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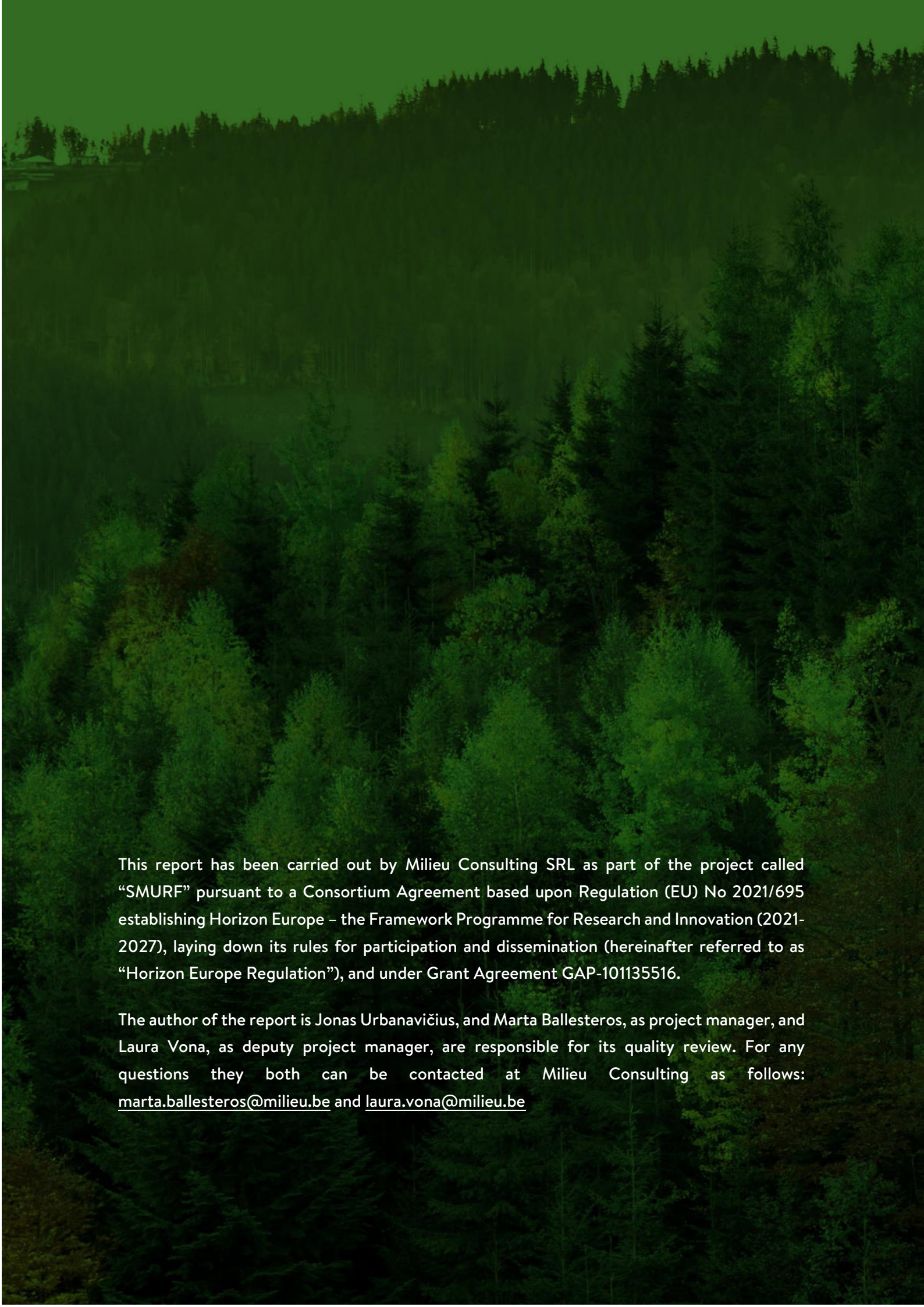
Legal and regulatory framework applicable to Small Forest Owners and Sustainable Forest Management

Country Fact Sheet
Lithuania

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THE FOREST OWNERS' PROJECT

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Legal and regulatory framework applicable to Small Forest Owners and Sustainable Forest Management (SMURF) - WP2

Executive Summary

Legal and Regulatory Framework of Forest Management in Lithuania

The Republic of Lithuania's forest governance is rooted in a legal framework defined by its Constitution and a comprehensive set of legislative measures, including the Civil Code, the Law on Forests, Law on Protected Areas and legislation adopted at the Cabinet of Ministers of Ministry levels.

The Constitution recognises forests of national significance as exclusive state property, while other forests may be privately owned, with ownership and use governed by strict regulations. The Law on Forests outlines the core principles of forest restoration, protection, and utilisation, emphasising sustainable practices.

National legislation defines key concepts related to forest management. A "forest" encompasses land with trees of a specific maturity and density, including temporarily deforested areas awaiting regeneration. The term has an identical meaning from both linguistic and legal point of view. Ownership definitions distinguish between state forests, which are of national significance, and private forests managed by individuals or entities. Private forest ownership is significant with over 255,000 owners collectively managing nearly half of Lithuania's forested land.

Governance and Institutional Roles

Lithuania's forest governance is centralised at the national level, with key responsibilities allocated to the Seimas (Parliament), the Ministry of Environment, and its subordinate bodies. These institutions oversee forest policy implementation, inventory management, biodiversity conservation, and forest health monitoring. The Lithuanian State Forest Enterprise plays a vital role in managing state forests, focusing on afforestation, sustainable use, and infrastructure maintenance.

Forest Land Ownership

Lithuania's forest land is categorised into state and private ownership, with a detailed cadastral system managing land-use data. The Real Property Register serves as proof of certain rights, including immovable ownership. Approximately 33.9% of Lithuania's territory is forested, with ownership data maintained through the Real Property Register and the Forest Cadastre.

Main Rights and Obligations

Forest owners in Lithuania enjoy rights to harvest resources, manage forest lands, and receive financial support for sustainable practices. However, these rights are paired with strict obligations. Owners must comply with forest management plans, restore harvested areas, and protect forests from fires, pests, and diseases. Limitations are imposed on activities such as clear-cutting and land-use conversion, ensuring sustainable practices align with national and environmental priorities. Less strict obligations are applicable for small forest owners.

Sustainable forest management

There is no formal definition of sustainable forest management, nor a comprehensive legal framework regulating it systematically. However, within the current legal framework, sustainable forest management is indirectly achieved through a set of individual environmental obligations. National legislation ensures that private owners adhere to sustainable management practices and comply with detailed regulatory requirements for activities such as harvesting, reforestation, and biodiversity protection. Additionally, the implementation of forest management plans – mandatory for state-owned forests and most private forests – further contributes to sustainability.

Forest land market

Lithuania's forest land market is regulated by the Law on Forests, which sets ownership limits, sale restrictions, and division rules. Persons (natural or legal) can own up to 1,500 hectares, and acquiring significant shares in large forest-owning companies requires approval. Land plots under 5 hectares generally cannot be divided, except in specific cases. Co-owners, neighbours, and the state have preferential purchase rights in certain transactions. The National Land Service oversees land transactions, while the Ministry of Environment manages state-owned forests. Market transparency remains limited, with no systematic publication of transaction data.

Legal and Regulatory Gaps

Major regulatory gap in national forest legislation in Lithuania is the lack of a systemic regulation of sustainable forest management, including definitions and main principles.

Another element that could be regarded as a significant regulatory gap, is the fragmentation of existing data on forest land, its structure and ownership: data is gathered from several datasets and then combined in principle manually, thus leaving a lot of room for errors and inaccuracies. It is also observed that in some instances forest owners are subject to disproportionate administrative burden.

Finally, system of sanctions does not ensure efficient observance of legislative requirements, and that state administration is not able to enforce all legislative requirements.

Introduction

This is a Horizon project with a strong research approach. The name of the project is 'Sustainable Management models and value chains for small Forests' known as SMURF with the reference HORIZON-CL6-2023-CIRCBIO-01.

The general objective is to provide an analysis of the legal and regulatory framework in EU Member States applicable to small forest owners (SFO) in their practices aiming to Sustainable Forest Management.

The specific project objectives are:

1. Prepare a report on the legal framework on SFO for most EU Member State.
2. Identify the basic legislation regulating SFO and the specific articles setting rights and obligations and *provide the links* to those basic and articles.
3. Define the rights and obligations for SFO in EU Member States.
4. Define the legal framework for the economic activity of SFO in EU Member States.
5. **Identify the main legal limitations or barriers for SFO in EU Member States.**
6. **Identify needs for legal reforms and propose specific legal improvements, when considered necessary.**
7. Prepare a comparative analysis of the legal framework SFO in the EU Member States.

These guidelines provide the basic information for the elaboration of the report on legal framework applicable to Small Forest owners/holders. It is complemented by a pilot report showing as a model to show the level of depth of the analysis.

When using the term "legal framework" we consider:

- The organizational model of forestry and the forest value chain.
- The institutional framework, identifying the distribution of competences among the different administration levels (European, national, regional and local) and administration sectors (agriculture and rural development, environment, industry, interior, economics and others).
- The regulatory framework, identifying laws and regulations that affect forestry and the forest value chain. The key articles that set basic rules for forestry will be explicitly referred and translated into English.

The analysis will be focused on factors that affect the participation of forest holdings in the market. There is a particular interest in identifying barriers, obstacles and measures or instruments that have had a significant positive impact in the present functioning of the forest markets.

The analysis will describe the nowadays situation of the framework, although a contextual and short reference of the origin and evolution of the framework when needed for a good understanding will be included.

The analysis will consider the national legislation and will only refer to the regional legislation as a way of example to confirm the national legal framework or to show that in some regions the situation may be rather different.

The analysis will take into consideration the forest sector legislation, but not only, because the main barriers and legal limitations might be derived from the inadequacy of other sectoral laws (societal, fiscal, real state and ownership, cadastral, insurances) or requirements in some pieces of national environmental legislation. It will refer to Nature or Biodiversity Conservation law and to the Environmental Impact Assessment legislation while it might also refer to relevant agriculture legislation.

1. Basic legal and regulatory framework applicable to small forest owners

1.1. Context to the legislation

The foundations of the legal system of the Republic of Lithuania are based on the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, adopted in 1992 by referendum. Under that law, sovereign state power is vested in the people of Lithuania and is exercised by the Seimas (Parliament), the President of the Republic, the Government, and the Courts.

The Lithuanian legal system is principally based on the legal traditions of continental Europe. Legal reforms implemented after the restoration of independence in 1990 were aimed at adopting new pieces of legislation not based on the socialist legal system of the occupying USSR.

Main sources of national law include (in the order of hierarchy, established by laws and the practice of the Constitutional court): Constitution; international treaties ratified by the Parliament; secondary EU legislation; constitutional laws; other laws; international treaties not ratified by the Parliament; acts of the Government (Cabinet of Ministers); acts of other institutions.

Lithuania's judicial system consists of general and special jurisdiction courts. General courts, including the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, regional, and district courts, handle civil and criminal cases. District courts also hear certain administrative offence cases. Special jurisdiction courts, such as the Supreme Administrative Court and regional administrative courts, resolve administrative disputes. While court decisions are not formal sources of law, Supreme Court rulings guide lower courts. The Constitutional Court reviews the constitutionality of legal acts, and a recent amendment allows citizens to submit individual appeals.

Lithuanian forestry has evolved over centuries, starting with tribal land divisions before the 13th century. By the 14th–15th centuries, forest industries developed, with nobles controlling the lands while peasants retained limited forest-use rights. The 1529 Lithuanian Statute and later regulations formalised forest ownership and management. Since the 17th century, the first regulatory measures in forestry were introduced, while systematic sustainable forestry developed in the 19th–20th centuries. In the 19th century, systematic forest inventory and regulations on logging norms emerged. Between 1918–1940, Lithuania established forest management institutions and expanded afforestation. During the Soviet occupation (1940–1990), forests were nationalised, and centralised forestry planning intensified. Post-WWII, forest protection and afforestation efforts increased. Since 1990, Lithuania has focused on sustainable forestry, with afforestation rates stabilising. Today, forest cover continues to expand, ensuring long-term ecological and economic balance. Lithuania's forest cover is around 33%, slightly above the EU average. (for comparison – approximate figure of about 20% in 1948), playing a crucial role in its ecology, economy, and culture.

1.2. Basic legal instruments

Constitutional provisions

It sets principles of private ownership as well as limitations on ownership of forest land.

1. Exclusive ownership by the State of forests of national significance: Article 47 of the Constitution establishes that land, forests, and other natural resources may only belong to Lithuanian citizens, the State, and legal entities established in Lithuania. However, forests of national significance are the exclusive property of the Republic of Lithuania.
2. Foreign ownership restrictions: Foreign entities may acquire land, internal waters, and forests only under strict conditions aligned with Lithuania's European and transatlantic integration, as prescribed in the Constitutional Law[1]. However, specific exclusions apply, notably for forest land designated for forestry purposes, protective forests, recreational forests, and land near significant water bodies and their protective zones.

Civil Code

It defines main principles of the legal institute of ownership (including specific provisions on ownership, transfer, registration of real property, such as land, forests).

Key sectoral legislation

1. Law on Forests[2]

The law regulates forest restoration, protection, and utilisation, establishing principles for sustainable and balanced forest management applicable to all ownership forms. This is done through implementation of the following objectives:

- Rational use of forest resources.
- Provision of raw materials to industry.
- Promotion of ecological, economic, and social benefits.
- Preservation of biodiversity and environmental quality.

2. Law on Protected Areas[3]

The Law governs the establishment, management, and protection of protected areas, including Natura 2000 sites of international importance. The Law integrates environmental conservation with sustainable development to protect Lithuania's natural and cultural heritage.

[1] Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucijos 47 straipsnio 3 dalies įgyvendinimo konstitucinis įstatymas, No I-1392, adopted on 20-06-1996, publication reference: Žin., 1996-07-05, Nr. 64-1503, last consolidated version of 19-01-2018, available at: https://e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.73F76F9D2EF1/asr

[2] *Lietuvos Respublikos miškų įstatymas*, No. I-671, adopted on 22-11-1994, publication reference: Žin., 1994-12-14, Nr. 96-1872, last consolidated version of 01-07-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.5D6D055CC00C/asr

[3] *Lietuvos Respublikos saugomų teritorijų įstatymas*, No. I-301,adopted on 09-11-1993, publication reference: Žin., 1993-11-24, Nr. 63-1188, last consolidated version of 01-07-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.FF1083B528B7/asr

3. Law on National Genetic Resources of Plants[4]

The Law safeguards plant genetic resources to ensure sustainable use and conservation, aiming to prevent destruction or depletion while maintaining biodiversity.

