

THE ROMANIAN FORESTRY SECTOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The article presents the conclusions and findings of the training needs assessment performed for the Department of Forestry within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development and the decentralized structures (Territorial Inspectorates for Forestry Regime and Hunting). The conclusions are based on a thorough review of organizational structures, a review of available job descriptions from the DoF (Department of Forestry), interviews with the representatives of the Directions within the DoF, Territorial Inspectorates for Forestry Regime and Hunting and representatives of other interested parties (forest owners, National Forest Direction, city halls). The study was performed in the field of operational management, Human resources development and project management and was oriented on adult education, vocational training and e-learning.

KEYWORDS: *human resources, forestry, Department of Forestry (DoF), strategy*

1. Actual Organization, Role and Structure of the Directorate of Forests

After December 2000, according to the new organizational framework elaborated by the Government, the Directorate of Forests has been transferred from the former Ministry of Waters, Forests and Environmental Protection (MWFEP) to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests (MAFF), nowadays the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Rural Development (MAFRD). Also, several subsequent changes within its organization followed as well. According to the Government Decision no. 155/2005, referring to the organization and functionality of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Rural Development, its mission consists in the following main tasks:

- ✦ Develops strategies and sector policies for the sustainable use and management of resources (provided by the national forest fund and the forest vegetation - which is not comprised by the forest fund.);
- ✦ Develops technical standards and instructions aiming to effectively manage the forest fund sustainably;
- ✦ Exerts the legal tasks in order to observe the Forest Code provisions across the national forest fund;
- ✦ Prepares the adoption by Parliament and implements the communitarian acquis for forestry;
- ✦ Coordinates and supervises the development of managerial plans concerning large and small forest estate and also woodlands, in a consistent way and in accordance to the associated technical standards;

- ✦ Initiates proposals for the maximum allowable cut for one year, on the basis of the total allowable cut provided by the forest managerial plans (Note: the allowable cut is broken down on types of final users - such as industry and local communities);
- ✦ Analyzes and approves the submissions for the fallout of certain areas from the forest fund in accordance to the law, for a limited or unlimited period of time; it also regulates the forest boundaries, regardless the type of ownership;
- ✦ Coordinates, along with other stakeholders, the reforestation works on badlands, inadequate for agricultural use, or forest belts. It also coordinates in a homogeneous manner the works on forest managerial planning;
- ✦ Organizes the national system of forest monitoring, and adopts measures for improving the health of the forest fund in accordance with the communitarian acquis;
- ✦ Pursues the development of the forest road network and supervises its funding and implementation;
- ✦ Supervises the state of forest fund and elaborates annual reports for the Government;
- ✦ Certifies the professionals and the companies allowed to deliver projects and studies for ecological restoration, badlands afforestation and reforestation, and managerial planning works;
- ✦ Collaborates with other stakeholders for seizing the national forest fund;
- ✦ Organizes and coordinates the research activities, along with technical development and forest extension;
- ✦ Standardizes the forest managerial plans for private forests as well as for forests owned by municipalities or other owners;
- ✦ Approves the forest zoning for woodlands;
- ✦ Organizes the forest technical works financed by the state budget for private forests, in accordance to the law;
- ✦ Coordinates the public awareness and training campaigns in order to make private owners observe and improve the forest regime;
- ✦ Develops and supervises technical standards for seed production and seedlings needed for forest regeneration;
- ✦ Authorizes structures able to manage the private forests according to Forest Code provisions;
- ✦ Develops and analyses the information system for forestry;
- ✦ Elaborates feasible international programs for forestry;
- ✦ Produces and delivers syntheses on national forest fund, updates the national forest inventory and writes down prognoses;
- ✦ Checks and approves the documents for the justification of losses, especially those produced by calamities and occurred in freshly regenerated areas;
- ✦ Coordinates the works for forest inventory;
- ✦ Initiates strategies and sector policies;
- ✦ Tenders, according to law provisions, the hunting fields and supervises game management;
- ✦ Develops regulations and technical standards for sustainable game management and for sustainable management of other non-wood forest products.

For the institutions that stand for the public authority in charge with forestry at the territorial level, according to the updated organization chart, there are eight inspectorates for forest regime and hunting that overlap the territorial profile of the development regions.

According to the latest sector strategy developed for forestry, the role of DoF has been defined in accordance to the main topic addressed by that strategy. We must highlight that, in contrast to the Government Decision referred to as the guiding document for drafting the needs for human resources, the sector strategy is defined more clearly in some respects.

