

THE ANALYSIS OF THE REGIONAL SELF-GOVERNING UNITS FORESTS IN SELECTED EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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Received: December 18, 2012

Abstract

LIŠKOVÁ BARBORA: *The analysis of the regional self-governing units forests in selected European countries*. Acta Universitatis Agriculturae et Silviculturae Mendelianae Brunensis, 2013, LXI, No. 3, pp. 699–709

The article focuses on identification, analysis, description and comparison of the regional self-governing units (RSGU) forests in selected European countries. The analysis deals not only with forests in the ownership of basic regional self-governing units such as villages but also with forests of higher regional self-governing unit such as regions or federated states. The identification and description of this type of ownership is not overly published in the Czech Republic. The published foreign overall studies and summaries state mainly the division into forests in public and private ownership. This article is created on the basis of the selection of relevant information sources according to corresponding key words. The methods of analysis of available literary sources, conspectus, comparison and interpretation were used to deal with the topic. The quantity of information is higher and more available within basic regional self-governing units than with higher regional self-governing units. On the basis of obtained information it can be stated that the share of forest ownership in the observed countries varies ranging from zero share in the ownership to fifty per cent share in Germany.

forests of regional self-governing units, communal forests, municipal forests, regional forests

Regional self-governing units are some of the most significant forest owners worldwide. Although the extent of their representation in each country is very diverse, they belong among three most important groups of forest owners in Europe.

The regional self-government is implemented in two-tier system in the Czech Republic, by basic regional self-governing units (such as municipalities, therefore towns) and higher regional self-governing units (such as regions). Forests in the ownership of the basic regional self-governing units are described by several different terms: communal forests, municipal forests, common forests; all these terms are considered to be synonyms. Sometimes, it is possible to come across a term of town forests, however, in view of the fact that a town is a municipality with certain special characteristics, the town forests should be considered as a subcategory of the municipal forests. Forests owned by the City of Prague in this case are considered as municipal forests. Forests in

the ownership of the higher regional self-governing units are in the Czech Republic considered to be in the ownership of regions. Within the bounds of this work, equivalent forest property abroad, e.g. forests of federated states, cantons, regions, etc., will be included in this category.

Unless any specific information sources are quoted, a term of the regional self-governing units forests (RSGUF), which is a synonym to above mentioned terms, will be used in this work. If it is necessary to distinguish forests of the basic and the higher regional self-governing units, terms the basic regional self-governing units (BRSGU) and the higher regional self-governing units (HRSGU) will be used.

Concerning RSGUF in each European country, there is not a consistent classification of these forests. In some cases they are ranked among the forests of public property along with state forests and in other cases they are ranked among private forests. RSGUF are in essence interlinks between state and private

forest ownerships and they combine characteristics of both of these forest ownership categories. For this reason, this category needs to be distinguished, defined, described and compared within the bounds of geographically, historically, politically and economically similar regions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This analysis was carried out with the choice of relevant information sources according to corresponding key words. As a matter of priority, primary information sources were used; secondary sources were used only as an exception. The methods of analysis of available literary sources, conspectus, comparison and interpretation were used to deal with the topic.

Information carried out in this work was searched in reviewed publications and in publications with the impact factor in databases such as Web of Science, EBSCO and Scopus. Furthermore, information available in public, found with the help of web search facilities like Google, were used, since this issue is very often published in overall studies about forests and forestry in each state. Research studies, dissertations, monographs, conference proceedings, overall reports from Ministries which administer forestry in each country, overview and overall studies of institutions which gather information about forestry in each country were considered as relevant sources of information.

As key words were considered appropriate expressions (in particular languages) matching a term "regional self-governing units forests", such as common forests, town forests, communal forests and municipal forests. Defining this ownership category is also connected with terminological disunity, so within bounds of defined terms it was necessary to verify if these terms had been used in required meanings in the texts. Carrying this work out was also complicated by the fact that communal forests are often associated with various ownership groups along with other ownership categories. Most often they are united with forests in the ownership of church, monasteries or other communities (e.g. in Germany). Also terms consistent with so called forest associations were taken into account.