4. Law on Hunting[5]

Connection of the Law to Forest Management: Regulates hunting activities, which are integral to maintaining ecological balance and ensuring sustainable wildlife populations within forests.

Regulations and Specific Norms

1. Forest Restoration and Afforestation Rules[6]

It governs reforestation, afforestation, and the quality standards for forest planting and cultivation (with the exception of raw plantations of trees and shrubs and Christmas trees).

2. Complex and Natural Reserves Regulations[7]

It defines the management and protection principles for state and municipal reserves, including those with geological, botanical, zoological, and other ecological significance; ensure protection of genetic forest resources within reserves.

1.3. Basic Regulatory framework

Currently, Lithuania has no dedicated national Forest Strategy . The most recent document was the National Forestry Sector Development Programme 2012-2020[8]. The most recent Strategy of the Forestry Sector Policy and its Implementation was adopted even earlier, in 2002[9]. In about 2015-2020 there were public debates on the country-wide pact on the Forestry Strategy, however, the final agreement between stakeholders was not reached. To be noted though that the Work Programme of the 19th Cabinet of Ministers[10] can serve as guidelines on new Government's approach towards the forest sector. The Government commits itself to adopt a new Forest strategy and to conduct forest policy based on sustainable forest management principles.

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[4] *Lietuvos Respublikos augalų nacionalinių genetinių išteklių įstatymas*, No. IX-533, adopted on 09-10-2001, publication reference: Žin., 2001-10-24, Nr. 90-3144, last consolidated version of 01-07-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.55D93E8A9C77/asr

[5] *Lietuvos Respublikos medžioklės įstatymas*, No. IX-966, adopted on 20-06-2002, publication reference: Žin., 2002-06-28, Nr. 65-2634, last consolidated version of 01-05-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.A92E17FDCD13/asr

[6] *Miško atkūrimo ir įveisimo nuostatai*, adopted on 14-04-2008 by the order No D1-199 of the Minister of Environment, publication reference: Žin., 2008-04-19, Nr. 45-1702, last consolidated version of 01-07-2021, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.E0061030F4E1/asr

[7] *Gamtinių ir kompleksinių draustinių nuostatai*, adopted on 02-04-2008 by the Decree No 318 of the Government, publication reference: Žin., 2008-04-17, Nr. 44-1642, last consolidated version of 07-09-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.111D79A65EC5/asr

[8] *Nacionalinė miškų ūkio sektoriaus plėtros 2012–2020 metų programa*, adopted on 23-05-2012 by the Decree No 569 of the Government, publication reference: Žin., 2012-05-30, Nr. 61-3058, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.4766FD6E972D

[9] *Lietuvos miškų ūkio politikos ir jos įgyvendinimo strategija*, adopted on 17-09-2002 by the Order No 484 of the Minister of Environment, publication reference: Žin., 2002-09-25, Nr. 93-4029, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.6115B0F01C2B

[10] *Devynioliktosios Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės programa*, adopted on 12-12-2024 by the Decision No XV-54 of the Parliament, publication reference: TAR, 2024-12-12, Nr. 22047, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/0b418dc0b89811ef88c08519262548c4, p. 635-649

2. Governance and institutional framework

2.1. Distribution of competences between the State and Regional authorities.

- **According to the legal framework, what are the relevant competences and responsibilities regarding decisions on forest management and forest management practices at the different State level (national, regional, municipal) in your country?** Please describe the situation stating the legislation and relevant provisions.

Legal background

The key elements of the legislative background on forest include constitutional provisions, sectoral laws, and specific regulations (see above Section 1.2.).

As per competences and responsibilities on forests and forest management, they are allocated across different state levels, primarily national and municipal (in Lithuania, the governance is not implemented at the regional level). The key legal instruments detail specific responsibilities and competencies.

National Competences

The **Seimas (Parliament)** and the **Government** play primary roles in establishing and implementing forest policy. The main national-level authorities involved are the **Ministry of Environment**, the **State Forest Service under the Ministry of Environment**, and the **Environmental Protection Department under the Ministry of Environment.** Their responsibilities are mainly defined in the Article 5 of the Law on Forests as follows:

Seimas (Parliament) defines the strategic directions of state forest policy through laws.

Government (Cabinet of Ministers) approves and implements state forestry policy measures via national development programs and cutting norms for state forests.

***Ministry of Environment* performs forest management functions, including:**

1. Formulating and implementing national development programs for forestry.
2. Coordinating afforestation, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable forest resource use.
3. Overseeing national forest inventory and maintaining the Lithuanian Forest Cadastre..
4. Drafting forest-related legal acts.
5. Representing Lithuania in international forest management initiatives.

State Forest Service under the Ministry of Environment:

- Conducts forest inventories and provides official statistics.
- Manages forest categorisation, including protected forest zones.
- Issues permits for tree cutting and oversees compliance with forestry regulations.
- Monitors forest health and coordinates application of forest sanitary protection measures .
- Provides advisory services to forest owners on forest use, restoration, maintenance and protection issues.

Environmental Protection Department under the Ministry of Environment:

- Monitors and enforces compliance with forestry regulations, including reforestation and conservation.
- Consults forest users and other institutions on regulatory compliance.
- Intervenes legally in cases of public interest violations.

Lithuanian State Forest Enterprises (Miškų urėdija):

- Administers state forests under trust.
- Implements forest fire protection and maintenance of forest roads.
- Advances innovative forest management technologies.

Regional competences

- N/A

Local/Municipal Level Competences

While municipalities have limited roles, their primary responsibilities include:

- Supervising, protecting, and managing state-owned forest land assigned to them under trust.
- Engaging in local forest conservation and maintenance activities.

Forest coordination and advisory bodies

The State Forest Service provides advisory services and consultations to forest owners.

No other specifically designated bodies exist.

2.2. Key representation organisations of the forest sector

1. Forest owners:

In Lithuania, two organisations represent forest owners:

Lithuanian Forest and Landowners Association[11]. The Association presents itself as a national public organisation representing private forest owners in Lithuania. Its mission is *to unite forest owners and organisations serving private forestry into an association capable of coordinating activities, representing the members of the association and defending their legitimate interests*. Operational income (2023): approximately EUR 200 000.

Association of Private Forest Owners[12]. Membership includes both private individual forest owners and companies involved in forest management and forestry services. The Association does not seem to be very active: its operational income in 2022 was approximately EUR 9000.

2. Forest municipalities:

While there are no formal "forest municipalities", municipalities do play a limited role in green space and land-use planning.

[11] www.forest.lt
[12] www.pmsa.lt

3. Forest industry:

Association of Lithuanian Timber Industry Companies "LIETUVOS MEDIENA"[13]. Voluntary union of timber producers and traders. The association is a member of the Confederation of European Timber Industries (C.E.I. BOIS) and the European Federation of Furniture Manufacturers (UEA), representing the Lithuanian timber industry as a national organisation.

Lithuanian Forest Industrialists Association - not active.

4. Forest clusters:

Cluster of Innovation in Wood Products (Medienos produktų gamybos inovacijų klasteris)[14]. In February 2018, a partnership agreement was signed to establish the Wood Products Manufacturing Innovation Cluster. The cluster agreement was signed by Kaunas University of Technology, Kaunas Collegium, Klaipėda and Akmenė District Municipalities, business entities: Vakarų medienos grupė (VMG), SBA koncernas, „Freda".

5. Forest contractors:

Association of Forestry Contractors (Miško darbų rangovų asociacija)[15] - not active. There are no key organisations of forest contractors, only individual entities remain active.

6. Forest Professionals:

Lithuanian Federation of Trade Unions of Forest and Forest Industry Workers (Lietuvos Miško ir Miško Pramonės Darbuotojų Profesinių Sąjungų Federacija)[16].

7. Forest Agents or rangers:

Lithuanian Forestry Union (Lietuvos miškininkų sąjunga)[17]. A public organisation of Lithuanian foresters. The Lithuanian Foresters' Union brings together forestry specialists and forestry workers to address theoretical and practical forestry issues, assists them in the exchange of scientific information, organises conferences, seminars, competitions, drafts and amendments to normative acts, and maintains contacts with foreign foresters' organisations.

8. Forest Sciences:

Vytautas Magnus University Agriculture Academy is a state institution of higher education and research, which is constantly improving its activity and meeting the highest expectations of society needs. At present it has over 1617 students in a wide range of study programmes of biomedicine, technologies and social sciences. Faculty of Forest Sciences and Ecology of the Vytautas Magnus University Agriculture Academy[18] provides undergraduate and graduate studies in forestry studies direction and biology study direction (study branch – ecology).

[13] www.lietuvosmediena.lt/
[14] https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100067218937739
[15] www.miskorangovai.lt/
[16] www.lmpf.lt/
[17] www.miskininkusajunga.lt
[18] https://zua.vdu.lt/fakultetai/misku-ir-ekologijos-fakultetas/

Applied research and experimental (social, cultural) development trends of the Faculty of Forest Sciences and Ecology are:

- Environment (soil, air, water, vegetation) quality;
- Biodiversity of the natural and anthropogenic ecosystems, their structure, stability and variation under climate change and human activity;
- Renewable energy resources and their sustainability;
- Biomass engineering and energetic processes in biotechnology;
- Agro ecosystem sustainability and ecological intensification;
- Wildlife populations;
- Sustainable forests formation under changing environment conditions;
- Forest stands productivity and growth modeling;
- Logging technologies and wood quality;
- Modern methods of remote sensing, spatial analysis and modeling.

Forest certification:

There are several FSC Certification enterprises in Lithuania:

- BM Certification Lietuva[19]
- Bureau Veritas Lietuva[20]
- DNV GL Lietuva[21]
- Preferred By Nature Lietuva[22]

It exists also local FSC Lithuanian Team, i.e. FSC Lithuania[23].

In addition, the Center of Sustainable Forest Management (Darnaus miškų valdymo centras, new entity, no website) joined the **PEFC** alliance as the national member for Lithuania in January 2024. The national forest certification system was submitted to PEFC in May 2024 and is currently under assessment.

9. Public enterprises

The Lithuanian State Forest Enterprise[24] was established in 2018, following the implementation of the restructuring of state forestry and the merger of 42 forest enterprises. It consists of a central administration, 25 regional divisions with 192 forest districts and a Forest Nursery Division.

The State is the owner of the company. The Ministry of the Environment of the Republic of Lithuania exercises the rights and duties of the owner of the company.

[19] https://lt.bmcertification.com
[20] http://www.bureauveritas.lt
[21] https://www.dnvgl.lt
[22] http://www.preferredbynature.org
[23] https://lt.fsc.org/lt-lt
[24] https://vmu.lt/

Objectives of the company:

- To sustainably carry out complex economic activities in state forests, including afforestation, restoration, maintenance, protection, rational use of forest resources and trade in timber and forest resources, without prejudice to the implementation of nature management measures in forests,
- To take care of the implementation of a common national fire protection system in forests under all forms of ownership, the implementation of common maintenance and repair of forest roads in forests under all forms of ownership, and the introduction of advanced technologies for afforestation, restoration, protection, management and use of forest resources,
- To breed forest trees and develop the forest seed base.

10. Forest cooperatives

Currently, 7 forest owners' cooperatives operate in Lithuania (on the territorial grounds):

- Forest owners' cooperative "AUKŠTAITIJOS ŠILAS".
- Forest owners' cooperative "Jonavos miškai".
- Forest owners' cooperative "JONAVOS ŠILAS".
- Forest owners' cooperative "Miško žemė".
- Forest owners' cooperative "Privati girininkija".
- Forest owners' cooperative "Zanavykų šilas".
- Forest owners' cooperative "Žemaitijos šilas".

11. Other Forest organisations

N/A

3. Forest land ownership structure

- **According to State statistics, what is the ownership structure of the forest in your country (at State level)?** Please include relative and absolute data of forest ownership types, including average size of public and private forests and the number of area of forests in each size category)

3.1. Data on national forests ownership structure

According to the latest data published by the State Forest Service under the Ministry of Environment, as of 1 January 2020, about half of all forest land (2200,2 thousand ha) was state forests, i.e. about 1 110 thousand ha (2010: about 1 068 thousand ha), of which about 1 075 thousand ha were managed by the State Forest Enterprise. Approximately 924 thousand ha of forest area was identified on private land (2010: approximately 829 thousand ha). In Lithuania in 2020, there were about 255 thousand private forest owners. On average, each owner owned 3.4 ha of forest (most private owners hold smaller plots, often less than 3 ha). The size of private plots remains similar since 2010.[25]

Most recent data show that the area of forest land in 2024 amounts to 2 210 ha (about 33,9% of the territory of Lithuania), while the area of state-owned forest land has increased to 1118 ha[26]. There is no specific data on privately owned forest land, although proportions should remain the same as in 2020.

3.2. Definitions of forest ownership in your country

Please provide the definitions identified in the legislation applicable in your country following the guidelines shared with you.

In the national legislation, majority of the definitions are provided in the Law on Forests, Article 2.

- **Forest owner**

Forest owners – according to the Law on Forest, the State, natural and legal persons and organisations established in foreign countries, which do not have legal personality but have civil legal capacity under the laws of those countries, having acquired ownership of forests in accordance with the procedure established by law.

- **Forest holder**

In the Lithuanian legislation there is no specific definition of "Forest holder", while it is defined the "Forest user".

Forest users – according to the Law on Forest, legal and natural persons who have acquired the right to use forest and forest resources in accordance with the procedure established by this Law and other legal acts.

[25] *Šalies miškų rodikliai ir jų kaita (National Forest Indicators And Their Evolution)*, State Forest Service, 2021, available at: https://amvmt.lrv.lt/uploads/amvmt/documents/files/Leidiniai/Leidinys_Salies_misku_rodikliai_ir_ju_kaita.pdf

[26] According to data of State Forest Service as of 01-01-2024, available at: https://amvmt.lrv.lt/lt/atviri-duomenys-1/misku-statistikos-leidiniai/valstybine-misku-apskaita/20240101/

In addition, Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Management, Use and Disposal of State and Municipal Property[27] defines the **use of an asset** as the application of the useful characteristics of an asset to meet the needs of the user.