Some objectives are defined in a pragmatic manner, such as “The establishment of a Geographic Information System (GIS) for forest management in Romania” while other issues are completely forgotten, such as the communitarian acquis itself. It is just an issue of timing because when the forestry strategy was produced, too little was known about the odds and ends of the EU integration process. The following strategic actions are not regarded as actual responsibilities of the DoF, although the strategy has assumed the DoF would be in charge with:

- Drafting and passing legal basis for administrative and control mechanisms, and instruments based on market economy principles and private land ownership (1st priority);
- Developing administrative structures to suit the existing working units and forest districts, irrespective of land ownership (1st priority);
- Updating the forest administration information system at both central and local level (1st priority);
- Harmonizing the forest administration system with the European practice (2nd priority, now changed to a 1st priority issue);
- Extending the forest coverage over meadows and other types of land usually covered by wooden plants (3rd priority);
- Developing and implementing criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management (1st priority, now partially accomplished in practice and fully accomplished in theory);
- Developing a National Program for sustainable forest management;
- Setting up a Geographic Information System (GIS) for forest management in Romania (1st priority, postponed now, due to the lack of money);
- Developing the National Forest Inventory;
- Upgrading the forestland register/cadastre in compliance with the general land Register/cadastre requirements.

Identifying the forest ecosystems and habitats which possess a high biodiversity value (a task that is impossible to accomplish directly, without coming up with adequate proposals for research projects that would be financed from the national budget).

2. Directorate of Policies, Strategies and Forest Regulations

This body is responsible with conceiving and implementing the national sustainable forest policy and measures to preserve the forest vegetation beyond the forest fund, such as forest shelterbelts and woodlands where the density of trees is lower than 40%. In this category the alpine Swiss pine belt is also included, as well as isolated trees spread out on pasturelands. This body is also responsible for merging the forest strategy within the national economic growth strategy.

2.1 Directorate of Forest Development and Ownership consolidation

It includes three compartments and a subdivision gathered into this directorate, their profile being rather a technical one.

The Department of Ecological Restoration has to allocate funds needed for reforesting some badlands; it also has to track down these funds that imply a straightforward relationship with landowners or land administrators, such as the National Forest Administration. A sound comprehension of the reforestation or afforestation works is needed, including the knowledge related to the supply of reproductive material (seed reserves for nurseries or seedlings). In order to foresee the seedlings supply, the most important piece of information this compartment actually needs is a catalogue of the most important nurseries.

The second department deals with forest road network (forest accessibility), torrents control, privatization, estates and concessions. Similar to the first herein department, it is oriented to technical aspects of torrents control and forest roads. Nevertheless, the legal aspects of concessions and property rights are prevailing and this department might be overwhelmed soon, without having a reliable IT support.

The finance department plays the role of middleman between woodland owners, the regional program implementation bureaus and the companies able to produce the technical documentation an application form relies on. Each of the eight forest inspectorates has two employees supposed to provide technical assistance to the regional implementation bureaus as well as to the landowners, associations or other legal bodies that might be eligible for co-financed investments.

Compared to other departments, this is a temporary one and will last as long as necessary in order to smooth and encourage the process of submitting projects for being co-financed. The last compartment deals with private forests, its main task comprising of the coordination works necessary for improving the management of private forests. This department deals specially with strengthening the local association and the national ones and supply technical standards when required.

3. Department of Forest Management

3.1 Tasks Derived from the Communitarian Acquis for Forestry

In 2003, the last landmark of this vast process, a Network for a European Forest Information Service (NEFIS) was created. NEFIS will be built on and continue the activities initiated under the initial European Forest Information System (EFIS) project; it will also contribute to the activities of the IUFRO Special Programme on the Global Forest Information System (GFIS). NEFIS will thereby concentrate on issues related to data provision and prepare the ground for EFIS to become a European node of the GFIS.

Nevertheless, the forestry Information System, irrespective of which extent it is not structured yet, must integrate the DoF within the network. For the DoF, the main task to undertake is to define, according to the existing legal basis and standards, the final structure of the forest database; the latter one is to set up the priorities and privileges for accessing and/or updating any data file included into the forestry database.

3.2 Ongoing Tasks Carried Out in Accordance with the Existing Legislation and Common Practice

This department is the technical core of the whole Directorate of Forests, as all of the most frequent technical problems must be dealt with; problems such as: forest cadastre, coordination of the forest managerial planning, natural reserves or supervising the way in which the forest legislation is being observed by all land users and landowners.

The main tasks of the Compartment of Forest Fund and Biodiversity Preservation are related to book-keeping the overall features of the forest area and biodiversity preservation. It should be said that another counterpart department has been created within the Ministry of Water and Environmental Protection, wherein the biodiversity issues are gathered with the food security (Directorate of Biodiversity Conservation and Biological Security). Also, according to the strategy that has been adopted for biodiversity conservation, special departments for biological diversity are to be set up wherever biological resources are being used or managed, in order to harmonize in a coherent manner the national strategy.