The sources were primarily searched in English and German. If it was impossible to verify the data relevantly, or they were missing completely, also information in other languages was used complementarily, e.g. Romanian and Estonian. Slovakian was used for searching information about RSGUF in Slovak, of course.

Simultaneously, there was an effort to find the most up-to-date information, however in case of description of the development of the certain situation, older publications were also used. Generally, all materials used in this work were not older than fifteen years. Concerning information about a share of RSGUF in each country, there was

an aim to introduce the latest information, mostly from 2010.

Complication connected with placing RSGUF in different ownership categories had to be dealt with searching particular and appropriate information in other available sources. In this contribution abbreviated (geographical) names of countries were used according to the code-list of the Czech Statistics Office.

RESULTS

In the Tab. I there are shares of representation of BRSGU forests in percentages in relation to the total forest area in selected European countries. Beside the representation in percentage there are also shown total forest areas in the ownership of BRSGU (municipalities). Furthermore, the representation in percentage and the total forest area in ownership of HRSGU (regions, etc.) are also shown. Simultaneously, average value representing all selected countries marked as "Europe", for both above mentioned categories is shown.

In the following text situations in some selected countries are described in greater detail. This brief description completes information shown in the Tab. I. More detailed information about the situation in the mentioned countries should be searched in quoted sources, since more detailed description of the situation and relations in each country would be beyond the possible extent of this contribution.

The ownership development of the regional self-governing units forests in Albania

Communal forests in Albania were defined first by the law published in 1923. It stated that forests and pastures in Albania were owned by state, private or municipal entities. In 1945 communal forests covered an area of 16 000 ha, which represented approximately 1.42 % of the total forest area in this country. During the Communist regime all forests and pastures were nationalized and original forms of ownerships were re-established according to the laws from 1992 and 2005 (Muharremaj a coll., 2009), however the real transfer of the forests did not start until 1996 when Albanian government and the World Bank agreed on implementation of the project, which was based on forests administration carried out by rural municipalities. Respectively, it dealt with transfer of the state forests under the administration of RSGU and with preparation of common forest management plans according to the Natural Resource Development Project (Lako, 2008). The aim of the help was: 1) to reduce poverty and develop a rural community, 2) sustainable growth of private sector in hilly and mountain areas, 3) to improve the administration of public farms and establish institutions with special emphasis on the capacity of RSGU and also establish user associations which would maintain sources in both sustainable and transparent way (Male, Anton, 2010).