Although in the Lithuanian legislation there is no specific definition of "Forest holder", it is reasonable to claim that the systemic interpretation of the definition of "Forest user" refers to the civil law concept of use (Latin *usus*) of the asset (in this case, the forest). Therefore, the concept of "Forest user" is closely linked to the concept of "Forest holder", although is not identical to it.

- **Forest manager**

Forest manager – according to the Law on Forest, a forest manager may be: a forest owner; a forest enterprise; a state reserve directorate; a national park directorate; a municipality; a state enterprise or another legal entity that manages state forest land transferred to it by governmental resolutions for the implementation of state functions by the right of entrustment as established by the law. It may also refer to a natural person , a legal entity, or an organisation established in a foreign country, which does not have the status of a legal person, but possess civil legal capacity under that country's laws and has acquired the right to manage private forest land.

- **Forest contractor**

National legislation does not provide a definition of the Forest contractor as such. While the term "contractor" exists in the Civil Code, there are no specific legal definitions or regulations for forest contractors. This contrasts with, for example, construction contractors, whose rights and obligations are explicitly outlined in the Law on Construction.

The national legislation refers only to the **Independent timber measurer** - a natural person qualified and certified in measuring and assessing the quality of unharvested forest and/or timber who is not engaged in the timber trade himself/herself, and who is not part of a legal person engaged in the timber trade, a participant, member of the governing bodies, representative, who is not related to such legal person by employment, service or joint activity, and who is not related to the buyer or seller of timber by close family relationships, employment, service or joint activity.

- **Forest**

The Law on the Land[28] defines forestry land as one of the types within the land fund of the Republic of Lithuania.

Meanwhile, the Law on Forests define the Forest in the following way:

Forest (in Lithuanian *miškas* – both literally and legally) means an area of land of at least 0.1 hectare covered with trees of at least 0.3 caliper and a height of at least 5 metres at maturity in the natural stand, and other forest vegetation, as well as an area of land of at least 0.1 hectare in which the stand is thinned or temporarily devoid of trees as a result of human activity or natural

[27] *Lietuvos Respublikos valstybės ir savivaldybių turto valdymo, naudojimo ir disponavimo juo įstatymas*, No VIII-729, adopted on 12-05-1998, publication reference: Žin., 1998-06-12, Nr. 54-1492, last consolidated version of: 01-12-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.D5496D69DF98/asr

[28] *Lietuvos Respublikos žemės įstatymas*, No I-446, DDDD: 1994-05-06, publication reference: Nr. 34-620, last consolidated version of: 01-01-2025, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.CC10C5274343/asr

factors (reforestation sites, coppice areas, fallen trees). Groups of trees in fields, roadsides, water bodies, residential areas and cemeteries, plantations in road rights-of-way, trees and shrubs growing on non-forestry land held in trust by the manager of the public railway infrastructure, narrow tree strips up to 10 metres wide, hedges, individual trees and shrubs, as well as plantations on non-forestry land in towns and rural areas are not considered to be forest. The maintenance, protection and use of these plantations is regulated by the Law on Plantations of the Republic of Lithuania.

3.3. Forest ownership types in your country

- Please provide a **description of the types of forest ownership** (e.g. public forest, private forest) identified in the legislation applicable in your country. **Are there specific laws** for certain types of collective, communal, vicinal or neighbourhood forests?

National legislation does not explicitly divide forests in accordance with the types of ownership.

Law on Forests provides only a definition of **State forests** (as forests of national importance and other forests owned by the State – although this definition is superfluous, as the Law further provides that forests of national importance can only be owned by the State), but not private forests. In addition, national legislation also refers to **Urban forest** (a forest located in the territory of a city and/or urban municipality) and **Forest parks** (forests of at least 3 hectares in area used for intensive recreation with appropriate recreational facilities and infrastructure). It has to be noted that the latter two concepts remain unchanged from previous versions of the Law and are not further referred to in the Law.

There are no specific laws for certain types of collective, communal, vicinal or neighbourhood forests.

- Are there well-established programs for forest land consolidation? Are there public bodies promoting or responsible for these programs?

No. According to the Lithuanian legislation, only plots of agricultural land can be consolidated.

3.4. Proof of ownership: Land registry and Cadastre

- How is ownership proved?

In the national legislation, there are no specific provisions, limited only to forest ownership. Thus, general rules on ownership of real property are applied. The Law on Land (which defines forestry land as one of the types of land) defines the Land plot as an area of land with defined boundaries and cadastral data that is registered in the Real Property Register.

The Real Property Register serves as proof of certain rights, including immovable ownership (see question right below).

Meanwhile, Article 4.27 of the Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania[29] provides that possession of an immovable property starts when the possession is registered in the public register (i.e. the Real Property Register). In addition, possession of an immovable property may not be registered

[29] *Lietuvos Respublikos civilinis kodeksas*, No. VIII-1864, publication reference: Žin., 2000-09-06, Nr. 74-2262, last consolidated version of: 01-11-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.8A39C83848CB/asr

in the public register if the ownership of the immovable property has already been registered therein.

- **Is there a legal obligation to register ownership/property?**

There is a legal obligation to register owenership/property and this stems from Article 4.254 of the Civil Code, according to which the following legal facts relating to immovable property, liens on immovable property and rights in rem shall be entered in the Real Property Register:

- transactions and decisions which change the legal status of the registered object or substantially alter its possession, use and disposal;
- agreements between the co-owners of the registered object concerning the common object;
- inheritance of the registered object;
- seizure of the registered item;
- changes in the name of the registered object (size, purpose, etc.) and of the persons holding rights in rem over it, or of the name of legal persons;
- the fact that civil proceedings have been instituted concerning the legal status of the registered item;
- the court judgments which have entered into force and which affect the legal status of the registered object, as well as the relevant court orders;
- the fact of administration of the property;
- the fact of the formation of a new object or the extinction of a former object.

- Is there a registration fee?

Registration fees are cost-related and may be regarded as small[30]:

- Registration or deregistration of a plot of land – EUR 17,15
- Registration or deregistration of ownership of immovable property – EUR 17,19
- Registration or deregistration of a right in rem (other than a right of ownership and a mortgage (pledge)) – EUR 8,4
- Registration or de-registration of a legal fact relating to immovable property, rights in rem over it and restrictions on those rights – EUR 8,19
- Recording of changes to the cadastral and/or register data of immovable property, other than those listed in rows 2 to 4 – EUR 11,03

On the other hand, notary's fees on transaction of real property (including forest land) depend on the transaction value and are set at 0,37 percent (minimum fee is EUR 76, maximum fee is EUR 5000).

[30] *Fees for property registration services*, State Enterprise Centre of Registers, available at: https://www.registrucentras.lt/p/1532

- **Is there an official register of forest owners and of forest holdings? Is it shared with agricultural registers? Is it harmonized with the general property/ownership register?**

There is no dedicated register of forest owners in Lithuania. However, some information can be retrieved from the existetnt registers. Three legal concepts are relevant in the current context:

1) The Real Property Register of Lithuania registers data related with land plots and their ownership, registered use[31].

2) The Real Property Cadastre is a structured and methodically organised system that records graphical and attribute data for real property objects (in the national coordinate system)[32]. Thus, It registers information on land plots, buildings, and other real estate assets, ensuring their proper classification and documentation.

3) The Forest Cadastre[33] registers factual situation related with forest plots. The purpose of the Forest cadastre is to register the cadastral objects (forest land tax plot - a portion of forest land distinguished from other forest land by forest land use, forest group and subgroup, administrative division, forest vegetation, stand tax characteristics), to manage the cadastral data, cadastral information, documents submitted to the cadastre and/or their copies, and to provide the cadastral data, cadastral information, copies of documents submitted to the cadastre to the forest managers, other interested natural and legal persons, to the state registers.

Data to the Forest Cadastre is provided by:

- forest managers;
- operators of the state plot forest inventory (hereinafter referred to as inventory holders);
- preparers of internal forest management projects;
- persons who have initiated or organised the conversion of forest land to other uses;
- the National Paying Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture;
- the State Forest Service;
- the Department of Environmental Protection under the Ministry of Environment.

There is no automatic transfer of data among various registers.

Forest Cadastre receives from the Real Property Register and the Real Property Cadastre following data:

- the name and code of the cadastral area,
- the code of the cadastral block,
- the cadastral and unique number of the land plot,
- the data of the Real Property Cadastre map,

[31] Law on the Real Property Register (*Lietuvos Respublikos nekilnojamojo turto registro įstatymas*), No I-1539, adopted on 24-09-1996, publication reference: Žin, 1996-10-16, Nr.100-2261, last consolidated version of: 01-01-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.38E82AA2664C/asr

[32] Law on the Real Property Cadastre (*Lietuvos Respublikos nekilnojamojo turto kadastro įstatymas*), No VIII-1764, adopted on 27-06-2000, publication reference: Žin, 2000-07-19, Nr.58-1704, last consolidated version of: 01-01-2025, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.72C31F8DD98E/asr

[33] *Lietuvos Respublikos miškų valstybės kadastro nuostatai*, adopted on 09-10-2003 by the Decree No 1255 of the Government, publication reference: Žin, 2003-10-15, Nr. 97-4348, last consolidated version of: 01-01-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.5579802E5549/asr

- the legal grounds for the registration, amendment or deregistration of the immovable object, property rights, legal facts,
- the dates of registration, amendment or deregistration.

Forest Cadastre receives from the State Cadastre of Protected Territories of the Republic of Lithuania following data:

- general and specific data from the spatial dataset "Protected Territories",
- general and specific data from the spatial dataset "Natura 2000", and
- spatial data on the boundaries of the objects.

- **Is the Cadaster/register well updated and reflecting real forest owners/holders?**

Regarding ownership and the Real Property Register, any real property transaction must be confirmed by a notary, who must first verify data in the Real Property Register. Therefore data in the Register reflects legal transactions that were performed with the plot of the land in accordance with legislative requirements. It does not reflect unregistered transactions; however, in case the transaction is not registered it cannot be invoked against third persons.

As a side note, regarding the Forest Cadastre, as stated above, there is no automatic transfer of data/update among various registers in Lithuania. If the manager of the Forest Cadastre discovers that the area of forest land recorded in the cadastre differs from that recorded in the Real Property Cadastre, they shall notify the cadastre manager of the change in the area of forest land. The notification shall be submitted to the administrator of the Real Property Cadastre not later than 20 working days after the cadastral data which led to the change in the forest land area have been entered in the cadastre.

4. Rights and obligations: forest owner/holder and forest contractor

4.1. Overview

- **According to the legal and regulatory framework what are the rights and obligations of forest owners/holders and forest managers in your country?**

Rights of Forest Owners/Holders

- Management rights: According to Law on Forests, forest owners have a right to use forests for various purposes like timber harvesting (subject to permits and regulations), research, recreation, and beekeeping; Right to prohibit, allow, set conditions for hunting on their land .
- Financial support: Eligible for financial support to mitigate game animal damage (e.g., fencing, deterrents); Compensation for damage caused by certain game animals (e.g., hoofed animals, beavers, wolves).
- Tax exemptions: No specific tax on forest ownership; forest land is exempt from land tax.

Limitations on Rights

- Land use conversion: Strict limitations on converting forest land to other uses (agriculture, urbanization) except in specific cases (e.g., infrastructure projects) and with strict conditions (compensation, reforestation).
- Harvesting restrictions: Clear-cutting is restricted or prohibited in many forest groups, with limitations on areas and methods.
- Non-forest activities: Limitations on non-forest activities (mining, energy plants) in forest land, requiring permits and approvals.

Obligations of Forest Owners/Holders

- Management of forests: Manage forests according to the principle of continuous use, balancing growth and harvesting.
- Protection: Protect forests from fires, pests, diseases.
- Restoration: Restore harvested areas promptly (in general, in no more than 3 years).
- Compliance: Adhere to forest management plans, regulations, and permit requirements.
- Data reporting: Submit required information and data to authorities.

Rights of Forest Managers/Contractors

- Right to use forest resources for purposes like timber harvesting, subject to permits and regulations.

Obligations of Forest Managers/Contractors

- Management of forests: Manage forests according to the principle of continuous use, balancing growth and harvesting.
- Compliance: Adhere to forest management plans, regulations, and permit requirements.
- Financial obligations: Pay a tax on income derived from timber sales.[34]

[34] Law on Forests, Article 7(2).

4.2. Legal rights of the forest owner/holder

- **Right to financial support/tax exemptions/subsidies? What are the requirements?**

Currently, the following activities are (or are to be, subject to financing) supported as part of the national 2022-2030 Development Programme[35]:

Private owned forests:

Conversion of thinned and economically marginal stands or shrubs into productive and climate-resilient stands, establishment of heterogeneous and multi-stemmed stands.

State owned forests:

- Conversion of thinned and economically marginal stands or shrubs into productive and climate-resilient stands, establishment of multi-species and multi-stemmed stands.
- Optimisation of the number and area of State-owned forest nurseries, by equipping them with the necessary infrastructure for the cultivation of forest seedlings, and by the introduction of advanced technologies for the cultivation of seedlings, and of measures for the protection of seedlings against disease and pest infestation.
- Conditions of harvesting, storing and processing of forest seed material, Improving protection against diseases and pests through the introduction of advanced technologies and effective measures.
- Developing forests on public land.
- Applying effective measures for the conservation and restoration of the genetic resources of forest trees.
- Developing the development of forest tree breeding and the creation of a higher-quality forest seed base.
- Adapting forest fire protection to climate change by introducing advanced tools and technologies for the detection of, and quick reaction to, forest fires.

In addition, based on the provisions of the Law on Hunting, the legal rights of forest owners or holders, concerning financial support, tax exemptions, or subsidies, are following:

Legal rights of forest owners/holders

1. **Right to financial support:**
   - Forest owners, holders, or users of land plots where hunting is not prohibited have the right to receive financial support for implementing measures to prevent damage caused by game animals (Law on Hunting, Article 6(3).
   - **The financial support is provided under the procedures established by:**
     - The Environmental Protection Support Program Law (*Aplinkos apsaugos rėmimo programos įstatymas*).
     - The Municipal Environmental Protection Support Special Program Law (*Savivaldybių aplinkos apsaugos rėmimo specialiosios programos įstatymas*).

