefining roles and responsibilities of institutional actors, changing the relationships between stakeholders and transforming the public forestry sector organizations.

This new mode of governance that NFPs promote can be seen as an informal network of public and private actors which co-operatively strive for the realization of a common benefit – the sustainable forest management [6]. It is important to recognize that by following “principles of NFPs”, the policy formulation process in fact produces new knowledge and brings about new capacities, thus incorporating goal setting into the process, and making the process itself as the central component, and not the agreed upon document. On a more theoretical level it can be stated that the NFP process has moved away from the “classical policy planning (implementing public goals through state administration based on rational choice among alternatives [14]) and onto the concepts of communicative action [15] and deliberative democracy [16, 17]. This trend is also present in the forest policy science itself, as the “old” idioms (interest groups, power, public administration) and theories (positivism) have been replaced by new idioms (governance, policy discourses) and theories (neo-institutionalism, discourse theory [18, 19]). In this context the NFP process should not be based on formal bureaucratic organization, but on a collaborative model of organization with coordinative, directive and team elements, whose general structure is constant, but the members and the content of its elements vary over time [20]. The most important prerequisite for such structure are strong participatory mechanisms.

International legislative framework of NFPs

The origins of the NFP process can be found in Tropical Forestry Action Program (TFAP), which was an international response to the growing awareness on deforestation. The TFAP was promoted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Resources Institute (WRI), which were supported by the World Bank (WB) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The TFAP were a technocratic planning tool, implemented by external staff, and focused mainly on the forestry sector and its’ financial support [26]. This lineage can be seen as in 1999 FAO had defined NFP as an instrument for coordinating external assistance for a implementation of a strategic forestry documents on a national level [8], and seven years later [4] has moved to the broad definition from the beginning of this text. It can be stated that generally TFAP failed, due to the restricted point of view, limited agenda, fading sense of national ownership and donor-dependency [4].

At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, within the Chapter 11 of the Agenda 21, a commitment to the development and implementation of “national forestry

action programs and/or plans for the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests” was formulated. Same commitment was further on developed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF), The Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF; all succeeding one another) and the Commission for Sustainable Development’s (CSD) first working group for forests. The basic message was that NFPs should be a national framework for the implementation of forest-related commitments stemming out of UNCED [13]. The most comprehensive product of these efforts is the 270 IPF/IFF Proposals for action [27] that were produced between the years 1995 and 2000. The implementation of (150) IPF Proposals for action through NFPs can be clustered into the following groups, which appropriately depict the basic pillars of NFP process [28]:

1. Develop and implement a holistic national forest program which integrates the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources and benefits in a way that is consistent with national, sub-national and local policies and strategies - measures 17a, 70a, 77f and 146e;
2. Develop and implement national policy goals and strategies for addressing deforestation and forest degradation in a participatory manner - measures 29a and 29b;
3. Improve cooperation and coordination systems in support of sustainable forest management within national forest programs which involve all stakeholders including indigenous people, forest owners and local communities in forest decision making - measures 17b, 17f, 17h, 40e and 77f;
4. Develop and apply criteria for effectiveness and adequacy of forest programs - measures 58d and 71b;
5. Monitor and evaluate implementation progress of a national forest program including the use of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management - measures 17a, 17d and 71b;
6. Develop and promote the concept and practice of partnership, including partnership agreements, between all actors in the implementation of national forest programs - measures 17a, 17i, 40g, 40n, 46e and 77c.

Further call for implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for action was made in the Non-legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests [29]. The same document also states that NFPs should be integrated with instruments of sustainable development and poverty reduction.

The importance of NFPs is also recognized within Forests Europe (formerly known as the MCPFE) policy process. The first mention of NFP in MCPFE process is in