I: Forest area of regional self-governing units in selected European countries

Country	Forest area					Resources
	basic RSGU		higher RSGU		total in the country	
	%	1 000 ha	%	1 000 ha	1 000 ha	
Czech Republic	17	429	0,2	4	2 594	Zpráva 2010
Albania	38	356	-	-	776	Male, Anton, 2010; Stojanovska, 2009
Belgium	32	223	0	0	694	Schmithüsen, 2010; Nachricht, 2004
Belarus	0	0	0	0	8 600	Report, 2010b
Bosnia and Herzeg.	0	0	-	-	2 720	Stojanovska a kol., 2009
Bulgaria	12	471	0	0	3 927	Voloshyna, Dürr, 2010; Report, 2010c
Montenegro	0	0	0	0	770	Stojanovska a kol., 2009
Denmark	5	29	-	-	534	Report, 2010e
Estonia	0,1	2	-	-	1 726	Aastaraamat, 2010
Finland	2,3	529	0	0	23 311	Schmithüsen, 2010; Table, 2005
France	14	2 393	0,0	234	17 165	Schmithüsen, 2010; Table, 2005
Croatia	0	0	0	0	2 487	Stojanovska a kol., 2009
Italy	22	2	-	-	8759	Table, 2010
Cyprus	0	0	0	0	174	Table, 2005; Report, 2010d
Lithuania	< 1	19	-	-	1 921	Schmithusen a kol., 2000
Latvia	2,3	66	-	-	2 884	Vilkriste, 2011
Luxembourg	33	29	-	-	90	Dokument, 2005; Snapshot, 2008
Hungary	1	20	-	-	2 039	Schmithüsen, 2010; Table, 2005
Macedonia	0	0	0	0	997	Stojanovska a kol., 2009
Moldova	12	46	0	0	375	Botnari a kol., 2011
Germany	20	2 160	30	3 277	11 076	Forstwirtschaft, 2006
Netherlands	16	58	0,2	1	365	Dirkse, 2004; Oldenburger, 2005; Pelkonen, 2000
Norway	2,3	281	0	0	12 000	Schmithüsen, 2010; Table, 2005; Pelkonen, 2000
Poland	0,9	82	0	0	9 121	Schmithüsen, 2010; Paschalis-Jakubowicz, 2006
Portugal	6	352	-	-	5 860	Mendes, 2006; Torres, 2011
Austria	1,9	69	1,4	50	3 887	Report, 2010a, Waldbericht, 2008
Romania	16	1024	1	66	6 573	Starea Pădurilor, 2010; Schmithusen, 2010
Greece	12	468	-	-	3 903	Snapshot, 2008; Pelkonen, 2000; Christopoulou, 2011
Scotland	2	25	-	-	1 341	Voysey, Hollingdale, 2010
Slovakia	10	188	0	0	1 938	Správa, 2009
Slovenia	2	24	0	0	1 217	Resolution, 2008
United Kingdom	0	0	2,8	80	2 881	Schmithüsen, 2010; Wightman, 2012
Serbia	0	0	0	0	2 200	Nonić a kol., 2009, Table, 2005
Spain	1,7	317	23	4 226	18 373	Anuario de Estadística Forestal, 2010
Sweden	2	610	-	-	30 516	Snapshot, 2008; Statistik, 2011
Switzerland	29	361	4,5	56	1 240	Jahrbuch, 2010
Turkey	0	0	0	0	10 729	Giraud, 2011; Report, 2010f
Ukraine	0	0	0	0	9 705	Carter, Voloshyna, 2010
Europe	4,9	10 626	3,7	7 993	215 468	

The transformation concerned:

138 towns (approximately half of the total number of towns) and 1 290 villages,
356 00 ha of forests (38% of the total forest area) (Lako, 2008),
36 district forest service
Ministries of the Environment, Forestry and Water Management (Male, Anton, 2010).

Concurrently during the transformation were established:

138 Forest Users Associations on the municipal level,
10 Regional Communal Forest Federations,
1 National Association of Communal Forest and Pastures of Albania (Male, Anton, 2010).

To carry out the communal forest service, Forest and Pastures Users' Associations were established – they are non-governmental organizations later named as non-profit organizations, which unite all communal forests users according to their territorial jurisdiction. These organizations work on the local level. In 2005 National Association of Communal Forests and Pastures of Albania was established there with the help of Netherlands' Development Agency. This organization represents regional associations on the national level and these associations work further on the regional level (Lako, 2008).

Transferring the forests under the municipal administration led to better management in degraded forests and increased the interest and participation of villages and local state administrations in forestry (Lako, 2008). However, it is mentioned that communal forests and pastures in Albania have low productivity and they are considered as degraded so they are not supposed to bring any incomes to municipal budgets (Muharremaj *et al.*, 2009).

A similar project was started in Kosovo in 2009. Currently, there has been carried out a pilot project concerning 36 villages and new legal scopes are being formed which enable decentralization of ownerships and forest use. The villages neither owned nor had the use of any forests since the Communist fall. The state owns and maintains 60% of the forest area in Kosovo, the rest is private. Aims of the project are similar to those in Albania (Kampen, 2010).

In former Yugoslavia villages owned their forests before WWII, however, after 1990, they show zero numbers concerning the forest areas in their ownership. For example in Serbia, according to official numbers given by ministry, there were 11% of forests in the village ownership in 1926. Unfortunately, it was impossible to find reasons which had caused this state. However, other publications also state that in the area of Balkan Peninsula, the communal forests are recorded only in Albania (Nonić *et al.*, 2009).