[35] *Dėl 2022–2030 metų plėtros programos valdytojos Lietuvos Respublikos aplinkos ministerijos aplinkos apsaugos ir klimato kaitos valdymo plėtros programos pažangos priemonės Nr. 02-001-06-08-04 „Skatinti miškų plėtrą ir darnų miškų sektoriaus vystymąsi“ įgyvendinimo*, adopted on 19-09-2022 by the Order No D1-305 of the Minister of Environment, publication reference: TAR, 2022-09-19, Nr. 19069, last consolidated version of: 01-01-2025, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/2bdba2d037eb11ed8f249634f1996e02/asr

2. **Specific allocation of funds:**
    - At least 50% of the funds collected from hunting area user fees for the use of game resources must be allocated to measures aimed at preventing damage caused by game animals.[36]
    3. **Compensation for damage:**
    - The hunting area user compensates for damage caused by certain species (e.g., hoofed animals or beavers) to agricultural crops, forests, and hydrotechnical facilities under the specified conditions in Article 18(3) of the Law on Hunting.
- If the damage is caused by species whose hunting is prohibited throughout the year or by wolves to livestock, the state compensates the damage via designated institutions, as per Article 18(4) of the Law on Hunting.

Requirements for financial support/subsidies

Eligible land plots: financial support is applicable only for land plots where hunting is not prohibited.

Purpose of funds: the funds must be used for measures aimed at preventing damage caused by game animals.

Compensation for damages depends on whether the species causing damage are:

- Not prohibited from hunting year-round (e.g., hoofed animals or beavers for damage to forests and crops).
- Prohibited from hunting year-round (state compensates in such cases).
- Wolves, in the case of damage to livestock.

Damage thresholds for forests:

- **For forest damage, compensation applies if:**
    - Strongly damaged or dead target species trees in young forests exceed 20%.
    - Strongly damaged prospective target species trees in older forests exceed 10%.
- Additionally, hunting quotas for certain limited species must be met.

- **Is there a right to decide about the forest management practices in their forest land?**

Forest owners or holders have following rights regarding forest management practices in their forest land:

1. **General management rights**: Forest owners, managers, and users have the right to use forests and their resources for purposes such as timber harvesting, scientific research, education, beekeeping, livestock grazing, nature conservation, and other legally compliant activities (*Law on Forests*, Article 10(2)).
2. **Restrictions and conditions**: The right to manage forests and harvest resources, including timber, requires obtaining permits in prescribed forms. These permits are subject to conditions set by regulatory authorities (*Law on Forests*, Article 10(2)).

This right, although not explicitly stated in the Law, is granted to owners or holders of private forests. Meanwhile, State owned forests, as stated in Article 7 of the Law on Forests, are managed

[36] The ratio may vary on the basis of local regulations and programmes.

by the Lithuanian State Forest Enterprise in accordance with Law on State and Municipal Enterprises.

- **Is there a right to harvest?**

Forest owners or holders have the right to harvest, but it is regulated by specific conditions:

- Owners have the right to harvest timber and other forest resources, provided they adhere to the procedures established by the Government or the Ministry of Environment (*Law on Forests*, Article 10(2)).
- Permits are mandatory for conducting timber harvesting, and the rights expire if the permit holder dies, the legal entity is reorganised or liquidated, the permit expires, or the permit is revoked by law.

4.3. Limitations to the rights of forest owner/holder

- **Is there a limitation to change the land use of the land (from forestry to agriculture and/or urbanization)?**

General principles for the change of the land use are provided in the Law on the Land[37] and Law on Territorial Planning[38]

The specific legal framework for forest management and land use conversion from forest land to other uses in Lithuania is provided in Article 11 of the Law on Forests. The Law imposes the following restrictions regarding the conversion of forest land to other uses such as agriculture or urbanization:

1. **General restriction on conversion:**

   Forest land conversion to other uses is generally prohibited except in explicitly listed exceptional cases as outlined in Article 11(1) of the Law on Forests. These cases include projects of significant public interest (e.g., infrastructure development, exploitation of natural resources, national defense, etc.).

2. **Permissible exceptions:**

   Conversion is allowed only under the following conditions:

- Projects of national importance.
- Infrastructure development (communication corridors, engineering networks, roads, etc.).
- Public-use territories, parks, or green spaces.
- Exploitation of mineral deposits when alternative non-forest lands are unavailable.
- Reconstruction of historical homesteads (only under exceptional circumstances).
- Designated residential areas in municipalities with over 50% forest cover and no other alternatives.

[37] Lietuvos Respublikos žemės įstatymas, Nr. I-446, ado[ted on 26-04-1994, publication reference: Žin., 1994-05-06, Nr. 34-620, latest consolidated version of 02-11-2025, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.CC10C5274343/asr

[38] Lietuvos Respublikos teritorijų planavimo įstatymas, No I-1120, adopted on: 12-12-1995, publication reference: Žin., 1995-12-30, Nr. 107-2391, latest consolidated version of 02-11-2025, available at: https://e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.26B563184529/asr

3. **Prohibited areas:**

   Conversion is explicitly forbidden in:

- Group I forests (strict reserves) – in all cases.
- Group II forests dedicated to ecosystem protection, except for limited cases.
- Group III forests in reserves, state-protected zones, and certain coastal or water-protection zones, with specific limited exceptions.
- Other forests within one kilometer of the Baltic Sea or Curonian Lagoon, with limited exceptions.

4. **Planning requirements:**

   Conversion must align with local or regional land-use plans (as per Article 11(4) and 11(5)). The project must be included in spatial planning documents or be supported by a state project planning document.

5. **Environmental and priority considerations:**

   Priority is given to converting land that is already degraded (e.g., logged areas, forest clearings, or damaged stands). Environmental significance of forests must be considered in decision-making (Article 11(7)).

6. **Compensation obligations:**

   Owners must:

- Pay monetary compensation covering the value of the land, the cost of growing the trees, and the loss of future timber growth.
- Reforest an area equivalent to or larger than the converted forest land or pay a higher compensation if reforestation is not feasible. For Group II and III forests, the compensation or reforestation obligation increases significantly (Article 11(8) and 11(9)).

- **Is there a legal limitation to the right to harvest? Is there a ban on clear cutting?**

The **Law on Forests** establishes limitations on forest owners' and holders' rights to harvest and perform clear-cutting, particularly in different forest groups:

1. **Sustainable management principle:** Forests must be managed based on the principle of continuous use (Article 9(1)), ensuring a balance between timber growth and harvesting. This requires sustainable harvesting practices to prevent overexploitation.
2. **Forest group-specific restrictions**: The right to harvest depends on the forest group classification, which imposes varying degrees of restrictions:
   - **Group I (strict reserves)**
   - The aim in Group I forests is to allow forests to grow naturally.
   - Deforestation is prohibited, except as provided for in the Law on Protected Territories and the regulations of the reserves.
   - **Group II (Special Purpose Forests):**
   - **Subgroup A (Ecosystem Protection Forests):**
     - Clear-cutting is entirely prohibited to protect ecological values.

        - Shelterwood harvesting is also prohibited in stands that have not reached natural maturity.
    - **Subgroup B (Recreational Forests):**
        - Clear-cutting is entirely prohibited to protect recreational values.
        - Shelterwood harvesting is prohibited in immature stands.
        - Harvesting is banned during the recreational season, except for clearing storm-damaged or pest-affected trees.
- **Group III (Protective Forests):**
    - Clear-cutting is limited to plots no larger than 5 hectares.
    - Clear-cutting is prohibited in national parks, except for specific ecological conditions (i.e. swampy or waterlogged forest stands).
    - For Group III and IV forests, harvesting limits are set in accordance with Forest Cutting Rules[39] and are related with age and type of trees, proximity to habitats.
- **Group IV (Economic Forests):**
    - Clear-cutting is limited to plots no larger than 8 hectares.
    - Clear-cutting is prohibited in national parks, except for specific ecological conditions (i.e. swampy or waterlogged forest stands).

- It must be noted that, according to information that from time to time is being made public by media, NGOs or activists, limits are not always enforced properly.

- **Are there limitations to carry out non-forest activities in forest land (like mining, energy plants, etc.)?**

Non-forest activities on forest land in Lithuania are limited. Forest land can only be converted for specific purposes such as national infrastructure projects, mining when no alternative non-forest locations are available, or for other public or state needs as outlined in law. Such conversions require detailed planning and government approval and are strictly prohibited in protected areas like nature reserves unless explicitly permitted under exceptions. Compensation or reforestation obligations are also mandated for private land conversions.

- **Are there specific limitations to carry out agricultural activities, like extensive grazing or temporary cultivation, on forest land?**

Specific limitations apply to agricultural activities on forest land in Lithuania. Forest land use is generally restricted to purposes aligned with forest management and environmental conservation. Activities like extensive grazing or temporary cultivation are permitted only if they do not conflict with environmental laws and are approved under the regulations established by the Government or the Ministry of Environment.

- **Is hunting right linked to ownership right? Is it considered a forest activity or does it have specific regulations?**

Hunting rights in Lithuania are not inherently linked to land ownership rights but require adherence to specific regulations and agreements. Hunting is not classified as a general forest

[39] *Miško kirtimo taisyklės*, adopted at 27-01-2010 by the Order No D1-79 of the Minister of Environment, publication reference: Žin., 2010-02-03, Nr. 14-676, last consolidated version of: 20-07-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.4A966C7D30EB/asr

activity but is governed by the Hunting Law, which mandates agreements with landowners for hunting infrastructure and conditions.

Forest owners have a right to regulate hunting on their property by prohibiting hunting, lifting prohibitions, or setting additional hunting conditions. This right applies to lands included in or potentially assigned to hunting areas (*Law on Hunting*, Article 13(2)). In 2005, the Constitutional Court has declared the owner's right to limit hunting on their property as constitutionally grounded[40].

If hunting is prohibited, the owner must still comply with mandatory directives for managing wildlife, especially in cases of disease risks spread by game animals (*Law on Hunting*, Article 7(5)).

Owners of private forest land, possessing a hunting license and owning at least 15 hectares of forest or agricultural land in a specific hunting area, may utilise game resources proportionate to their land ownership. This is conditional upon forming agreements with hunting area users regarding animal quotas, expenses, and other hunting-related arrangements (*Law on Hunting*, Article 13(1)). They can also prohibit hunting on their property by submitting a formal decision to local authorities (Law on Hunting, Article 13(2)).

- **Are there citizens' rights to collect wild products in forest land? Are they linked to the ownership right or not?**

According to Article 8 of the Law on Forests, natural persons in Lithuania have the right to freely collect wild products like berries, mushrooms, and herbs in forests, regardless of ownership, except in areas restricted by law (e.g., reserves or protected sites). This right is not directly linked to land ownership. However, local authorities may impose restrictions for specific reasons, such as fire risk or resource conservation. Collecting protected plant species is prohibited, as regulated by the Ministry of Environment.

- **Are there rights to access (walking) on forest land? Are there specific regulations for public use of forest land, hiking, riding, biking, etc.?**

According to Article 8 of the Law on Forests, natural persons in Lithuania have the right to freely access forests for walking, hiking, and similar activities, except in restricted areas such as reserves or military zones. These rights are subject to regulations, and access can be temporarily limited by local authorities for safety or conservation reasons, such as fire risk or resource protection. Specific activities like biking or horseback riding may require adherence to additional rules. Public use must comply with environmental and forest protection laws.

[40] Decision of the Constitutional Court, Case No 14/02, adopted on 13-05-2005, Publication reference: Žin., 2005-05-19, Nr. 63-2235, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.C75A20543131

4.4. Forest manager/contractor obligations

- **Which requirements or obligations regarding forest management are imposed on owners?**

Forest owners, holders, and users (both public and private) in Lithuania are subject to various obligations and requirements in relation to forest management and compliance with environmental, legal, and economic regulations. Key obligations are outlined in **Article 9** of the Law on Forests, as summarised below:

1. Forest Management (Article 9(1)):

Forests must be managed following the principle of continuous use. This includes:

Ensuring a balance between annual or periodic wood growth and harvesting.

Sustaining a continuous supply of wood and other forest resources.

2. Protection and conservation (Article 9(2)):

Owners, managers and users must:

- Protect forests from fires, pests, diseases, and other harmful factors.
- Restore cut forests in a timely and appropriate manner.
- Use environmentally friendly practices to minimise adverse impacts.
- Safeguard soil fertility and biological diversity.
- Comply with laws and other legal requirements.

3. Land maintenance and usage standards (Article 9(3)):

Forest users are required to:

- Restore disturbed forest areas to their designated purpose.
- Preserve forest roads, drainage systems, and other infrastructure.
- Respect the rights and legitimate interests of other forest owners and users.

4. Specific obligations for management of state forests (Article 9(4)):

- Adherence to rules for allocation and sale of uncut state forest, approved by the Government.
- Timely cutting and transportation of produced timber within the permit period.
- Failure to comply results in the transfer of uncut forest and raw timber ownership to the forest manager without compensation.

5. Obligations related to private forest management (Article 9(5)):

Private forest owners must:

- Comply with the Law on Forests, as well as other regulations for private forest management, and forest management project requirements.
- Adhere to standards for cutting, forest restoration, and environmental protection.

6. Prohibition on unauthorised activities (Articles 9(6)-(7)):

- No cutting or resource use without permits as required by legal acts.
- Removal or transportation of illegally cut trees, shrubs, or round timber from forest land is prohibited.

7. Data reporting (Article 9(8)):

Private forest owners must submit information and statistical data about forest management activities according to procedures established by the Ministry of Environment and State Data Agency.

- **Is there a tax imposed on forest ownership?**

No, there is no tax specifically imposed on forest ownership in Lithuania. On the contrary, Law on the Land Tax[41] explicitly states that forest land and agricultural land where forests have been established according to legal regulations are not subject to the land tax.

- **What type of permits the forest owner needs to manage their land?**

According to Law on Forests, following types of permits are associated with the forest owners or managers right to manage the forest:

1. **Permit to cut trees**: The State Forest Service issues permits for cutting trees to forest managers and users, including those holding servitudes, when such cutting is necessary to exercise the rights granted by the servitude according to territorial planning documents.
2. **Documentation for forest reproductive material**: Forest owners must obtain documents that certify the origin and quality of forest reproductive material. They also need permits to import and use forest reproductive material for afforestation.
3. **Usage permits**: Forest managers and users must have specific permits issued by the Government or authorised Ministry of Environment to use the forest and its resources (such as wood and other forest resources) for various purposes, including scientific research, education, and beekeeping.
4. **Permit for conversion of forest land**: If a forest owner wishes to convert forest land to other uses, this can only occur under exceptional cases defined by the law, and a specific permit must be obtained from the Government.
5. **Regulations on timber harvesting and transport**: Permits are also required to harvest and transport timber and other forest resources. No operations should take place without the required permits, especially if such permits are mandated by existing legislation.