the Resolution H3 [30], in which the members of the European Community commit themselves to assist countries with economies in transition to develop their NFPs. Five years later in the Resolution L2 [31] the Pan-European (quantitative) Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management (C&I for SFM [32]) were endorsed as a reference framework for the formulation of NFPs. The NFP was gaining momentum in the MCPFE process, as it was recognized as the first qualitative indicator in the Improved Pan-European Criteria and indicators for Sustainable Forest Management [33]. At the fourth MCPFE held in 2003 in Vienna NFP was the central topic, as in the Vienna Living Forest Summit Declaration [34] NFP was endorsed as a means for inter-sectoral cooperation. The signatory parties of the Resolution V1 [5] commit themselves to use the MCPFE Approach to NFPs, which is annexed to the Resolution. Other resolutions of the Vienna MCPFE in the same context endorse NFPs as method of implementation of different segments of sustainable forest management (Resolution V3 for social and cultural dimensions of SFM, Resolution V4 for biological diversity and Resolution V5 for implementation of obligations stemming from the UNFCCC). Similar mode of endorsement of NFP was present also in the fifth MCPFE held in Warsaw in 2007, where in the Warsaw Declaration [35] signatory states commit themselves to promotion of NFPs, and in the Resolution W2 [36] commit to coordination of forest and water resources through NFPs and integrated water resources management plans. The strategic importance of NFPs to forestry sector in Pan-European context is evident from the Oslo Ministerial Decision [37] from the sixth MCPFE held in Oslo in 2011, in which the developed and implemented NFPs in all European countries is the first goal of for-

estry for the year 2020. The EU policy shared the same approach to the NFP as did the MCPFE in the pan-European context, as the EU Forest strategy [38] identified NFPs as a framework through which forest-related international commitments should be implemented. The same statement was made in the EU Forest action plan [39]. The Action plan also states that the development of NFPs should be done through application of the open method of coordination, which is a method based on voluntary actions of the member states of the European Union, and on its soft law (quasi-legal instruments which are not legally binding) mechanisms, such as criteria and indicators, benchmarking, best practices and broad participation.

Participation and legitimacy in NFP process

From the perspective of public administration, there are three rationales why public participation should be included in environmental decision making [21]; it enhances information basis and the scrutiny of environmental matters, it is a part in the well-established international human right legislation, and it constitutes a prerequisite for legitimacy, i.e. public acceptance of decision. Based on Aarhus convention [22] and other legislative acts, the same author gives a series of recommendations for participators decision making within a NFP process, which are presented in Table 1.

Since NFP process should cover wide range of topics through usage of participatory mechanisms, the issue of legitimization of the NFP process arises. This could be solved [23] by making the scope of the process restricted just to its participants, or making the process "Pareto efficient", i.e. to reallocate forest resources in such a way that at least one party is better off, without

TABLE 1
Recommendations for high participation in NFP process (based on [21])

INITIATION PHASE	PROCEDURAL ASPECTS OF THE PROCESS	OUTCOME AND IMPLEMENTATION
Political commitment to implementation of the decision	Early participation	Participation in developing the outcome
Sufficient financial resources	Genuine opportunity to participate	Participation in implementation
Cross-sectoral representation	Access to information	Implementation has taken into account outcome of participation
Independent moderator / facilitator	Standardized rules for participation	Legal review if implementation violates decision
Agreement of sharing information and recognition of a long-term scope	Code of conduct	Transparent implementation and monitoring
Procedures for monitoring and evaluation		

1Type of document – formal NFP process; Process guided by NFP principles; similar process; none of the above,

making anyone worse off. The practice has showed that this issue is usually resolved by broad stakeholder and public participation, which could have similar issues on its own. Participatory mechanisms exercised through NFP process may lack democratic legitimization, since stakeholders enrolled in it are “neither democratically authorized nor accountable to the population” [24]. One way of circumventing this problem would be opening up of the process to the public, but that would cause serious difficulties in the organization of the process, and would probably be met by a resistance of the representatives of stake-holding groups. Such unrestricted public access to the NFP process would also negate representatives, as it would allow some actors to expand their bargaining power simply by delegating additional participants. Learning from the NFP process in Germany, Elasser [24] argues that public acceptance of forest policy goals could be more improved by appropriately altering the partly incorrect public image of forestry, rather than with providing detailed information about specific goals and their background. Additional problem arise if unanimity is used, since the probability of reaching any decision decreases with the increase in the number of participants, thus perpetuating status quo. Pragmatic solution to these issues would be loosening the conditions of unanimity and unrestricted access when the progress in the NFP process is blocked. Other solutions to the veto situation would be [23]:

- *issue decomposition*
tracing the specific element of the issue that blocked the progress, and then removing it.
- *issue linkage*
linking the specific element with many other, making the entire package beneficial to all groups.