The development of forest ownership of regional self-governing units in Bulgaria

The situation of 1947 became relevant for the restitution process of nationalized forest property after 1990.

Before WWII, according to Stoyanov and Stoyanov (2009), villages managed also forests owned by the state with a view filling needs of the villages and their citizens. More than 6 000 villages were in charge of 2 millions ha of forests in this way.

Restitution of the forest property should have been carried out according to the law from 1997, but the implementation did not start until 2001. Nevertheless, this process was officially finished as early as 2009, in accordance with the available information (Stoyanov and Stoyanov, 2009). According to Voloshyn and Dürr (2010), at the present time 530 000 ha of forests are in the ownership of villages, which is about 13% of the total forest area (authors work with the data of FAO from 2005). The size structure of RSGUF rather tends to property of smaller size. More than half of the property is smaller than 500 ha (Cenova, 2010).

Voloshyn and Dürr (2010) also state that these forests are managed by a special department within the bounds of the village structure or by a company with own legal personality, which is subordinate to the village. The management can also be delegated to the state forest enterprise. However, regulation of utilization of non-timber forest products and hunting in RSGUF still lies within the authority of the state forest service. It is a duty of the state forest enterprise to supervise RSGUF.

Regional Self-Governing Units Forests in Germany

The BRSGU in Germany belong in the category of so called forest associations (Körperschaftswald), which, covering 19% of the forest area, is the smallest of the three types of forest ownership (beside the state and private forest ownerships). Overall, this category covers 2 160 189 ha of forests. However, there are quite considerable differences on the regional level.

Approximately 12 500 villages in Germany own about 8 000 pieces of communal forest property in a very different size spectrum. There are great differences between individual federated states concerning the distribution of the size categories of the communal forests; in general there is a high share of small-sized communal forests (Ruppert, 2006).

The smallest municipal forest property in Germany is markedly smaller than 1 ha, in Rheinland-Pfalz for example seven villages own a forest area of 0,1 ha and Rauenstein in Thüringen owns 0.0162 ha of a forest. On the other hand, one of the largest communal forest property in Germany is owned by Waldeck-Frankenberg district which owns 18 500 ha of a forest, from other towns there should be mentioned Berlin with about 28 000

ha of forests and Brilon with 7750 ha of forests. In Germany, average size of the communal forest property (i.e. forest property of villages and church) is about 260 ha (Ruppert, 2006).

A factor, which complicates management of the villages with their property including the forest property, is the financial situation of the villages. Due to enormous debts of German villages, falling tax revenues and increasing expenditures, the communal forests can face considerable financial problems in the future. Permanently deficient municipal budgets call for discussion about communal forest privatization, which means to sell the forests to private owners (Mans, 2010).

Apart from this, the forest management has been less profitable in last years and economic results of forest companies have been falling into red numbers. Consequently, there are changes concerning the communal forests. For example, suitable accounting and controlling systems are being introduced, number of employees is being reduced and some discussions about changes in the organization of the district forest service are being held, for example discussions on establishment of public limited companies or limited liability companies for forest management. In Saarland, Bayern and Sachsen-Anhalt, a separation of the state forest service from the federated forest enterprise managing forests was carried out (Anonymus, 2005). Simultaneously, pressures on increased responsibility of forest owners and reorganization of forest property management are growing stronger. In addition to that, there are thoughts of selling communal forests which often meet strong public opposition. This is also connected to growing pressure on recreational utilization of forests without appropriate financial performance. All these circumstances led to the revision of the federal forest law and on the basis of this fact also forest laws in federated states were revised, this revision also included social utilization of forests (Ruppert, 2006).