[41] *Lietuvos Respublikos žemės mokesčio įstatymas*, No. I-2675, adopted on 25-06-1994, publication reference: Žin., 1992-07-02, Nr. 128-0, last consolidated version of: 03-05-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.D267FBDC094B/asr

- **How is the control of forest harvest determined? Is there an obligation to mark every tree to be cut or retained?**

The control of forest harvest in Lithuania is determined by regulations stipulated in the Law on Forests, the Forest Cutting Rules[42], and the Rules for Marking and Evaluating Cutting Areas[43]. Rules on harvest depend on the groups (I-IV) to which the forest is classified into, each group having specific management goals and restrictions. For example, clear-cutting is generally prohibited or restricted in forests of Groups I-III, while it is allowed in Group IV under certain conditions.

Marking of trees to be cut or retained depends on the type of cutting and forest ownership.

In private forests:

- Trees for non-clear-cutting (selective cutting) must be marked if they are 16 cm or thicker.
- Marking is not mandatory for certain species (e.g., alder, aspen, willow) in final-stage cutting of patch cutting.
- Marking is done using personal markers, paints, or other approved methods, and it must comply with educational or certification requirements for the person marking the trees.

As regards state forests, the marking is conducted by state forest officers or qualified forestry specialists using standardised tools, such as stamps. Marking methods include stamps, personal markers, bark stripping, paint, or other identifiable marks. In addition, the documentation must specify the number and type of trees to be cut, areas of conservation, and regeneration plans.

The Environmental Protection Department oversees compliance, ensuring that cutting adheres to environmental, ecological, and legal requirements.

- **Are there technical, administrative or economic specifications on the forest products market? Are forest harvest contracts legally defined for public or private forests or for some specific types?**

In Lithuania, there are several types of specifications/standards, directly or indirectly related with the forest products market:

Rules on the classification and marking of round wood[44] regulate the basic requirements for the classification of roundwood according to species, purpose, dimensions and quality, as well as the procedure for marking it. The Rules shall be binding on all State forest managers when producing or selling roundwood. Other roundwood producers are recommended to classify roundwood in accordance with those Rules.

[42] *Miško kirtimo taisyklės*, adopted at 27-01-2010 by the Order No D1-79 of the Minister of Environment, publication reference: Žin., 2010-02-03, Nr. 14-676, last consolidated version of: 20-07-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.4A966C7D30EB/asr

[43] *Biržių atrėžimo ir įvertinimo taisyklės*, adopted at 10-11-2004 bythe Order No D1-577 of the Minister of Environment, publication reference: Žin., 2004-11-17, Nr. 167-6157, last consolidated version of: 01-06-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.591A432B1572/asr

[44] *Apvaliosios medienos klasifikavimo ir ženklinimo taisyklės*, adopted on 05-07-2001 by the Order No 358 of the Minister of Environment, publication reference: Žin., 2001-07-13, Nr. 61-2198, last consolidated version of: 20-04-2018, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.108B873E43E9/asr

Rules for measuring and determining the volume of roundwood and standing timber[45] govern the procedure for measuring and determining the volume of roundwood and standing timber. The Rules shall be binding on all forest owners, managers, independent timber measurers, sellers and buyers in the settlement of timber bought or sold in Lithuania, in the exchange of timber, on timber producers in the settlement of logging operations, and in all cases where the amount of timber produced, bought or sold directly affects the calculation of the taxes due to the State.

Rules on the procedure for the transport of round wood[46] regulates the transport of round wood produced in forests.

Instructions for forest management works[47] regulate the execution of forest management works. The requirements of the document shall be binding for all forest management work performers and persons managing forest management data when forest management data are provided to state authorities or used in their activities for the implementation of state-established functions (forest plot inventory assessment, forest management project coordination and approval, forest group classification, forest felling permits, state forest inventory, etc.). Where forest management data are used for purposes other than those specified, the requirements of this Instruction are recommended.

In Lithuania, **forest harvest contracts** are not legally defined for public or private forests nor for some specific types.

- **Is there an obligation to prevent forest fires or other risks?**

The law explicitly mandates that forest owners, managers, and users must protect forests from fires and other risks (Law on Forests, Article 9(2)). This responsibility includes taking preventive measures, as well as responding promptly to mitigate any potential damage from such risks. In addition, Regulations on the management and use of private forests[48] provide that the owner of a private forest is obliged to comply with the requirements for forest fire protection approved by the legislation, to implement preventive fire-fighting measures at their own expense (installing firebreaks and fire pits, clearing of frozen forest, etc.), and to carry out the special measures for protection of the forest and elimination of the consequences of natural disasters in case of a natural disaster in the forest.

[45] *Apvaliosios medienos bei nenukirsto miško matavimo ir tūrio nustatymo taisyklės*, adopted on 10-12-2002 by the Order No 631 of the Minister of Environment, publication reference: Žin., 2003-02-26, Nr. 20-873, last consolidated version of: 24-11-2016, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.018A80102022/asr

[46] *Apvaliosios medienos gabenimo tvarkos aprašas*, adopted on 09-10-2014 by the Order No D1-823 of the Minister of Environment, publication reference: TAR, 2014-10-10, Nr. 13955, last consolidated version of: 02-09-2021, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/666591a0506c11e4a698d921e3e46801/asr

[47] *Miškotvarkos darbų vykdymo instrukcija*, adopted on 14-01-2010 by the Order No 11-10-V of the Head of the State Forest Service, publication reference: Žin., 2010-04-20, Nr. 45-2182, last consolidated version of: 01-01-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.44E2BF82EF29/asr

[48] *Privačių miškų tvarkymo ir naudojimo nuostatai*, adopted on 24-07-1997 by the Decree No 799 of the Government, publication reference: Žin., 1997-07-30, Nr. 71-1808, last consolidated version of: 01-07-2021, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.6A6D776786E3/asr

- **Is fencing or the use of forest roads regulated?**

Fencing in the Lithuanian legislation is regulated only in the context of the use of wild animals: Law on Wild Fauna[49] and its implementing legislation regulate size of animal's enclosure. Otherwise, fencing is regarded as environmental offence ("Violation of the forest's ecological and recreational functions, its natural landscape and aesthetic qualities, impeding the migration of wildlife through illegal fencing")[50].

Concerning forest roads, they must be maintained and repaired by their respective owners or users as specified by legal acts, and their construction is supported by various funding sources, including municipal and Road Fund resources (Law on Forests, Article 12).

- **Is there an obligation for forest owners and/or forest managers to be associated?**

There is no legal obligation for forest owners or managers in Lithuania to be associated with any organisation. However, they have the right to form or join associations, cooperatives, or other organisations as permitted by law, and the state encourages such initiatives to support private forest management.

4.5. Forest manager / contractor obligations

- **Which requirements or obligations on forest management are legally imposed on forest managers/contractors?**

Forest managers in Lithuania are legally obliged to manage forests ensuring continuous resource availability while maintaining balance between growth and utilisation (Law on Forests, Article 9(1)). They must protect forests from fires, pests, and diseases, restore harvested areas promptly, safeguard biodiversity, and comply with environmental laws (Article 9(2)). Additionally, they are required to adhere to regulations regarding harvesting deadlines, permits, and proper forest land use (Articles 9(4)–9(6)). Private owners must follow forestry management plans and provide activity reports as stipulated by law (Article 9(8)). As regards forest contractors, national legislation does not provide a definition of the "forest contractor" as such.

- **What legal rights does the forest manager/contractor have in your country?**

In Lithuania, main right that Law on Forests (in particular, its Article 10) grants to forest owners and managers is the right to use forest and its resources (such as wood and other forest products) for various purposes, including:

- Harvesting timber
- Scientific research
- Education
- Beekeeping
- Grazing of domestic animals

[49] *Laukinės gyvūnijos įstatymas*, Nr. VIII-498, adopted on 06-11-1997, publication reference: Žin., 1997-11-28, Nr. 108-2726. Last consolidated version of: 01-07-2024. Available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.08F2F39FF20B/asr

[50] Methodology for the amount of compensation for environmental damage caused by illegal activities of natural and legal persons in forests *(Fizinių ir juridinių asmenų neteisėta veika miškuose padarytos žalos aplinkai atlyginimo dydžio metodika)*, adopted on 06-03-2014 by the Order No D1-249 of the Minister of Environment. Publication reference: TAR, 2014-03-07, Nr. 2881, last consolidated version of 25-01-2019. Available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/f8954e20a5cd11e3aeb49a67165e3ad3

- Protection of natural complexes
- Other lawful purposes.

This right to utilise forest resources is contingent upon obtaining the necessary permits. While forest owners, managers and users have rights to use forest resources, these rights can be restricted by law for the protection of public interest, environmental conservation, and forest protection. The right to use the forest and its resources ceases under specific conditions, such as the death of the permit holder, the reorganisation or liquidation of a legal entity, the expiration of the permit, or if the permit is deemed invalid by legal means.

- **Is there a requirement of a forest management plan? Are there detailed prescriptions on that?**

Yes, a forest management plan in general is required in Lithuania, with some exceptions (see also Section 5). Detailed prescriptions are provided in the Law on Forests, which specifies that forest management plans (referred to as "*vidinės miškotvarkos projektai*") must outline activities such as forest restoration, use, and land management. The plans are mandatory for state-owned forests (always) and private forest (except in some cases, see Section 5), with specific preparation, approval, and revision rules established by the Ministry of Environment.

- **Is there an obligation to register the responsibility of forest manager/contractor?**
  i. Is registration based on product income?
  ii. Is there a registration fee?

  No, there is no such an obligation in Lithuania.

- **Is there a tax imposed on the forest manager? Is it based on income or hectares?**

In Lithuania there is a tax imposed on the forest manager (Law on Forests, Article 7(2)). The tax is based on **income** rather than hectares.

- **State forest managers** must pay a mandatory **15% deduction** from their income derived from the sale of raw timber and standing forest.
- **Private forest managers must pay a mandatory 5% deduction from their income derived from the same sources.**

These funds are allocated to the state budget and local budgets for specific uses such as public road maintenance in areas with high forest cover.

5. Forest Management plans

- Are forest management plans required in the legislation of your country?
  - ☒ Yes
  - ☐ No

Specify where and the conditions as well as the amount of forest land with plans

Forest management plans are required in Lithuania. According to Article 14 of the Law on Forests, forest management plans (referred to as "vidinės miškotvarkos projektai") are essential documents for organising forest management activities, including forest restoration, usage, and land management.

Plans must be prepared for all State-owned forests (Law on Forests, Article 14(2)(2)). According to Law on Forests and Rules on Preparation of Forest management plans[51], forest management plans in general are prepared for all forest plots, irrespective of the owner. However, in private forests or land not designated for forestry purposes are not mandatory only if:

- Clear-cutting involves specific forest groups (e.g., III-IV A groups, as detailed in Privačių miškų tvarkymo ir naudojimo nuostatai, p. 13.1-13.2).
- The forest area is under 3 hectares (as detailed in Privačių miškų tvarkymo ir naudojimo nuostatai, p. 13.3).
- Certain other exceptions apply (e.g., selective or shelterwood cuts in specific forest types, as detailed in Privačių miškų tvarkymo ir naudojimo nuostatai, p. 13.4).

In cases where a management plan is not required, alternative documents such as cutting area evaluation and forest planting/regeneration plans are prepared instead.

There is no summarised data on how many forest plots have forest management plans. Only data on newly prepared/approved plans as well as persons preparing plans is available[52]. Thus, during 2024, almost 3000 new forest management plans for private owners were prepared and approved (around 2000 plans were rejected, about 100 are in the process of verification). Similar data is for 2023 and 2022 with lower numbers for previous years.

For state owned forests, 51 forest management plans are in force[53].

- **Are there other type of plans required such as:**
  - ☐ Technical Plan
  - ☐ Financial Plan
  - ☐ Exploitation Plan
  - ☐ Fire prevention Plan
  - ☐ Hunting Plan

[51] *Miškų tvarkymo schemų ir Vidinės miškotvarkos projektų rengimo taisyklės*, adopted on 01-09-2006 by the Order No D1-406 of the Minister of Environment, publication reference: Žin., 2006-09-09, Nr. 95-3741, last consolidated version of: 04-03-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.366815D03694/asr

[52] *Privačių miškų vidinės miškotvarkos projektų registras (Register of internal forest management projects in private forests)*, State Forest Service, available at: https://projektai.amvmt.lt/pvp.aspx

[53] *Valstybinių miškų vidinės miškotvarkos projektų registras (Register of internal forest management projects in state forests)*, available at: https://amvmt-my.sharepoint.com/:x:/g/personal/stanislava_kukseniene_amvmt_lt/ETAOQYZT6PtDjs3NN0JJc-cBIg0orxckDmbb4dRBVYREbg?rtime=PWbUauAo3Ug

No other types of plans are required in Lithuania. However, volume of harvesting is a part of the general forest management plan.

- **Please indicate the minimum size of forest requiring a forest management plan?**

There is no specific minimum size set in the legislation for a forest to require a forest management plan. However, for forests smaller than 3 hectares, a management plan is not obligatory.

The size of the forest determines the length of the validity of the forest management plan. In general, forest management plans are valid for 10 years. However, for forests smaller than 10 hectares, the validity of the plan may be extended to 20 years upon request of the forest manager or a group of managers. For forests larger than 500 hectares, a mathematical model is applied for the determination of the cutting rate[54].

- **On which legal basis are they required? Are they legally binding or only guidelines?**

Forest management plans are required by the Law on Forests, which states that owners of forest plots must comply with the mandatory parts of the forest management plan (which are thus legally binding), such as the ten-year rate of clearing, reforestation and environmental requirements (Article 9(5)).

On the other hand, Rules on preparation of forest management plan provides a much longer list of mandatory requirements of the Plan (Rules, p. 14). Rules provide that the content of the plan may be supplemented with other information (it is not stated, what), which would not fall under Article 9(5) of the Law on Forests (Rules, p.15).

As regards State owned forests, the Rules do not provide a possibility that plan contains non-obligatory information.

- **Who has the responsibility for the implementation of forest management plans**? Please include national, regional, and local levels as appropriate. Please distinguish between state and private ownership. Please distinguish between different protection status.

National legislation is explicit only with regard to owners of forest plots (who must comply with the mandatory parts of the forest management plan). However, sanctions for infringements of provisions of forest management plans are not subject-specific (see Section 9 below about sanctions). Therefore it may be concluded that any subject who comes into contact with the forest plot for which the plan is approved, is bound by the plan.