The same paper also states a series of procedural strategies for circumventing vetoes: concealing the issue behind vague or ambiguous wording; presiding from binding agreement to a more general notice of attention; putting the disagreement into brackets for later treatment and stating both views in the proposal of the document. These are just some of the procedural elements that the national leadership of the NFP process gives governments considerable discretion to change the relations among actors and ideas, thus affecting in a considerable way the policy outcome [25].

Overview of NFP selected process

The organization that is a global leader in endorsing the NFP on a global scale is the FAO and its NFP Facility. The Facility has been established in 2002 with the goal of supporting stakeholder involvement in the forest policy process. Majority of their activities are set in South America, Africa and Southeast Asia. Up to March 2012 they have implemented 749 activities in

70 partner countries, and 19 activities through 4 regional initiatives [40].

The issue on what NFP is has made it difficult to list which countries have it. One viable source for such list on the pan-European scale is the data base of reports on the pan-European Qualitative indicators for sustainable forest management and national implementation of commitments of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, which belongs to the UNECE [41]. From this data base Table 2 was compiled, which provides some insight into the status of NFPs in Europe

Although the basis for this table are national reports of the respective ministries to the UNECE, the data presented in it should not be taken for granted, as the analysis of the documents referenced in the reports show that the criteria upon which they are characterized as a NFP or other types of documents is not clear. Examples issues are the categorizations forest Strategies as formal NFPs in Croatia and Macedonia [42], or German classification of their formal NFP [43] as being a similar to NFP.

Finland can be considered as a pioneer of formal NFP process [44]. Finnish NFP 2010 [45] was formulated in 1999 through broad public participation (38 experts, 59 public forums with 2900 participants that resulted in 190 written opinions), through strong cooperation with six other ministries and both private and public sector, and which was accompanied by formulation of 13 regional forest programs. The general orientation of this NFP is presented in the first sentence of the summary, as the documents covers “... forest utilization as seen from economic, ecological, social and cultural perspective”. The same perspective is kept in the strategic aims of the program, as 7 out of 10 are primary economic. The document was revised in 2005 – 2008 period, when Finland’s NFP 2015 was made [46]. The new program states the reasons for the revision: “... the impacts of global competition and Russian wood duties as well as climate and energy policy decisions of the EU”. The funding needs of the new program also reflect these reasons, as now only minor role is played by the Ministry of Agriculture of Forestry. Accordingly, the general orientation has also changed, and it is now “... to increase welfare from diverse forests”, and only half of the strategic aims are primary economic.

From all the NFP documents enlisted in the UNECE data base the Swiss NFP for the 2004-2015 period [47] has gone the farthest as regards to the operationalization of the strategic aims and in the scope of participation. Each objective has its indicator with

TABLE 2
Status of implementation of NFPs in Europe

Country	Type of document ¹	Start of the process / year of the most recent document	Inclusion of stakeholders (out of 10 groups)	Uptake of MCPFE instruments (out of 6)	Country	Type of document ¹	Start of the process / year of the most recent document	Inclusion of stakeholders (out of 10 groups)	Uptake of MCPFE instruments (out of 6)
Albania	guided by	1995/2005	2	5	Macedonia	formal	2006/2006	5	2
Austria	formal	2003/2005	10	6	Republic of Moldova	similar	2001/2001	6	0
Belarus	guided by	2007/2007	2	1	Montenegro	guided by	2006/2008	6	1
Belgium	Similar	2009/2011	9	4	Norway	guided by	1998/2009	6	2
Bulgaria	guided by	2006/2006	9	3	Poland	similar	1997/2005	2	2
Croatia	formal	2003/2003	6	1	Portugal	guided by	1996/2006	6	1
Cyprus	formal	2000/2002	5	1	Romania	similar	2000/2005	9	1
Czech Republic	formal	2003/2008	6	5	Russian Federation	-	2007/2008	5	1
Denmark	formal	2001/2001	9	1	Slovak Republic	formal	2006/2007	4	4
Finland	formal	1993/2008	9	2	Slovenia	formal	1997/2007	9	3
France	formal	2006/2006	6	4	Spain	similar	1999/2008	6	5
Germany	Similar	2008/2008	-	0	Sweden	similar	2008/2008	9	1
Hungary	formal	2004/2007	4	2	Switzerland	formal	2004/2004	10	3
Italy	Similar	2008/2009	5	4	Turkey	formal	2004/2004	1	3
Latvia	guided by	1998/1998	7	3	United Kingdom	similar	2003/2003	4	2
Lithuania	formal	2002/2007	6	2	Ukraine	guided by	2002/2010	5	3