The development of forest ownership of regional self-governing units in Romania

Before WWII villages in Romania owned the largest share of forests in the country, the share was about 40% out of the total forest area and after 1948 these forests were nationalized as well as the forests of the other non-governmental owners. However, between 1954–1986 villages were given 500 000 ha to manage (Roaring, 2000). After the Communist fall in December 1989, the government started to form measures to reconstitute the forest lands. This restitution was carried out by three restitution laws during a relatively long time period.

The first part of the restitution was carried out from 1991 to 1999, on the basis of the first restitution law, according to this law, forests were restituted only to private owners (natural persons) in the maximum area of 1ha (Abrudan *et al.*, 2009). The forests were not restituted in the places of the original ownership but mostly on the edge of the forest areas (Vasile,

2009). According to the second restitution law from 2000, all historically communal and town forest property owned before 1948 should be restituted. This time the law followed the historical boundaries of the forest property. The third restitution law from 2005 enables to reconstitute all forests to their original owners with no regard to their size, location or type of ownership (Abrudan *et al.*, 2009).

In 2010 the share of communal forests increased up to 16%, which represents 827 963 ha of the forests and the average area of the forest property of BRSGU (508,26 ha) is, in comparison with other Eastern European countries, unusually high (Report, 2010c).

The development of regional self-governing units forests in Slovakia

At the present time communal forests cover 187 955 ha, which represents 9.7% of the total forest area in Slovakia. The process of restitution of forest property after 1989 was not completed in 2009 yet; unresolved property of towns and villages represents 2 035ha. On the other hand, the forest area which is run by the villages themselves has been increasing. According to the latest information, villages manage 175 645 ha of the forest lands (9.1 %), the rest of the forests in the ownership of villages is run for example by schools or by the state enterprise Forests of the Slovak Republic (Správa, 2010). The information about a size structure is full of contradictions. Správa o lesnom hospodárstve (2009) states that 439 requests for restitution of communal forest property were settled in the affirmative, which represents 200 210 ha. However, this information does not correspond with the information about the forest area in the ownership of villages, even though it comes from the same source. On the other hand, according to the information units, 91 community owners manage 90% of the total communal forests area (Správa, 2009; Siet, 2008).

In the same way as in the Czech Republic, where organization SVOL (Association of Communal and Private Forests Owners) was established, in Slovakia the Association of Communal Forests of the Slovak Republic (ZOL SR) was established in 1994, which currently associates not only owners of the communal forests but also owners of the non-governmental forests and the legal entities managing forests. Members of this association own 73% of the communal forest area in Slovakia (Združenie, 2012). It is possible to find out that villages manage their forests in most cases either in terms of department (division) of the municipal office (concerning smaller areas of forest property) or with the help of a legal entity, a limited liability company, whose majority or exclusive owner is the village. Just in some exceptional cases, a public limited company or an institution receiving contributions from the State Budget are established to manage the communal forest property (Združenie, 2012). Consequently, it is obvious that there is a larger number of communal forest properties covering an area of over 500 ha. For

example, forest property of a city of Košice used to be the largest city property in Hungary and today, with an area of 19 432 ha, it is the second largest forest property in central Europe (Košice, 2012).

The regional self-governing units forests in Switzerland

Three quarters of Swiss forests are in the private ownership¹ (71%, i.e. 894 743 ha). However, this proportion differs in each district (Waldbericht, 2005). Forests in the ownership of so called political communities (Politische Gemeinden)² represent about 29% of the total forest area. Besides these forests, there is one quite specific type of ownership called "forests inherited by a group of owners", where the ownership is shared by a group of families (Bürgergemeinden)³, whose ancestors came from the same locality (village). This type of owners manages about 30% of the total forest area. Forests are also owned by HRSGU, in this case by 26 cantons. The forest area managed by them covers 5% of the total area. Switzerland (federation) owns less than 1% of the forest area – these are protected areas of nationwide significance (Schwitter, Oberholze, 2011; Jahrbuch, 2010).

