

## PLANNING OF THE RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES WITHIN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN FORESTRY: LINKING TO POLICIES AND PLANNING

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### Abstract

This contribution deals with the theoretical relationship of how forestry should influence society's requirements for recreation in forests and, on the other hand, how society's requirements for recreation in forests influence forestry. Here, the emphasis is placed on existing planning systems, policies and strategies. Using the examples of selected towns and municipalities from the Hodonin region in the Czech Republic, the study monitors the encounters of national and international policies and strategies with immediate impacts on forestry, and vice versa from the point of view of recreational use. The importance of the state of forests, their location, natural conditions, infrastructure, etc. plays a key role. This study found that although policies and strategies significantly mention forestry and the requirements of recreational use at a sustainable level, from a practical point of view we would expect this to be included in forest management plans. These are understood as a specific practical tool for the forest owner, but they should also include the stated demands of society, which are based on policies, strategies and are reflected through legislation in specific management measures. Unfortunately, the results of the findings point to shortcomings in these expectations.

**Key words:** forest management planning, strategy, policy, theoretical approaches, implementation

### Introduction

Forestry encompasses a few related disciplines, including forest policy, which can be defined as an analytical policy process that involves formulating goals for human activities in forest management and use, and implementing them through feedback (Helms 1998).

In the context of this contribution, we understand regional development as a set of activities on which local actors agree to contribute to the development of a region across the environmental, economic and social dimensions. We focus on the strategic-planning dimension of regional development, because strategic documents at the supranational, national, regional, local and municipal levels shape the priorities and directions of territorial development, including the position and expected contribution of forestry. Understanding how these documents formulate objectives related to forestry is therefore essential for assessing the role that forestry is to play in regional development. The basic tool for planning forest management is the forest management plan. It can be defined as a predetermined procedure and direction to achieve a set of results, usually specified in terms of objectives, tasks and political intentions. (Krott, 2005).

The law of the Czech Republic defines a forest management plan as a tool of the forest owner. Based on a detailed assessment of the state of the forest, the plan determines a sustainable level of timber harvesting in the long term, which, by using the forest's production capabilities, ensures a permanent yield and does not threaten its essence or the fulfilment of other functions (including recreational ones). The Forestry Code (No. 289/1995 Coll., as amended) states that these plans are a tool of the forest owner, who is entitled to significantly influence the principles of future management and thus its yield within certain limits.

The objectives of forest planning can be diverse, from setting strategic visions to assessing the current state of the forest, identifying the results and outputs of forest management and setting political goals (van Hensbergen et al., 2023). According to him, the hierarchy of forest planning is generally based on the objectives of the national forest policy, which are reflected in the regional strategic forest plan. Here, the objectives are implemented mainly through the forest owner.

The aim of this study was to determine, using the example of selected municipalities in the Hodonin region within the Czech Republic, how forestry (the overall state of forests and its management methods) affects society's requirements for recreation in forests and, on the other hand, how society's requirements for recreation in forests affect forestry (in terms of management results – economic aspects, forest condition – ecological aspects, and overall access to forests – social aspects). Here, the emphasis is placed on existing planning systems, policies and strategies. The study monitors the

intersection of national and international policies and strategies with immediate impacts on forestry, and vice versa from the perspective of recreational use.

## **Material and methods**

### *Study area*

The analysis of the approach to recreational forest use and the connection of forestry policies was solved on the example of several selected municipalities in the Hodonín region. Hodonín is a district, according to NUTS units in terms of NUTS 4 units according to European Commission (2007). It is located in southeastern Moravia in the Czech Republic, near the border with Slovakia. For the purposes of this study, 5 municipalities were selected that own forest property. These are the municipalities of Mutěnice, Dubňany, Čejč, Hovorany, Šardice - i.e. located in the immediate vicinity of the city of Hodonín. These municipalities are cadastrally connected to each other, but the approach to forest management and support for recreational forest use is different.