1 Type of document – formal NFP process; Process guided by NFP principles; similar process; none of the above,

concrete target value, strategic direction, list of measures, implementing agency with list of partners and follow-up measures. The document was developed in 2002 and 2003 by six working groups comprising out of 130 experts, organized according to the Pan-European Criteria and indicators for Sustainable Forest Management. There were also an NFP Forum with 28 decision makers, and a series of 35 seminars and workshops with 3400 participants. The result was an NFP document with balanced ecological, economical and social components.

Perhaps an unique example of a NFP process is the Kyrgyz one, in which a full logical sequence of policy documents and reforms has been made [48]. Entire process was performed with the assistance of the Kyrgyz-Swiss Forestry Support Program (1995-2009), by whose help the entire organizational structure of the sector has changed [49].

The formulation of strategic documents was done through the usage of a “mixed method” of decision making [50], by which the deductive instrumental

(“top-down”) approach is combined the communicative (“bottom-up”) approach. Practically this means the application of through negotiations between all interest groups in all steps of instrumental rationality (identification of problems, formulation of objectives, selection of means and implementation, monitoring and evaluation). Conceptually a sequence of policy reform can be represented by a “double spiral of power re-distribution” [50], in which the first outward spiral is characterized by a policy learning process, and is followed by an inward spiral characterized by policy negotiation.

The National Concept (i.e. a strategy) for Forestry Development was made in 1999, and since it comprised mostly out of short-term provisions, it was revised in 2004. National forest program was made the same year [52] which disseminated the 10 strategic lines in finer detail. The NFP explicitly specifies the need for Integrated Management Plans as a basic tool for its practical implementation at the sub-national level [48], and sets a clear division between control/regulation responsibilities and economic function that should be privatized. The essence of the ten strategic lines was also kept in the National Action Plan (NAP) [53], which regulated the development of the sector in the period 2006-2010. Both NFP and NAP in Kyrgyzstan have clearly defined implementing agencies, expected results, indicators, resources and time frame.

The organizational changes that were introduced by the NAP led the sector to the increasing of authority of the central administration. However, the implementation of the NAP can be characterized as poor [49]. The strategic documents were not followed by a new law that would support it, and the same situation is with by-laws. In 2011, the state forest implementing agency had staff of 11, and so the field-level forestry enterprises played a key role in the sector. These organizations had too poor funding to improve the status of forest, and very low salaries of its employees stimulated illegal logging [49]. In this case it seems that when the donor-driven “by-the-book type” reforms ended, the strategic determinants of the sector failed to cope with the day-to-day reality of a transition country.

A good example of different type of progression in formal NFP is Slovenia, who’s first NFP [54] is in fact a strategy [55] with a strong ecological orientation. The Strategy was accompanied with an Operational Program of forest development 1996-2000, which only provided a financial framework for the goals set in the Strategy. Second NFP process started in 2005, and in 2007, with the help of five thematic workshops and 14 regional forums, Slovenian second NFP was

made [56] The document is essentially a list of sector-specific, ecologically oriented broad guidelines with indicators that have no threshold values, and with no financial frame of implementation. Although operational plan with concrete measures and responsible actors was set to supplement the NFP, until now such document was not made.

NFP process of Serbia can be characterized as a process of change. It began in 2003 with FAO’s project “Institution development and capacity building for NFP of Serbia” and continued in 2005 with another FAO’s project “Forest sector development in Serbia”. The most important outcomes of the projects [57] were the Draft National Forest Policy, which was adopted in 2006 as a Strategy, and the fourth draft of the Law on Forests, which didn’t came into power so far. At the same time the project of the Norwegian Forestry Group “Program for forest sector of Serbia” focused on more technical aspects of policy change, such as development of cost-effective forest management, development GIS capacities, national forest inventory and forest certification. All of those have strengthened and changed institutional environment of the forest sector in Serbia, and strive to a goal of National forest program in compliance to the procedural requirements of new modes of governance and adherence to the international forest-related commitments. So far such document has not been made.