- **Are forest management plans being enforced?**

Forest management plans are being enforced in Lithuania through the Code of Administrative Offenses[55]. The enforcement is implemented through fines for violations related to the preparation, approval, and implementation of forest management plans. Sanctions are differentiated between the heads of legal persons (EUR 120-300) and other persons (EUR 30-

[54] *Rules on Preparation of Forest management plans (Miškų tvarkymo schemų ir Vidinės miškotvarkos projektų rengimo taisyklės)*, adopted on 01-09-2006 by the Order No D1-406 of the Minister of Environment , p. 10, 12.

[55] *Lietuvos Respublikos administracinių nusižengimų kodeksas*, No XII-1869, adopted on 25-06-2015, publication reference: TAR, 2015-07-10, Nr. 11216, last consolidated version of: 01-01-2025, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/4ebe66c0262311e5bf92d6af3f6a2e8b/asr

140). In general, administrative responsibility does not distinguish between private and State-owned forests (with the exception of the Article 271(2), which specifically refers to the approval of forest management plans for private forests or coordination of forest management plans for public forests or for private forests).

- Is there an obligation to maintain a **Forest Book** (linked or related to the Farm Book of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)?

No.

- **How often do forest management plans need to be updated? Who is responsible for the update?**

According to Rules on preparation of forest management plans[56] (p.10), forest management plans for private forest plots or forest land on non-forestry land plots are valid for 10 years. For smaller plots (less than 10 hectares), plans can be created for a period of up to 20 years upon the request of the forest manager or authorised individuals. The forest manager(s) or their authorised representatives, as validated by a notarised authorisation or equivalent, are responsible for initiating the preparation or updating of the forest management plan. If a land plot is co-owned, a written agreement from all co-owners is required to authorise one representative to act on their behalf.

The State Forest Service can extend the validity of an existing forest management plan by up to 5 years if there are proposed but uncompleted management activities. This requires a written, justified request from the forest manager or their authorised representative. The State Forest Service must notify the forest manager of its decision in writing. For State owned forests, validity of forest management plans is 10 years. However, the State Forest Service can extend the validity of an existing forest management plan by up to 5 years upon receiving a justified request from the forest manager (Rules on preparation of forest management plans, p.9).

- Are specific mechanisms put in place to guarantee that national legislation is in line with European guidelines and **criteria on forest management plans** (i.e. Natura 2000 Forest Management Plans?

Guarantees that national legislation is in line with European guidelines and criteria on forest management plans are set in the Rules on preparation of forest management plans[57]. Main principles are the following:

- Forest management plans must not contradict national land-use laws and regulations concerning protected areas, including the Natura 2000 network. They must adhere to legal requirements for the protection and management of Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas.
- A formal significance assessment is required to evaluate the potential impact of a forest management plan on Natura 2000 sites. This is conducted according to procedures established by national and European legislation. If significant impacts are identified, a

[56] *Rules on Preparation of Forest management plans (Miškų tvarkymo schemų ir Vidinės miškotvarkos projektų rengimo taisyklės)*, adopted on 01-09-2006 by the Order No D1-406 of the Minister of Environment

[57] *Rules on Preparation of Forest management plans (Miškų tvarkymo schemų ir Vidinės miškotvarkos projektų rengimo taisyklės)*, adopted on 01-09-2006 by the Order No D1-406 of the Minister of Environment.

strategic environmental assessment (SEA) or an environmental impact assessment (EIA) must be carried out, and only plans deemed compliant with Natura 2000 objectives and regulations are approved.
- The preparation of forest management plans requires consultation with the State Protected Areas Service or relevant territorial administration for areas overlapping with Natura 2000 sites. These bodies must issue findings confirming the compatibility of proposed activities with the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites. Local authorities and other stakeholders, including cultural heritage protection institutions, are also consulted where applicable.
- Forest management plans must include detailed cartographic materials identifying Natura 2000 sites, their boundaries, and conservation targets. Requirements for protecting habitats and species of Community importance, along with cultural heritage considerations, are explicitly outlined in the plans.

- Are there any specific requirements for the **forest management plans** in terms of content, structure or criteria? If yes, please elaborate.

Yes, there are specific requirements for forest management plans in terms of content, structure, and criteria. These requirements are detailed in Rules for preparation of forest management plans[58] and vary depending on whether the forest is state-owned or privately owned.

Forest Management Plans for State owned forests

They must have the following structure:

Summary, Table of Contents, and Introduction: General overview and contextual information.

Analytical Section:

- **Analysis of the current state**: Includes the history of the area, forest management practices, and forecasts for economic and social needs.
- **Characterisation of the management area**: Physical and geographical features, economic and social environment, infrastructure (roads and railways), administrative and cadastral divisions, and forest distribution by purpose and ownership.
- **Characterisation of the forest area**: Structural subdivision names, land types, dendrometric data, forest health, specific territorial features, protected areas (including "Natura 2000"), conservation objectives, and cultural and natural heritage sites.
- **Analysis of previous management plan implementation**: Includes measures undertaken, their effectiveness, and an evaluation of economic and forestry outcomes.

Project Section:

- Basis and objectives of the plan.
- Forest subdivision by function.
- Detailed planning for forest harvesting, regeneration, protection, and maintenance.

[58] *Rules on Preparation of Forest management plans (Miškų tvarkymo schemų ir Vidinės miškotvarkos projektų rengimo taisyklės)*, adopted on 01-09-2006 by the Order No D1-406 of the Minister of Environment.

- Considerations for conservation, fire safety, road building, recreational, and non-timber uses.

Conclusion:

- Information on assessments related to the “Natura 2000” network or strategic environmental impacts, where applicable.
- Procedures for monitoring and revising the plan.

Annexes: Maps and other cartographic materials, such as forest maps, plans, and fire prevention layouts.

Technical Projects: For conservation, restoration, or recreational infrastructure where relevant.

Additional Documents: Management plans for protected areas and specific action plans for invasive species or endangered habitats.

<u>Forest Management Plans for privately owned forests</u>

They must have the following structure:

Title Page: Contains identification information about the owner, preparer, and details of the forest land.

Summary: Overview of planned forest operations such as harvesting and reforestation.

Land Plan: Detailed plan including protected species, habitats, and boundaries of significant areas like “Natura 2000”.

Forest Characteristics: Based on inventory data, describing forest stands and other relevant details.

Harvesting Plan: Includes logging norms, areas for thinning and other treatments.

Reforestation Plan: Specifies reforestation timelines, methods (e.g., planting or natural regeneration), target species, and density requirements.

Protection and Environmental Requirements: Specifies conservation requirements for protected areas and compliance with ecological objectives.

Landscape and Cultural Heritage: Plans for recreational facilities, cultural heritage protection, and landscape shaping.

Environmental Impact Information: Where necessary, an assessment of the plan's impact on "Natura 2000" or other ecological factors.

It must also be noted that the plans may be tailored or supplemented upon request by the forest manager. In addition, for certain activities like clearcutting in private forests, simplified documentation (e.g., stand marking and evaluation documents) may replace a full management plan.

- **Are there any supporting mechanism for the management plans? If yes, please elaborate.**

No, there are no supporting mechanisms for the management plans. However, the simplification of the verification of forest management plans could be regarded as an administrative support. Since 2023, verification of forest management plans on site is performed selectively, in accordance with risk assessment methodology, adopted by the State Forest Service[59].

- Are **there impact assessment required** in your country in relation to the adoption of the forest management plans? What mechanisms are in place in your country to ensure that forest management plans are developed to ensure sustainable forest management practices? If yes, please elaborate.

In principle, impact assessments are not required in Lithuania for the adoption of forest management plans. However, Law on Environmental Impact Assessment of the Planned Economic Activity[60] provides that in certain cases EIA or EIA screening must be performed before starting economic activities in forest plots.

EIA is required in cases when the implementation of the planned economic activity may have an impact on the territories of the European ecological network Natura 2000 and when it is determined, in accordance with the procedure established by the Minister of the Environment, that this environmental impact may be significant

Screening for EIA must performed for following activities:

- Land-use changes in natural or semi-natural areas for intensive agriculture if exceeding 0.5 ha.
- Forest afforestation on land exceeding 10 ha.
- Deforestation in rural areas on land of 1 ha or more and in urban areas, irrespective of size.

Results of the Strategic EIA, EIA or EIA screening must be included in the forest management plans[61].

Mechanisms for Sustainable Forest Management mainly stem from Regulations on the management and use of private forests[62]. According to Regulations, private forest owners must comply with the *Law on Forests*, *Law on Land*, *Law on Protected Areas*, and other relevant laws and regulations. These legal instruments provide a structured approach to ensure that forest management aligns with sustainability principles.

Owners are also required to protect forests from: fires; pests and diseases; illegal logging; any actions causing environmental harm. Adherence to sanitary protection rules is mandatory,

[59] *Supaprastintos privačių miškų miškotvarkos projektų rengimo ir derinimo procedūros* (Procedures for the preparation and approval of private forest management projects were simplified), Ministry of Environment, 13-01-2023, available at: https://am.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/supaprastintos-privaciu-misku-miskotvarkos-projektu-rengimo-ir-derinimo-proceduros/

[60] *Lietuvos Respublikos planuojamos ūkinės veiklos poveikio aplinkai įstatymas*, No I-1495, adopted on 15-08-1996, publication reference: Žin., 1996-08-30, Nr. 82-1965, last consolidated version of 23-06-2023, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.0539E2FEB29E/asr

[61] *Rules on Preparation of Forest management plans (Miškų tvarkymo schemų ir Vidinės miškotvarkos projektų rengimo taisyklės)*, adopted on 01-09-2006 by the Order No D1-406 of the Minister of Environment, p. 13.4.1, p. 14.10.

[62] *Privačių miškų tvarkymo ir naudojimo nuostatai*, adopted on 24-07-1997 by the Decree No 799 of the Government, publication reference: Žin., 1997-07-30, Nr. 71-1808, last consolidated version of: 01-07-2021, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.6A6D776786E3/asr.

including removing or securing susceptible wood to prevent pest outbreaks and reporting pest or disease infestations to state forest officials.

Forest owners must:

- Restore logging areas within three years.
- Replant damaged or destroyed forest areas within specific timelines.
- Rehabilitate forests affected by illegal logging within one year.

Forest management activities must minimise negative environmental impacts, preserve soil fertility, and maintain biodiversity. Forest owners must adhere to the mandatory parts of approved forest management plans, ensuring consistency with sustainable practices.

- Are the **Natura 2000 sites plans already implemented and well-coordinated or integrated** with forest management plans? Are traditional forest activities recognized in those plans? Are there guidelines for small forest owners and managers on what they can and can't do?

Plans for Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas are integrated with forest management plans through management plans for protected areas[63]. Where the required measures for management of protected areas are planned only in forests of national importance, no documentation is prepared for the sites or parts of sites. In this case, the measures shall be included in internal forest management plans. Meanwhile, where management plans or action plans include measures to be implemented on privately owned forest land, the promoter of the nature protection plan shall cooperate with the owners or managers of the land and, where appropriate, prepare draft forest management plans or amendments to such plans for private forests.

It is also provided that management plans for protected areas shall include the following relevant information:

- what impact the implemented nature protection measures will have on other (non-target) values, on forest land, such as reforestation, species composition, structure and sanitary status of existing and future stands.
  - if the management area (or protected areas) is set aside in forests for the management of protected natural values and the measures are related to harvesting or may affect the condition of the stands, the main forest taxonomic data (forest block numbers, tax parcel numbers, forest groups, other relevant data);
  - the forest management measures included in the internal forest management projects, if these may affect the natural values protected in the management area.

Guidelines for forest owners are not explicitly provided in management plans for protected areas, however, those plans have to be prepared in close cooperation with forest owners; moreover, it is provided that the promoter of the management plans for protected areas shall prepare draft forest management plans or amendments to such plans for private forests.

[63] *Saugomų teritorijų gamtotvarkos planų, tikslinių programų ir veiksmų planų rengimo tvarkos aprašas*, adopted on 28-05-2024 bythe Order No D1-180 of the Minister of Environment, publication reference: TAR, 2024-05-28, Nr. 9552, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/e3b46b101cf211ef8b14c5bcce136045

6. Sustainable forest management.

6.1. Sustainable forest management definition and forestry practices

- **Is sustainable forest management (SFM) defined in your country?**
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☒ No (but there is an indirect and important mention)

The legal reference to SFM in the Lithuanian law is only indirect: Law on Forests defines that the purpose of the Law is to regulate the restoration, protection and use of forests and to create the legal preconditions for forests of all forms of ownership to be managed in accordance with uniform principles of sustainable and balanced forestry, ensuring the rational use of forest resources and the provision of raw materials to the country's industry, and to provide the maximum socio-economic benefits to the country by ensuring the preservation of biodiversity, the enhancement of the productivity of forests, the stability of the landscape and the quality of the environment, and the possibility of fulfilling, now and in the future, their ecological, economic and social functions, without causing damage to other ecosystems. In addition, Article 9 provides that forests must be managed in accordance with the principle of continuous use in a sustainable manner.

This definition is not binding per-se and serves only as a guidance.

- **Does the definition of SFM include specific objectives?**
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☒ No

From the above-mentioned indirect reference to the SFM it can be incurred that the objectives of the principle of the sustainable forest management are the following:

- To maximise the country's social and economic benefits by ensuring the rational use of forest resources and providing raw materials for its industry,
- **To ensure:**
  - Conservation of biodiversity;
  - The increasing forest productivity;
  - The landscape stability and environmental quality;
  - The ability to fulfil ecological, economic and social functions now and in the future without damaging other ecosystems.

- Does your country have specific guidelines **on Sustainable Forest Management**? If yes, are those mentioned in the legislation?
  - ☐ Yes, they can be found here:
  - ☒ No
  - ☐ Other sources defining or implementing Sustainable Forest Management

No, there are no specific guidelines on Sustainable Forest Management in Lithuania. However, general principles on SFM are reflected in the documents at policy level.