From the point of view of natural conditions, the selected area lies on the border of two different geomorphological units: the Lower Moravian Valley, the Central Moravian Carpathians. The relief is largely flat, flat to slightly undulating, with an altitude of 170-230 m above sea level (Culek 2005). Water is drained from the area by nameless streams, which are part of the Kyjovka River basin, then the Dyje and Morava rivers. According to the climatic classification of Quitt (1971), the municipal forests are in the group of warm areas T4. The geological subsoil consists of terraced gravelly sands, on which wind-blown sands rest. The predominant soil type is arenaceous oligotrophic cambium.

The municipality of Mutěnice owns approximately 95 ha of forest, the municipality of Čejč 16 ha, the town of Dubňany 225 ha, Hovorany 80 ha and the municipality of Šardice approximately 60 ha of forest. In the municipality of Mutěnice, the main tree species is Scots pine, which represents 32% of the growing area and 44% of the stock. Furthermore, black locust occupies 35% of the growing area (25% of the stock), oaks 11% of the growing area (10% of the stock), linden tree 7%. Other tree species are represented marginally (up to 5%). These are mostly invasive species such as ash-leaved maple, glandular juniper, etc. In the town of Dubňany, the species composition of tree species is approximately similar, however, the dominant tree species are oaks, followed by Scots pine. Again, there is a high presence of invasive non-native tree species: especially black locust, ash-leaf maple, tree of Heaven etc. The municipalities of Čejč (up to 90%), Hovorany and Šardice have stands consisting mainly of black locust, with tree of Heaven occurring prominently on the edges. However, there are some exceptions.

In terms of landscape character, this is more of an agricultural landscape with a high incidence of field crops, with minimal incidence of meadows or pastures. It is also a characteristic wine-growing area, which is also widely used for visits to taste wine. The forests in this landscape offer opportunities, especially for cycling or walking on hot summer days.

### *Analysis of the state of approach to recreational forest use with regard to regional development*

The identification of the approach of individual selected municipalities to the recreational use of forest property (regarding its potential) and the connection to various policies (the above-mentioned overview of policies is listed, for example, by Holušová et al., 2025) with a link to regional development and forestry was carried out by verifying several aspects. This verification was identified through discussions with representatives of municipalities and cities in the years 2024 to 2026. Specifically, the following findings were made:

- 1) Whether the given municipality or city has developed its own strategy for the development of forest property care with regard to the recreational use of forests (i.e. beyond the framework of planning documents);
- 2) Whether the given municipality or city sufficiently includes its requirements for recreational activities in forests in the forest management plan and practically implements this;
- 3) Whether the given municipality has infrastructure to support recreational activities. For example, roads - sufficiently marked and passable, also safe, whether there is, for example, an educational trail about forest ecosystems, whether the forest is equipped with, for example, game or other sports elements (or at least there is such an intention) and also with the use of subsidies.
- 4) Whether the municipality or city intends to improve the health of forests and thus increase the recreational potential of forests and their safety.
- 5) Which aspects of the three selected ones does the given municipality intend to support the most (economic, ecological or social, or all).

## Results and discussion

### *Results of the analysis of the state of access to recreational use of forests with a link to regional development*

A general overview of the approach to solving recreational use in forests owned by selected municipalities and towns in the Hodonín region is presented in Table 1.

The results show that only two municipalities have a strategy for developing forest property care with regard to recreational use of forest: Dubňany and Čejč. Two municipalities also have their own infrastructure to support recreational activities using subsidies, but these are municipalities that have larger assets than the others. These two municipalities with larger forest assets are also trying to improve the health of the forests. Almost all municipalities prioritize economic aspects in the care of their assets over others.

