Forest recreation in policy and legislation - a European comparison

by Carsten Mann

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‘Forest Recreation & Tourism Serving Urbanised Societies’
Outline

1 Introduction & Background information
2 Study objectives
3 Methodological approach
4 Reflection of outdoor recreation
5 Discussion & Conclusions
Introduction & Background

Changes in the recreational situation

- Outdoor recreation gained societal importance
  - rapid social changes &
  - changes in EU land-use policy
- High & diverse visitor demands
- Limited area (*resource*)
- Challenge recreation management

→ Reflected & concretised in policy?
Study objectives

To analyse…

1. What is the status of recreation demand & supply inventories as well as monitoring in policy & legislation?
2. What are differences & commonalities (EU comparison)?
3. Is there a need for harmonisation & standardisation?

To provide…

➔ Insights into various national policy setting & legislation
➔ Arguments for recreation inventories & monitoring
Methodological approach

- **COST Action E33 consortium**
  - 18 participating countries
  - e-mail questionnaire (*type & extend of recognition*)

- **Literature review: EU & national policy documents**
  - Forest/Forestry-related
  - other domains (*e.g. nature protection; landscape*)
  - best knowledge of country representatives

- **Analysis & synthesis by working group 2**
  - geographic levels (*EU, national*)
  - type & domain (*policy - legislation, forestry - others*)
Reflection of outdoor recreation

1. (Pan-) European documents

- **Forest / Forestry-related**
  - Report of MCPFE, related SFM-Criteria + Indicators
  - EC ‘Council regulation 1257/199’ (Improvement of ecological and social values of public forests)
  - EU Forest Action Plan
  - recreation = forest function, for societal ‘well-being’

- **Landscape-related**
  - European Landscape Convention, Florence
  - recreation = driving force for landscape transformation
  - adaptation of national measures for landscape planning
1. (Pan-) European documents

- Forestry-related documents are homogeneous

- **common aims**
  - measure & improve Sustainable Forest Management
  - strengthen Europe wide cooperation & coordination

- **‘outdoor recreation’ as content**
  - all address importance of social function
  - MCPFE: *most concrete for measures*
  - Forest Action Plan: *need for monitoring*
  - need for recreation inventories & -monitoring *not* stated
2. National policy documents

- **National Forest Programs** (*MCPFE*)
  - 14/18 have implemented NFP / in progress
  - 11/14 outdoor recreation as one objective
    - need to provide recreation opportunities
    - need for participatory planning methods

- **State Forestry Programs**
  - 2/18 have ‘State Forestry Programs’ (*Sweden, Norway*)
  - cover recreation & social well-being
2. National policy documents

- NFP assign different priorities & obligations for recreation

  - **Northern European countries**
    - low forest cover; large distance to urban areas
    - relatively higher priority
    - including objectives & regulations
      (e.g. DK, the Netherlands, UK)

  - **Central & Southern European countries**
    - general statements
    - stay vague in proposing actions
Reflection of outdoor recreation

3. National legislation documents

- mission to provide services for the public
- regulation of access

- Forest legislation
  - all 18 countries implemented a forest law
  - 12 refer to provide recreation possibilities (*public task*)
  - 9/12 include access regulations (*mainly free access*)
  - planning = prerequisite for recreation management
  - 6 do not mention recreation (*Northern countries*)
3. National legislation documents

- 11 countries further legislative covering recreation

  - Nature Protection/Conservation Legislation
    - sustainable provision of recreation opportunities
    - limitations of access (activities, ownership, protection)

  - ‘Everyman’s right’, ‘Allmende’
    - to experience nature & outdoors (e.g. Finland, Sweden)

  ➔ a need for recreation inventories & -monitoring not stated
Reflection of outdoor recreation

4. Other national policy documents

- heterogeneous in type and country

- **broader context** of environment & economy
  - development of rural areas
  - landscape spatial policy *(e.g. Netherlands, Belgium)*

- **woodlands/urban areas**
  - social benefits for communities
  - countries with fewer forests *(e.g. UK, Ireland)*
5. Monitoring of outdoor recreation

- **EU-level**
  - need for general forest monitoring
  - harmonising monitoring activities
    
    (*IPF & IFF + MCPFE work on adaptation*)

- **National-level**
  - Implementation of forest monitoring varies strongly
  - 5 countries mention ‘recreation monitoring’ needs
    
    (*Northern & Central nations: DK, F, FIN, GER, CH*)
  - no standardised ways to measure recreation
Discussion & Conclusions

- The importance of outdoor recreation (access & quality) for societal well being & SFM is stated in several European policies, serving as guidelines for national forest policy formulation.

- Most countries recognize & express the denotation of outdoor recreation in a political / legislative way, but contradictions exist between expressed importance and non-binding commitments.

- Hampering might be less national (real) political willingness and / or a lack of (financial) resources.

- A lack of visitor information and management methodology are among the main hindering factors for effective recreation policy, planning and management in the light of rapid social changes.
Discussion & Conclusions

There is a need to…

- Identify key topics for recreation information, which support sustainable forest use and which secure equal recreation opportunities, to improve the status of forest recreation.

- Produce consistent and comparable recreation information to detect use/user changes over time. Standardized contents & harmonized methods could then provide a sound decision basis for recreation resource allocation & achieve good quality of life.

- Launching a European research project & forming a working group seem a consequent step to develop a common information basis and a standardized EU recreation monitoring program.
Thank you!