In the past, communal forests were mainly sources of community income or they provided other benefits for citizens, for example a possibility to buy firewood for a discounted price, a possibility to graze cattle in the communal forests or a possibility to have Christmas trees free of charge. In some cases, households got certain payments coming from the profit of communal forest management. At the present time, managing the communal forests is more a duty than a source of income, because of a low purchase price of wood. Sometimes, inappropriate cultivation practices or over-logging even come from this situation, just to keep economical affectivity of this forest property. Therefore a supervision of the Forest Service is necessary on the canton level. Communal forests are still sources of firewood, however a production of forest chips is more common, because it is used for public building heating (Schwitter, Oberholze 2011).

Regional self-governing units forests in the Ukraine

At the present time all forests in the Ukraine are administered by various state institutions (mainly by ministries and the state forest enterprise). Nevertheless, there is a legal regulation according to which municipalities have proprietary rights to forests. This regulation states that forest lands can be transferred from the state to municipal administration (by territorial associations) or to self-governing organizations established by municipalities. This has not been put into practice yet, just in some regions communal enterprises dealing with forest products processing have been established (Carter, Voloshyna, 2010).

However, there was a project established in the last few years, which should support the interest to participate in making decisions about local forests on RSGU level, both higher (they may be compared to districts in the Czech Republic) and basic, therefore municipalities. The participation should be implemented through the chance to influence a form and content of the analogy with forestry plans, which should also mention, among other things, decisions concerning interests of villages and citizens of the selected region. One of these aims should be for example securing firewood for local communities or forest preservation around tourist areas or development of rural tourism as a source of living for citizens of the region (Carter, Voloshyna, 2010).

DISCUSSION

The data were searched in a wide range of publications and unfortunately it was not possible to ensure their time consistency. Consequently, there was an effort to get the up-to-date data. Availability of the information is in many countries given by the share of RSGUF, or by communal forests in a broader sense of word, on the total forest area of the selected country. In countries, where RSGUF are represented in a small extent (e.g. Poland, Northern European countries, etc) gathering information is problematic. However, the situation in Western European countries such as in France and Belgium is similar, as it was not successful to gather relevant information there, even though the share of RSGUF is rather high. In this case, it is probable that the complication

1 To the category of public ownership belong Swiss federation, cantons, political municipalities, forests inherited by a group of citizens, corporations, cooperatives, churches and monasteries. Remaining 28% of forests are owned by private owners.

2 Politische Gemeinde (political municipality) is an analogy with villages carrying on so called general competence in commune matters. In some cantons these municipalities are called Einwohner-, Orts- or Munizipalgemeinden, in canton of Appenzell they are called Bezirk. Towns are also political municipalities. As of January 1st, 2012, there were 2 495 political municipalities in Switzerland. Source: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politische_Gemeinde.

3 Bürgergemeinde is a statutory corporation that includes everyone who is a citizen of a commune and has the home right in that commune regardless of where they may currently live. In some cantons these corporations are also called Bürger-, Ortsbürger-, or Ortsgemeinde and in some cantons they do not exist at all. Source: <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bürgergemeinde>.

was caused by language incompatibility since the information was gathered in German and English. Southern European countries are included in the table 1 mostly due to the complexity reasons. Since the historical development, way of management and natural conditions are very different there, it would be complicated to possibly compare them with the situation in the Czech Republic.

In case of comparison of the development and situation of RSGUF in Eastern Europe, it is possible to state that in most of these countries the process of restitution of communal forest property has finished. If the restitution process started, it is either fully completed or it is necessary to complete some isolated specific cases which have been the subjects of legal actions. The process of restitution differs in each country. In this regard, the Czech Republic ensured relatively high-quality process of restitution of the common property, even though it has not been fully completed yet. It can be stated on the basis of comparison with e.g. Romania, where the process of forests restitution was very complicated, or with Bulgaria where some protracted lawsuits have been carried out, or in Albania where the beginning of the real transfer was financed by the World Bank. Also the cases of Serbia and other countries of former Yugoslavia are very interesting, because the restitution of forest property has not been implemented there at all.