Tab. 1: Results of the solution of recreational activities in forests with connection to the forest management plan, owners' intentions, use of policies and subsidies in selected municipalities of Hodonín region, Czech Republic

Name of municipality	Forest area in ha	Manages the forests itself or a foreign private entity manages them	Own strategy for developing forest property care with regard to recreational use of forests	To incorporate its requirements for forest recreational activities into the forest management plan and practically implemented	Providing infrastructure to support recreational activities using subsidies	Targeted improvement of the health of forests and increasing the recreational potential of forests and their safety	Mostly supports these aspects (economic, ecological, social, all of them)
Mutěnice	95	Municipality	No	Partly	Yes	Yes	Economic
Dubňany	225	Municipality	Yes	Partly	Yes	Yes	All of them
Čejč	16	Municipality	Yes	No	No	No	Economic
Hovorany	80	Private entity	No	No	No	No	Economic
Šardice	60	Private entity	No	No	No	No	Economic

It is possible to conclude that if a municipality transfers the right to manage forests to a private company. It is very difficult to talk about how it will influence and support forest management and how it will support recreational activities in forests located in the municipality's cadastre. With the transfer to private management and use, it can be said that the influence of politicians or the influence of a forest management plan or interest is not possible and in principle not even real. On the other hand, the management by municipalities itself does not seem ideal either. As for the state of the forest, we often find stands that are neglected in terms of cultivation.

All properties are burdened by the occurrence of invasive tree species, and their development is evident here. Where there were stands in the past that were logged in previous years, they were not afforested but rather allowed to rejuvenate the invasive black locust.

In the forests of the municipality of Mutěnice, the plans are currently similar. This may be due to the fact that these are again larger properties. Forests in the municipality of Čejč are another specific feature, the municipality has a developed strategy, but the condition of the forests is not good, and economic aspects are prioritized over others. The reason may be the small area of forests and their dispersion. Hovorany and Šardice currently do not address recreational use of forests in any way, the policy does not affect it in any way, and neither does the management of private owners. Which is probably not a sustainable model with the support of all aspects.

## Conclusion

In five selected municipalities and towns in the Hodonín region in the Czech Republic, it was investigated how forestry planning is linked to regional development policies and how recreational opportunities in forests are supported and addressed within this connection. It was found that although policies and strategies significantly mention forestry and the requirements for use for recreational purposes at a sustainable level, from a practical point of view we would expect this to be included in forest management plans, but this is not the case. The findings point to aspects of the importance of a larger area of forests managed by municipalities, and it is appropriate not to transfer the right to manage to other (private) entities. Thus, the municipality and its management cannot influence the

state of the forests or their use. Policies are therefore inapplicable within the framework of voluntary will. All that remains is a legislative regulation that does not directly direct specific goals and methods of management to the owner or manager of the forest (managing entity).

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## Souhrn

Tento příspěvek se zabývá teoretickým vztahem mezi tím, jak by lesnictví mělo ovlivňovat požadavky společnosti na rekreaci v lesích, a naopak, jak požadavky společnosti na rekreaci v lesích ovlivňují lesnictví. Důraz je zde kladen na stávající systémy plánování, politiky a strategie. Na příkladech vybraných měst a obcí z Hodonínského regionu v České republice studie sleduje prolínání národních a mezinárodních politik a strategií s bezprostředním dopadem na lesnictví a naopak z hlediska rekreačního využití. Klíčovou roli hraje význam stavu lesů, jejich umístění, přírodních podmínek, infrastruktury atd. Tato studie zjistila, že ačkoli politiky a strategie významně zmiňují lesnictví a požadavky rekreačního využití na udržitelné úrovni, z praktického hlediska bychom očekávali, že toto bude zahrnuto do plánů lesního hospodaření. Ty jsou chápány jako konkrétní praktický nástroj pro vlastníka lesa, měly by však zahrnovat i uvedené požadavky společnosti, které vycházejí z politik, strategií a promítají se prostřednictvím legislativy do konkrétních opatření v oblasti hospodaření. Výsledky zjištění bohužel poukazují na nedostatky v těchto očekáváních.

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