- Does your country have a **Forest Strategy and/or Forest Management Policy** setting policy priorities that implement a SFM approach?
  - ☐ Yes, they can be found here:
  - ☒ No
  - ☐ Other sources setting the Forest strategy/policy

In Lithuania, currently there are no forestry sector specific country-wide policy documents. The most recent document was the National Forestry Sector Development Programme 2012-2020[64]. One of its goals was to preserve and enhance the sustainability of forest ecosystems, taking into account their ecological and social roles and the impacts of climate change. Following objectives had to implement that goal:

- Enhancing the ecological and landscape stability of forest ecosystems
- Encouraging the development of recreational forest functions and the creation and management of recreational infrastructure in forests
- Enabling the preservation of cultural heritage sites and their monumental environment in forests

The most recent Strategy of the Forestry Sector Policy and its Implementation was adopted even earlier, in 2002[65]. In about 2015-2020 there were public debates on the country-wide pact on the Forestry Strategy, however, the final agreement between stakeholders was not reached.

In June 2024, the Lithuanian Parliament adopted a non-binding Resolution "On the Forest Policy"[66] with some focus on sustainable forest management. To be noted though that the Work Programme of the 20 th Cabinet of Ministers[67] can serve as guidelines on new Government's approach towards the forest sector in general, and towards sustainable forest management in particular. The Government commits itself to adopt a new Forest strategy and to conduct forest policy based on sustainable forest management principles, adopted by *Forest Europe*. The Government aims to introduce innovative and adaptive, environment friendly and closer-to-nature forestry practices. Objective of the Government is to achieve that in 20 years at least 50 percent of Lithuanian forests are governed in accordance with sustainable forestry principles.

- **Which requirements/obligations result from the legally binding requirement for SFM?**
  1. For forest owners
  2. For forest managers

In Lithuania currently there are no legally binding requirements directly connected to SFM. However, it has to be considered that the Law on Forests indirectly refers to a SFM approach

[64] *Nacionalinė miškų ūkio sektoriaus plėtros 2012–2020 metų programa*, adopted on 23-05-2012 by the Decree No 569 of the Government, publication reference: Žin., 2012-05-30, Nr. 61-3058, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.4766FD6E972D

[65] *Lietuvos miškų ūkio politikos ir jos įgyvendinimo strategija*, adopted on 17-09-2002 by the Order No 484 of the Minister of Environment, publication reference: Žin., 2002-09-25, Nr. 93-4029, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.6115B0F01C2B

[66] Dėl miškų politikos, adopted on 27-06-2024, publication reference: TAR, 2024-07-03, Nr. 12428, available at: https://e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/4eaada80390e11efbdaea558de59136c

[67] *Dvidešimtosios Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės programa*, adopted on 25-09-2025 by the Decision No XV-439 of the Parliament, publication reference: TAR, 2025-09-25, Nr. 15998 , available at: https://e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/568b271299f611f0a8bbd1e98310677d , p. 627-645

when describing its purposes, and the same law sets the obligations for forest owners and managers. Thus, while there are no specific requirements for SFM, the law ensures sustainable forest management through various obligations related to forest conservation, regeneration, protection, and responsible harvesting practices. These obligations align with the principles of SFM, even though they are not explicitly labelled as such.

- Are **specific criteria and/or indicators** to determine whether SFM is being achieved? Where are they described (see table below)?

In Lithuania currently there are no legally binding requirements for SFM. In the Work Programme of the 19th Government of Lithuania one measurable criteria was set: to achieve that in 20 years at least 50 percent of Lithuanian forests are governed in accordance with sustainable forestry principles[68]. After the Government reform by the same Parliamentary majority, this quantitative criteria was deleted from the Work Programme. The Work Programme of the 20th Government of Lithuania commits to the implementation of the forest policy based on the principles of sustainable forest management and a multi-purpose, close-to-nature forestry model[69].

- Are some **forest managers implementing sustainable forest management practices voluntarily**? If yes, how are these voluntary management practices taking place? Through citizen initiatives, local initiatives, or other ways? Please explain how forest managers ensure that forest management practices are sustainable.

Lithuanian State Forest Enterprise claims[70] that forest management in state owned forests is performed in accordance with principles of sustainable and balanced forest management. The evidence for this claim is the increasing forests area, successful implementation of greenhouse gas management projects, as well as the attainment of FSC certificates.

In addition, in its strategic plan adopted in 2022[71], the State Forest Enterprise provides that the design of its forest management project is based on the following criteria for sustainable forest management:

- Conservation and enhancement of forestry resources and their contribution to the global carbon cycle;
- Conservation, protection and enhancement of forest ecosystems and biodiversity;
- Conservation of other socio-economic functions and conditions.

Finally, one of the 5 strategic directions of the State Forest Enterprise is to enhance the sustainability of forest ecosystems.

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[68] *Devynioliktosios Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės programa*, adopted on 12-12-2024 by the Decision No XV-54 of the Parliament, publication reference: TAR, 2024-12-12, Nr. 22047, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/0b418dc0b89811ef88c08519262548c4, p. 637.

[69] *Dėl miškų politikos*, adopted on 27-06-2024, publication reference: TAR, 2024-07-03, Nr. 12428, available at: https://e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/4eaada80390e11efbdaea558de59136c .

[70] *Valstybinių miškų urėdija: tvarus ir subalansuotas miškininkavimas – klimato kaitai švelninti (State Forest Enterprise: sustainable and balanced forestry to mitigate climate change)*, State Forest Enterprise, 02-10-2023, available at: https://vmu.lt/valstybiniu-misku-uredija-tvarus-ir-subalansuotas-miskininkavimas-klimato-kaitai-svelninti/

[71] *State Entity State Forest Enterprise, Activity Strategy 2023-2027, summary*, available at: https://vmu.lt/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/VI-VMU-2023-2027-m.-strategija-santrauka.pdf

- Which mechanisms are put in place to support the implementation of SFM? Which measures are in place to monitor implementation of the SFM?

Currently, in Lithuania, there are no legally binding requirements for SFM. However, the following activities are (or are to be, subject to financing) supported as part of the national 2022-2030 Development Programme[72]:

Private owned forests:

Conversion of thinned and economically marginal stands or shrubs into productive and climate-resilient stands, establishment of heterogeneous and multi-stemmed stands.

State owned forests:

- Conversion of thinned and economically marginal stands or shrubs into productive and climate-resilient stands, establishment of multi-species and multi-stemmed stands.
- Optimisation of the number and area of State-owned forest nurseries, by equipping them with the necessary infrastructure for the cultivation of forest seedlings, and by the introduction of advanced technologies for the cultivation of seedlings, and of measures for the protection of seedlings against disease and pest infestation.
- Conditions of harvesting, storing and processing of forest seed material, Improving protection against diseases and pests through the introduction of advanced technologies and effective measures.
- Developing forests on public land.
- Applying effective measures for the conservation and restoration of the genetic resources of forest trees.
- Developing the development of forest tree breeding and the creation of a higher-quality forest seed base.
- Adapting forest fire protection to climate change by introducing advanced tools and technologies for the detection of, and quick reaction to, forest fires.

- Which forest management practices are required or prohibited by law in your forest/country? Please check below the proposed forest management practices and add supplementary ones if missing (Please include explanation of the legal requirements of the relevant techniques).
    - o Closer to nature silviculture practices
    - o **Clear-cutting**
    - o Shelterwood system
    - o **Selective logging**
    - o **Afforestation and reforestation to enlarge forest areas**
    - o Controlled burn
    - o Mandatory salvage logging
    - o Other .....

[72] *Dėl 2022–2030 metų plėtros programos valdytojos Lietuvos Respublikos aplinkos ministerijos aplinkos apsaugos ir klimato kaitos valdymo plėtros programos pažangos priemonės Nr. 02-001-06-08-04 „Skatinti miškų plėtrą ir darnų miškų sektoriaus vystymąsi“ įgyvendinimo*, adopted on 19-09-2022 by the Order No D1-305 of the Minister of Environment, publication reference: TAR, 2022-09-19, Nr. 19069, last consolidated version of: 01-01-2025, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/2bdba2d037eb11ed8f249634f1996e02/asr

Clear-cutting is generally prohibited or restricted in forests of Groups I-III, while it is allowed in Group IV under certain conditions (see above Section 4.3).

Selective logging – regulated by the Rules on Forest logging. It is divided into free selective logging, where trees are cut evenly across the stand, removing mature, low-growth, damaged trees; and group selective logging in the stand (usually in group understorey areas), where groups of trees smaller than 0.1 ha are cut. Rules on Forest logging regulate selective logging in accordance with forest categories and define frequency, intensity and other parameters of logging.

Rules on Afforestation and Reforestation[73] set quality requirements for reforestation and afforestation, afforestation works, plantations and coppice. Rules to a full extent are applicable to managers and users of state-owned forests, and partially – to owners of private forests (with the rest of obligations – recommendatory).

- Are there limitations on the management models to be applied, like clearcuttings or their sizes? **Is there a ban on clear cutting linked to SFM?**

The **Law on Forests** establishes limitations on forest owners' and holders' rights to harvest and perform clear-cutting, particularly in different forest groups (see above under Section 4.3). Cutting is also limited close to habitats of protected species of birds[74].

These limitations, however, are not directly linked to SFM, as in Lithuania currently there are no legally binding requirements for SFM.

- **Is there a defined/legal target for forest land to be managed for conservation and species protection objectives in your country or region?**

Area of forest land to be managed for conservation and species protection depends on it being a part of the protected area in accordance with the Law on Protected Areas.

- **Are there forest owner obligations related to forest restoration after harvest?**

According to Rules on Afforestation and Reforestation, owners of forests (both private owners and managers of State-owned forests) have an obligation to restore the forest in a timely and proper manner, maintain and protect forest plantations and coppice, replant dead plantations and coppice, and maintain and protect them from fires, forest pests, diseases and other negative factors. The species composition of forest plantations and shrubberies shall be appropriate to the conditions of the site and the functional purpose of the forest.

[73] *Miško atkūrimo ir įveisimo nuostatai*, adopted on 14-04-2008 by the order No D1-199 of the Minister of Environment, publication reference: Žin., 2008-04-19, Nr. 45-1702, last consolidated version of 01-07-2021, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.E0061030F4E1/asr

[74] Forest Cutting Rules, Annex I *(Miško kirtimo taisyklės)*, adopted at 27-01-2010 by the Order No D1-79 of the Minister of Environment, publication reference: Žin., 2010-02-03, Nr. 14-676, last consolidated version of: 20-07-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.4A966C7D30EB/asr, Annex I

6.2. "Closer-to-nature" guidelines and practices

(This section relates to the Commission Guidelines on Closer to nature forest management but also Commission guidance on payment schemes for forest ecosystem services both aiming to provide information and guidance for sustainable forest management)

- Has your country incorporated the **newly published Commission guidelines** in their legal or regulatory framework?

The Work Programme of the current Government of Lithuania is closely following the Commission guidelines on closer to nature forest management. T here are no specific action plans on how the Work Programme will be implemented in practice, however, a working group was established by the Ministry of Environment in 2024 to integrate these guidelines into the new Forest Policy Strategy Action Plan.

- Has your country **recognized under law/regulatory measure a closer-to-nature approach** in forest management? If yes please provide the source where this is explained and elaborate below.
  - ☐ Yes: indirectly in the Law on Forests, through a statement that Forests must be managed according to the principle of continuous use, so that timber and other forest resources are continuously supplied and an annual or periodic balance is maintained between the growth of timber and the extent of its use (Article 9).
  - ☒ No

- Does your country have legislation/measures setting specific biodiversity targets/management objectives for sustainable forest management at a national or regional level?
  - ☐ Yes, at national level – they can be found here:
  - ☐ Yes, at regional level – they can be found here: .....
  - ☒ No

  Please describe them and elaborate:

6.3. Climate change and Forest carbon absorption

- Does your country have legislation/measures setting specific climate change targets or objectives for sustainable forest management at a national or regional level?

Climate change measures in the forest management can be found first of all in the Work Programme of the 19th and 20th Governments. It is stated in the Programme that forestry practices that increase the resilience of forests to the impacts of climate change, the resulting droughts and forest fires, and the spread of pests will be developed. In addition, the creation of mixed and natural forests that are less vulnerable to climate change will be encouraged. Finally, forest management plans will have to be developed taking into account scientific data, the national environmental monitoring programme and climate objectives.

In addition, National Climate Change Management Agenda[75] sets a target to increase the country's forest cover to at least 35 % by 2024, giving priority to areas of non-forest land naturally covered by trees and shrubs, in line with ecological principles (it is to be noted that the Work Programme of the Government postpones the deadline until 2030). The document also sets non-measurable objectives in the area of forestry, for example: enhancing ecosystem resilience and conserving biodiversity through research and monitoring to evaluate ecosystem services and combat biodiversity loss, including the spread of invasive species; promoting sustainable forestry practices, aiming to protect old-growth forests, encourage close-to-nature forestry, and safeguard various elements crucial to forest ecosystem health. Additionally, effective forest management and protection measures are to be implemented to prevent damage from fires, pests, and other threats exacerbated by climate change. Similar targets and objectives are set in the National Energy and Climate Action Plan 2021-2030[76].

[75] Nacionalinė klimato kaitos valdymo darbotvarkė, adopted on 30-06-2021 by the decision XIV-490 of the Seimas, publication reference: TAR, 2021-07-02, Nr. 15226, available at: https://e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/abae1620db3311eb9f09e7df20500045

[76] Nacionalinis energetikos ir klimato srities veiksmų planas 2021–2030 m., adopted on 11-12-2024 by the order 1069 of the Government, publication reference: TAR, 2024-12-11, Nr. 21969, available at: https://e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/dabeaf52b7b811ef88c08519262548c4

7. Forest land market

NOTE: The key objective is to identify and present information on the basic legal framework regulating market of forest land and inheritance processes.

- Are there specific legal requirements or limitations when selling and buying forest land?

First, Constitutional limitations must be mentioned. Article 47 of the Constitution establishes that forests of national significance are the exclusive property of the Republic of Lithuania. In addition, foreign entities may acquire land, internal waters, and forests only in case they are subjects of countries that meet criteria of Lithuania's European and transatlantic integration (EU, OECD, EEA and NATO countries, as well as countries that have Association Agreements with the EU). However, specific exclusions apply, notably for forest land designated for forestry purposes, protective forests, recreational forests, and land near significant water bodies and their protective zones.

Other legislative provisions related with land market are defined in the Law on Forests. The Law provides that there are specific legal requirements and limitations when buying or selling forest land in Lithuania. Key elements:

Ownership limits: A subject or related subjects can own up to 1,500 hectares of forest land in Lithuania. Moreover, when acquiring more than 20% of shares in a legal entity that owns over 400 hectares of forest land requires approval from the National Land Service. This applies both to natural and legal persons.