The NFP process in the Federation of Bosnia is much more focused than in Serbia, in which the outline of the NFP document [58] has been made with balanced aims and list of thematic areas. Strong participation is present in many detailed sub-sectoral progress reports that have operational action plans with indicators, deadlines and implementing agencies; however so far there is no unifying text.

Power relations and procedural design of NFP

Power distribution among participants of the NFP process is an important factor contributing to the influence of stakeholders to the NFP process, and thus to the degree of realization of their interest in the outcome document. Most probably any NFP process will contain uneven distribution of representation of interests, due to the facts that specialized interest groups are more likely to be organized than general interests [59], and that costs and benefits of participation differ among interest groups [23]. One way of managing power misbalance would be designing the participatory and procedural aspects of NFP on a strong foundation in stakeholder analysis that makes the power relations overt; an example of which could be the work of International Institute for Environment and Development [60]. Another issue would be the

principal-agent problem [61], by which the representatives of stakeholder groups may have little bargaining power, and that they may have their self-interest that diverge from the interests of their principals. This problem can be circumvented if the process is composed out of high-ranking representatives that have more discretionary power.

Goals within NFP process may be weakly defined, because powerful users of forests are opposed to further regulation through binding decisions, and so goal setting and inter-sectoral coordination within a NFP process may have just symbolic success in a form of a binding document that will not produce and substantial change. As such, the NFP document can be used by those leading the process as a tool by which they can raise public demand for their specific interests (as opposed to similar strategic documents from other sectors). Based on regional planning experiences from 11 Central European Countries, Krott [62] makes the following recommendations for the formulation of NFP:

- Focus on selected goals in which broad coordination of stakeholders can be achieved, in order to ensure at least some binding potential of the document.
- Make clear to forest users that the NFP process is a tool by which the sector will cope actively with demands and restrictions coming from its surrounding – this will diminish their rejection of additional regulation.
- Combine the NFP formulation with the modernization of the state forest enterprise – with clearly defining the multiple productions of forests (such as recreation, nature protection and non-wood forest products). With this strategy specific state budgets can be formulated, and NFP could help legitimize the demands of the state forest enterprise towards the public funds and the central government – and by doing so, NFP would gain a powerful supporter.
- Mediation – Use NFP as a mediator between all forest users, and so maintains its political influence. Mediation has its problems, since it requires social skills not common to foresters, and that certain interest groups and other parts of state administration might become aware of the power and increase in competence that the mediator role brings, and thus they might challenge it.
- Use NFP as an innovation tool for bringing about new products that are specific to forestry – examples of the stated may be creation of a market for the vast forest-related data contained within the information system of the state forest management company.

Not taking enough account of the power relations among stakeholders may even cause writing of an obituary to the NFP concept itself [60], as the Finnish NFP 2010 with its strong adherence to procedural justice produced symbolic NFP program dominated by neo-corporatist network of key forest policy stakeholders that pushed for enlargement of timber production subsidies [63, 64]. In Germany the NFP process was used by the forestry coalition to stall at that time powerful nature conservation coalition in a long lasting negotiation process, with the goal of perpetuating the status quo. In Bulgaria the NFP process was understood by three different coalitions (state forestry, private forestry and the nature protection) as a tool to transform their policy core beliefs into public policy – and when it became obvious that this could not happen, the process was abandoned [10]. The examples described above show that usage of the deliberative mode of governance (and all of its principles that the scientific literature suggests) does not guarantee outcome justice in a NFP process, and that just as easily due to the determinants of power imbalance mean the consolidation of power of the major stakeholders.

The power relations among national stakeholders are not only determinant of the NFP process. The reliance on externally funded projects in the short run produces an NFP process characterized with strong procedural justice (as in Kyrgyz and Serbian case), but in the long run halts the process when the funding ends; as in Serbia it is unclear whether a document more substantive than the Strategy will be made, and the implementation of the strategic documents in Kyrgyzstan is under question.

The usage of NFP as a mechanism for implementation of international legislation is evident in all reviewed European examples. However the uptake of MCPFE instruments (most notably C&I for SFM) is not pronounced. Although the C&I for SFM are extensively used in the mostly technical reporting on forests [65, 66], from the data base of the UNECE of reports on the pan-European Qualitative indicators for SFM and national implementation of commitments of the MCPFE it is evident that they are not widely recognized as a platform upon which national forestry processes are built. This situation is currently being researched within the “CI-SFM” (Implementing Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management in Europe) project led by the EFICENT-OEF office of the European forest institute [67]. The qualitative C&I for SFM are recognized in the international forest policy domain, as they are one of the platforms for the negotiations on a legally binding agreement of forests in Europe.