According to the strategy of biodiversity protection (project financed by the World Bank) within a period of ten years the management of all national and natural parks should be backed up by adequate managerial plans. Along with that, it is also needed a specific

network for biodiversity monitoring, on which implementation the Department of Forest Fund and Biodiversity is in charge of.

According to the same strategy, the Department of Forest Fund and Biodiversity Preservation must contribute to a national program on analyzing both the biodiversity and the causes of some species decline, including threatened species.

Nevertheless, the frequency of getting to solve different problems related to biodiversity preservation is much lower than the rate of being involved in the day-to-day technical issues of forest cadastre or managerial planning.

Actually, coordinating and supervising managerial planning works is the bottleneck of the whole activity the Directorate is responsible for. Although the officials of this department are being involved only in a few phases of the technical process of producing a new managerial plan (they have to attend the managerial conferences wherein the planners meet their clients, being supervised by a representative of the public authority) this kind of work implies a tight logistic coordination, especially at the beginning of the year.

Unfortunately for the time being, the quality of the forest cadastre has left much to be desired due to the lack of coordination and money. Hence the training and IT needs of this department must be carefully addressed in order to speed up the process of modernizing the forest cadastre. As for the forest inventory, it will be carried out by another company or institution, the only role the Directorate of Forest Management might have being the coordination, in order to observe the same technical standards.

3.3 The Subdivision for Game Management

This section is responsible with producing standards and norms on game management and all related activities, such as: conditions to comply with when company is interested in administering a hunting fund, legal issues, hunting quotas for different species of game or annual surveying of the game stock. Along with these tasks, this subdivision is also responsible with issuing special authorizations for game trophies or protected species of game, as well as with issuing all the documentation needed to attend international exhibition of game trophies.

3.4 General Directorate for control of Forestry and Hunting Regime

3.4.1 History of Controlling the Forest Regime

The necessity of controlling the forest regime came up in 1998 in order to prevent any likely deforestation process that could follow the next stage of forest restitution. It's worth nothing that the first law on restitution of property rights over agricultural and woodlands (Law 18/1991) was followed by a severe deforestation due to the lack of legal enforcements in deterring the landowners from cutting the trees on their own properties or preventing the wood thefts.

The first territorial structures deemed for controlling the forest regime irrespective to the forest ownership were created according to Government Ordinance 96/1998, which stated that the General Directorate of Forest Regime Supervision, which is subordinated to the Forest Department, is supervising the forest regime. In order to fulfil its main duties, the General Directorate of Forests has the following responsibilities:

- ❖ Oversees the way in which legal provisions are observed;
- ❖ Analyses and controls the way in which managerial plans have been observed;
- ❖ Controls the way in which the legal provisions referring to fire control measures have been observed;
- ❖ Controls the harvesting operations;

- ❖ Controls the road building and maintenance works, in accordance with the legal standards;
- ❖ Establishes forest felonies and misdemeanours;
- ❖ Verifies written complaints;
- ❖ Approves the personnel employed by the private forest administration bodies, others than the National Forest Administration.

The job description of personnel within the General Direction for Forestry regime control and hunting were not available due to the fact that the Direction has just been reorganized within the ministry.

4. Justification of Training Needs within the Department of Forestry and its Territorial Structures

Romania's integration within the EU imposes complying with norms and regulations which include awareness and professional training for the personnel within the Department of Forestry and the territorial structures. Additionally, there are other requirements for forestry management, a continuous adaptation on implementing the new exploitation technologies and also improvement of the communication process between partners and beneficiaries. These needs arise as a consequence of change generation, introduction of new qualified personnel which needs not only training but also mentoring from the experiences personnel. Forest privatization process and the mixed property generates the need of specialized personnel which could ensure the correct information, a good and efficient relation with the owners in order to fight the effects of irresponsible deforestation. In this activity sector the competition is increasing, this could generate a deficient management of private forest, all these leading to a negative effect on the Forest Fund.

Conclusions

In conclusion, a lot of first priorities stated by the sector strategy have been left aside, a few second priorities have been already accomplished more or less, due to the snow-ball effect of adhering to international conventions (most of all being related to biodiversity preservation), and some challenges, not even mentioned as second or third degree priorities, have been addressed by officially authorized initiatives or kicked-off projects just for tagging on the political. Actually, when comparing the latest forestry strategy with the latest DoF terms of reference, one should consider that a forest strategy might reflect what the political power would have wanted to come up with in the forest sector, considering a tight network of connections within the national economy.

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