Declaration requirement: Before the sale, buyers must submit a declaration confirming that their total forest land ownership will not exceed legal limits. The declaration must also disclose the source of funds if the transaction triggers anti-money laundering criteria.

Division restrictions: Forest land plots smaller than 5 hectares cannot be divided, except in specific cases, such as dividing land jointly owned by multiple individuals or separating land with existing buildings.

First right of purchase: Co-owners and neighbours have the first right to buy forest land under equal terms unless sold through a public auction. In addition, for forest land in conservation areas or adjacent to state forests, the state also has the first right to purchase.

State ownership and management: Certain forests are exclusively state-owned (e.g., forests in national parks, coastal areas, and scientific reserves). In general, state-owned forests may be leased for recreational or other purposes but not for forestry activities.

Compliance with state regulations: Transactions violating ownership or land use limits may result in the state reclaiming the land, with compensation to the buyer based on purchase price or market value.

Notification process: Sellers must notify notaries or the National Land Service about their intent to sell, specifying sale conditions. On the other hand, potential buyers with preferential rights are informed and must respond within specified timeframes.

- **Are there limitations to divide the land by selling or inheritances?**

In addition to ownership limits and selling/purchase constraints listed above, certain limitations on dividing land through selling or inheritance are applicable in Lithuania:

Minimum land size for forest land: Private forest land or private forest land within non-forest land cannot be divided into parts smaller than 5 hectares unless certain exceptions apply. These exceptions include:

- Division among co-owners if the land was jointly restored under ownership rights.
- Separation of agricultural land from a forest plot to create two separate plots (agricultural and forest land).
- Division for land containing legally constructed buildings or those registered separately in the property registry.
- Division to restore former homesteads.

Inheritance or division among heirs: Inherited forest land or forest land within other land types must comply with the above restrictions on minimum land size and cannot result in plots smaller than 5 hectares, except under the outlined exceptions.

- **Are there institutions/bodies providing information related to the forest land market?**

Institutions in Lithuania that have competences related to the forest land market are:

National Land Service (Nacionalinė žemės tarnyba) plays a key role in overseeing transactions of forest land:

- It reviews and provides consent for purchasing forest land exceeding certain thresholds (e.g., when a person or related persons aim to own more than 1,500 hectares of forest land).
- It handles notifications and approvals related to the first right of purchase for forest land plots.

Ministry of Environment (Aplinkos ministerija): implements the state's rights and duties regarding state-owned forests.

State forestry enterprises, State Reserve Directorates, National Park Directorates, municipalities and other legal entities manage state forest lands under trust.

Legal Notaries act as intermediaries in transactions, ensuring compliance with legal requirements and notifying relevant authorities about pending sales.

- Are there institutions/**bodies contributing to dynamize that market,** like forest land banks or advisory bodies (similar to the CAP advisory bodies) and others? Is there regular information on the amount of forest land transferred and the prices of transmissions? (Information on this market is usually missing)

There is no specific legislation related with dynamizing the market, apart from the provision that the forest land not used for restoration of property rights is sold at auctions, unless otherwise provided for in other laws.

Regular and transparent information on the forest land market seems to be limited. However, market regulation involves specific procedures where notifications about sales are provided to the National Land Service and neighbouring landowners, especially for transactions involving

preferential rights. In addition, the pricing mechanisms for forest land acquisition by the state are based on either mass valuation methods or individual market valuations, but systematic publication of these prices is not indicated in the text.

- Are there **regulations of forest land leasing**? Are they common with agricultural land or independent and with specific requirements?

The only legislative provision on the leasing of forest land states that the state forest land may be leased for recreation or other purposes, except for forestry activities.

- **Are there obligations and or access to insurances for forest land or forest activities?**

There are no specific obligations.

- Are there specific regulations providing, **facilitating or limiting access to financial credits** for forest activities or mortgages on forest land?

There are no specific regulations.

8. Forest companies, Forest incentives and taxation.

Forest Companies

- **Is there a register of forest industries? Is there a register of forest contractors?**

In Lithuania, there are no official dedicated registers of forest industries and forest contractors. However, the State Forest Enterprise keeps and updates the list of contractors eligible to participate in public procurements. List of cooperatives of forest owners must be published on the website of the State Forest Service, although current version of the website does not provide such a list.

- **Is there any specific regulation on forest ownership, forest cooperatives or other types of forest companies or are they all regulated under the Company Law?**

The Law on Forests states that private forest owners have the right to form associations and cooperatives, and to set up companies and organisations, in accordance with the relevant legislation. Forest owners' cooperatives are granted the status of agricultural cooperatives.

The Law on Cooperative Societies (Cooperatives)[77] further defines that a cooperative shall be eligible for recognition as a forest owners' cooperative if it meets the following criteria for recognition:

- more than 70 per cent of its members are natural and/or legal persons who are forest owners, who have registered agricultural and rural holdings and whose shares are worth more than 70 per cent of the value of the shares of all the members of the cooperative society;
- the share of the cooperative society's income from forestry activities was 50 % or more of the total income;
- has more than 10 members;
- the cooperative society has no tax arrears to the State or municipal budgets or funds administered by the State Tax Inspectorate.

- **Do small forest owners have access to the status of forest companies?**

There is no such specific legal form as "forest companies" in Lithuania.

Forest incentives and taxation

A provision of the Law on the Land Tax[78] explicitly states that forest land and agricultural land where forests have been established according to legal regulations are not subject to the land tax (this is not applicable in instances when forest grows on land not designated as forest land or agriculture land - such instances are not very common). This can be regarded as a form of forest incentive.

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[77] *Lietuvos Respublikos kooperatinių bendrovių (kooperatyvų) įstatymas*, No I-164, adopted on 01-06-1993, publication reference: Žin., 1993-06-09, Nr. 20-488, last consolidated version of: 01-09-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.94DB985EB965/asr

[78] *Lietuvos Respublikos žemės mokesčio įstatymas*, No. I-2675, adopted on 25-06-1994, publication reference: Žin., 1992-07-02, Nr. 128-0, last consolidated version of: 03-05-2024, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.D267FBDC094B/asr

- Are there **effective subsidies** for forest owners and managers to implement SFM? And/or to carry out biodiversity conservation measures? If it does exist, please compare the total amount paid at national level in the last 3 years with available information with the amount defined as necessary at the Prioritised Actions Framework.

Private forest owners have the right to request grants in order to improve the quality of their degraded and economically marginal stands or shrubs by converting them into productive and climate-resilient stands. These grants are allocated under Progress Measure "Promoting forest development and sustainable forest sector growth" under the 2022–2030 Environment and Climate Change Management Development Programme[79]. General allocated amount is EUR 1,62 million, in 2024, EUR 0,087 million were distributed (with EUR 3000-3900 allocated for 1 ha of forest)[80].

- What taxes are applicable to Forest companies and forest owners?

In Lithuania there is a tax imposed on the forest manager (Law on Forests, Article 7(2)). The tax is based on **income** rather than hectares.

- **State forest managers** must pay a mandatory **15% deduction** from their income derived from the sale of raw timber and standing forest.
- **Private forest managers must pay a mandatory 5% deduction from their income derived from the same sources.**

These funds are allocated to the state budget and local budgets for specific uses such as public road maintenance in areas with high forest cover.

[79] *Dėl 2022–2030 metų plėtros programos valdytojos Lietuvos Respublikos aplinkos ministerijos aplinkos apsaugos ir klimato kaitos valdymo plėtros programos pažangos priemonės Nr. 02-001-06-08-04 „Skatinti miškų plėtrą ir darnų miškų sektoriaus vystymąsi" įgyvendinimo*, adopted on 19-09-2022 by the Order No D1-305 of the Minister of Environment, publication reference: TAR, 2022-09-19, Nr. 19069, last consolidated version of: 01-01-2025, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/2bdba2d037eb11ed8f249634f1996e02/asr

[80] *Teikiama parama privačių miškų savininkams, norintiems auginti kokybišką, klimato kaitai atsparų mišką*, Ministry of Environment, 22-04-2024, available at: https://apva.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos-24316/teikiama-parama-privaciu-misku-savininkams-norintiems-auginti-kokybiska-klimato-kaitai-atsparu-miska/

9. Enforcement: Forest control and penalties.

- Are there specific measures in place to enforce compliance with the legal requirements on forest management?

  Please list only the legislative measures including the responsible body that are specific to forest management requirements.

Forest management plans are being enforced in Lithuania through the Code of Administrative Offenses. The enforcement is implemented through fines for violations related to the various aspects of forest management. Fines are differentiated between the heads of legal persons (EUR 14-6000) and other natural persons (EUR 20-6000). They are also differentiated in accordance with the nature, severity and recurrence of infringements and may include not only fines, but also confiscation of instruments of the infringement or confiscation of income gained as a result of the infringement (e.g., illegal cutting).

For state owned forests, employees of state enterprise are entrusted with functions of State Forest Protection Officers, including the right to impose administrative sanctions in case of infringements against state owned forests.

In addition, officers of Environmental Protection Department have rights to impose sanctions in the area of forest management for infringements with environmental implications. Thus, in accordance with the Law on Environmental Protection[81], economic sanctions for legal persons may be imposed for infringements of forest management requirements. Sanctions are differentiated in accordance with the nature, severity and recurrence of infringements and may include financial sanctions (EUR 25-30000), as well as confiscation of instruments of the infringement or confiscation of income gained as a result of the infringement (e.g., illegal cutting). In addition to economic sanctions for legal persons, fines for heads of legal persons may be imposed for the same illegal activity.

[81] Aplinkos apsaugos įstatymas, I-2223, adopted on 21-01-1992, publication reference: Lietuvos aidas, 1992-01-30, Nr. 20-0, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.E2780B68DE62/asr

10. Conclusions

10.1. Legal or regulatory barriers for SFM

- What are the main legal and regulatory barriers and enablers affecting the implementation of SFM in your country?

In Lithuania, the main obstacle affecting the implementation of SFM is the absence of the officially adopted single forest policy strategy. Though such a strategy is currently under development and discussions with stakeholders are ongoing, at the moment legal gaps still exist, including the absence of a systemic legal regulation on sustainable forest management, with missing legal definitions and other key legal concepts. Within the current legal framework, sustainable forest management is indirectly achieved through a set of individual environmental obligations, including horizontal legislation on climate change management. This results in private owners adhering to specific sustainable management practices and complying with specific rules for activities such as harvesting, reforestation, and biodiversity protection, but there is no overarching legal structure guiding these efforts. It might be also argued that such a fragmented approach can facilitate owners and make it easier to adopt individual requirements.

In addition, financial support for private owners also plays a positive role in encouraging adherence to sustainable forest management practices.

- Are there specific legal and regulatory barriers or challenges to implement a closer-to-nature approach in forest management in your country?

The main challenge to implement a closer-to-nature approach in forest management is the lack of any legal regulation on the SFM, and thus the lack of an official closer-to-nature approach in forest management. In addition, system of administrative sanctions in Lithuania is perceived as not entirely efficient.

- What are the main legal drivers for implementing a closer-to-nature approach in forest management for relevant actors?

A closer-to-nature approach as the overarching principle is currently not present in the legislation. Main drivers seem to stem not from the legislation but from the administrative practice (simplification of regulatory burden) as well as corporate social responsibility approach of the State Forest Enterprise.

10.2. Legal or regulatory gaps in national forest legislation

Please provide key conclusions based on the information referred to in previous sections.

Major regulatory gap in national forest legislation in Lithuania is the lack of a systematic regulation of sustainable forest management, including definitions and main principles. Moreover, at the state level, sustainable forest management as such is not referenced in either regulatory or recommendatory documents - only its individual elements. Therefore, the existing legislation, while it often follows principles of sustainable forest management, is not systematic.

Another element that could be regarded as a significant regulatory gap, is the fragmentation of existing data on forest land, its structure and ownership: data is gathered from several datasets and then combined in principle manually, thus leaving a lot of room for errors and inaccuracies, especially regarding the Forest Cadastre.

Finally, a system of sanctions does not ensure efficient observance of legislative requirements.

A consulted forestry association affirmed that the main challenges are related to excessive bureaucracy and a lack of human resources. New legal requirements often involve complex administrative procedures, documentation, and reporting, which are particularly burdensome for small forest owners. The same stakeholder brought attention to additional considerations: (i) the alignment between legal obligations and the administrative and financial capacities of small forest owners, particularly in relation to management planning and funding processes; and (ii) implementation challenges associated with identified legal gaps (e.g., lack of an SFM definition and fragmented forest legislation)[82].

[82] Consultations with a forestry association from Lithuania took place in September 2025. Their input has been addressed and included within this report.

National experts on forest legislation and references

- **Please provide the names and contacts of 3 to 5 experts in forest legislation in your country,**
- Rasa Ragulskytė-Markovienė, Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania, judge; Mykolas Romeris University, Professor in Practice (main specialization – Environmental law), r.markoviene@mruni.eu
- Indrė Žvaigždinienė, Regional Administrative Court, judge; Vilnius University, Associate Professor; (specialization – Environmental law, environmental liability), indre@zvaigzdinas.net
- Evaldas Klimas, Attorney at law, (Walless); Mykolas Romeris University, Professor (specialization – Environmental law, territory planning, land law), evaldasklimas@mruni.eu
- Ekaterina Makrickienė, Assoc.Prof., Doctor of Agriculture, Vytautas Magnus University (specializations – forest policy, forest governance, dendrochronology), ekaterina.makrickiene@vdu.lt
- Provide **key books or articles analysing the national and/or regional forest legislation** in your country, particularly if they compare it with other countries, if they analyse the effect in actual management of SFM.

Main books in the area of forest legislation are:

- Mažeika J., Miško teisės pagrindai: mokomoji knyga (Basics of Forest Law: teaching materials), 2009
- Marcijonas A., Sudavičius B., Ekologinė teisė (Environmental law), 1996
- **Other:**
- Morkvėnienė Inga, Miškų apsaugos teisinis reguliavimas: privataus ir viešojo intereso santykio problema (Legal regulation of forest protection: the problem of the relationship between private and public interest), Master thesis, 2023, available at: https://cris.mruni.eu/cris/entities/etd/4483abaa-2b9e-43dc-b84f-81b5c2654057
- Mažeika J., Miško naudojimo teisinis reguliavimas (Legal regulation of the use of forest), Article in peer-reviewed Lithuanian conference proceedings, 2006, available at: https://www.vdu.lt/cris/entities/publication/6dbce3c7-626a-4e95-b54d-b0b2b255dee1

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