Perspectives of NFP development in Croatia

Strategic planning of the forestry sector is defined by the National Forest Policy and Strategy [68], which categorizes its activities into three time-categories: short-term (2003-2006), mid-term (2006-2008) and long-term (2008-). The activities are defined with respect to the strategic documents of the nature protection sector and international commitments, disseminated into the following topics: Management of forest ecosystems; Forest administration and legislation; Non-wood forest products; Forest based industry; Environment and physical planning; Education, research and international cooperation; Public relations. Assessment of the current situation transparently points to different issues, such as overlapping of different parts of state administration, restructuring of the Croatian Forests Ltd. (the state forest management company), management problems of private forests, under-managed non-wood forest products and the status of the wood-processing industry. However, unlike the realistic depiction of the status-quo, the strategic activities have been defined in an over-ambitious manner, and thus mostly have not been implemented. Although there is no explicit mention of NFP in the Strategy, it is defined as a principle instrument of the national forest policy in the Law on forests [69]. Croatia so far does not have an NFP. According to intermediary assessment of the Strategy [70]. 49% of the short-term activities and 33% of mid-term and long-term activities have been implemented. Due to the changes that have had happened from the defining of the Strategy [71] and its partial implementation, there is a need for a process in which new goals for the forestry sector are to be set.

Within the conceptual framework of Advocacy Coalition Framework [72], the NFP process in Croatia would have to encompass conflicts between different core beliefs and/or policy core beliefs of different coalitions (namely coalitions of forestry and nature protection) that would be impervious to policy oriented learning. The reduction of conflict among coalitions by a national "policy broker" (mediators of policy process who channel information among stakeholders and directly influence the output, do not have strong policy beliefs or abandon their preferences; [73]) is also not a dominant strategy, since scientific and state administration organizations can also be seen as a parts of the advocacy coalitions. A possible strategy would be mediation through an international policy broker, which is a viable option – especially since the NFPs are a potential subsidy target of the EU [13]. The assistance of external donors could also facilitate the harmonization of the NFP with respective inter-

national legislation both in its outcomes and in the process itself (i.e. usage of qualitative C&I for SFM as a policy platform). However, overly relying on external factors may impede one of the basic principles of NFP – country leadership, and thus lower the implementation of NFP on symbolic level once the funding ends.

Another momentum that could influence the NFP process are the external perturbations that may weaken the cohesion of the forestry coalitions, as parts of it (such as representatives of private forests, parts of the scientific community and private consulting companies) may modify their policy beliefs in order to reduce the uncertainty caused by the possible reorganization of the state forest management company – Croatian Forests Ltd., or by the further diminishing of the "green tax" (OKFŠ). Another momentum may be the strengthening of the nature protection sector, notably the State institute on nature protection [74] which may through the upcoming implementation of the EU nature protection network – Natura 2000 may have significant impact on the NFP and the forestry sector in general. Further perturbations may come in raising the importance of economic viability of forests due to the general stagnating economic situation in Croatia, which would then ease the access of some members of the forestry coalition to the central government. The national economic situation together with the upcoming accession to EU may raise the importance of the elements outside of the policy subsystem to a level in which the power relations and conflicts [71] may not play the leading role (as in the case of second Finnish NFP).

As stipulated previously, making the conflicts overt and recognizing the power relations among stakeholders is a prerequisite for a NFP which is not just symbolically accepted; otherwise these factors will impede its implementation. And as the theory behind NFP suggest, we should step out the frame of classical, instrumental rationality (practical solution gained through participatory formulation and participation) onto the communicative rationality, in which there is a continuous exchange between stakeholders that leads to change and adaptation of institutional arrangements. In this light the lack of ratification or the implementation of NFPs may not be considered negatively, for it is the process itself that is most important, as it represents the true test of "failure" or "success". The time for evaluation of the current strategic forestry goals in Croatia has clearly come, and for its policy subsystem to enter an inward spiral of negotiations that would result in a formal NFP. And regardless on the specifics of the outcome document, such process is needed as it would bring about institutional arrangements fitting to the current situation.

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