Consequently, there is a valuable experience, which it is possible to learn and take advantage from. For example in Albania, all communal owners are associated in regional associations, which are supervised by the national association which puts the interests of communal forests through.

In Western European countries the continuity of village property management was not disrupted by transferring the property under the state administration, as it happened in the countries of the former Eastern Block, which were for some decades under the influence of the Soviet Union. Despite this fact they also deal with similar problems while managing their forest property as Czech RSGU forests do. It concerns particularly the economic side of the management when due to the wood price decline it is very complicated to secure balanced or profitable management. At the same time there is a pressure on providing extra-production functions of forests, mainly the recreation functions which are not naturally compensated in any way. The economical situation in Europe is another aspect, which also influences financial management of the municipalities. They have to deal with increasing indebtedness and must require financial

contribution to their municipal budgets or at least balanced management from the forests owners. Due to this situation, thoughts about selling RSGUF get a more realistic form, even though there is a strong public opposition, which is for example in Germany very proud of communal forests ownership.

There is a significant difference between information about RSGUF in Western and Eastern European countries. These differences are particularly in availability, amount and informative value of the data about forest property management of RSGU. Whereas data in Eastern European countries are traceable only partly and in very complicated way, particularly economic data, in Germany and Switzerland the data are very rich, clear and easily available. And what is more they are comparable thanks to the unified methods used while gathering the data within the bounds of cooperation between Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

In the field of finding and publishing economic data about the forest management, the Czech Republic is on a higher level than the other Eastern European countries. However, it would be very beneficial to have a chance to compare the management in RSGUF not only within the Czech Republic and within the bounds of other types of ownership, but also in RSGUF of other countries. It is their specific position on the edge of state and private ownership, which predetermines a wide range of requirements on RSGUF from both the municipalities and the public in the environmental, economical and social fields.

CONCLUSION

The share of forest properties of RSGU on the total forest areas varies largely in each European country from the non-existence of such forest property to the numbers exceeding 38% as in Albania. The information published about this type of forest ownership also differs. In Eastern European countries information mostly about the process of restitution is published, on the other hand in Western European countries the information about economic results of forest management of RSGU is published. In comparison with the forests of RSGU in other Eastern European countries, it can be stated that the process of forest restitution to original owners was pursued relatively fast, comprehensively and successfully. On the other hand there is obvious lack of information about economy of management in these forests in comparison with Western European countries.

SUMMARY

The article focuses on identification, analysis, description and comparison of the share of regional self-governing units (RSGU) forests in selected European countries and compares it with the situation of these forests in the Czech Republic. The study was carried out with the choice of relevant information

sources according to corresponding key words. The methods of analysis of available literary sources, conspectus, comparison and interpretation were used to deal with the topic.

The results of available sources analysis are summarized in the table 1, which shows percentage share of forests of regional self-governing units in the relation to the total forest area of particular countries, and also the area of these forests and the total area of forests in the particular country. The share of forest properties of basic regional self-governing units from the total area of forests varies largely in each European country from the non-existence of such forest property for example in Serbia to the numbers exceeding 30% as in Belgium. The information about the representation of higher regional self-governing units is available with difficulties. It was found out only in certain countries (e.g. Rumania or Austria). In the contrast on the contrary this information could not be found or was available with difficulties in countries such as Italy. The difference is similar to basic RSGU with the zero amounts of this ownership category occurring more frequently. The share of the forests of regional self-governing units in the Czech Republic can be considered as substantial in the comparison with other countries. On contrary the share of forests in the property of regions (higher RSGU) is negligible, as well as in the majority of other European countries except Germany, where the share of these forests is even twice as higher than in the basic RSGU.

The information about forests management by these owners also differs. Especially information on the process and result of restitution of the forests to their former owners, which started after 1990 in Eastern European countries, exist. In Western European countries the information about economic results of forest management of regional self-governing units is published. It can be stated that the process of forest restitution to villages was pursued relatively fast, comprehensively and successfully. On the other hand there is obvious lack of information about economy of management in these forests in comparison with Western European countries.

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