

KOSOVO

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Summary of climate change dimensions

Introduction

This report provides a general description of forestry conditions in Kosovo, as well the impact of global climate change on forestry. Baseline data on topics such as forest vitality, health and yield, all of which are important to show the impact of global climate change on forest resources, are not available. Only one inventory, with the primary object of monitoring and assessing standing volume, quality classes and yield, has been undertaken, in 2002–2003, covering both private and public forest areas. This remains the only available national data. A second inventory, which was supposed to be undertaken within 5 years, could not be done because of lack of budget. The data existing on forestry in-country is insufficient to analyse change in forest health, yield and mortality.

After 1999, forestry in Kosovo was supported by various international donors, with the primary objectives of institutional capacity building, organization and training. Reflecting the recent conflict in the country, the priorities for government institutions were in other fields, such as infrastructure, rebuilding war-damaged housing, and health concerns. Apart from lack of human resources, limited budgets preclude the possibility of undertaking research activities and monitoring in the forestry sector.

In 2006, the Kosovo Forestry Agency, through the support of the Norwegian Government, developed methodology for preparation of management plans (10-year plans), where some 40 000 ha of public forests was covered out of the total 278 000 ha. The results show the extent of dead trees, which is approximately 2.3% of total volume. The reason could be either climate change or inappropriate management. The majority of Kosovo's forests are unthinned, so there is urgent need for thinning activities. High tree density in forests might be the reason for dead wood. In the absence of previous time-series data, no comparison can be made.

Kosovo is a country in development with a simple economy. As the primary energy source for the country is coal, future economic development can be expected to lead to increased CO₂ emissions. There is no data regarding GHG emissions. The only data that might be used as a source of information are data from 1985–1989, but that is outdated in view of the political, social and economic changes since then. There is no study or related research on this subject. Kosovo is not a Party to UNFCCC. It is crucial that, in the near future, Kosovo should establish a body responsible for policy-making and which would be responsible for actions on climate change.

Kosovo has to start preparation of an action plan for forest protection against illegal activities. With political changes in the country, Kosovo has also to implement responsibilities that derive from the Kyoto Protocol. However, this will require strengthening of the organization and human resources of institutions, and technical capacity building. Law enforcement activities will need to be supported by funds from government and possibly also through international donor support. An immediate positive impact would derive from measures such as using biomass as an energy source, an area where Kosovo has little experience, even though there are plenty of resources for biomass production. There is a big area of forest classed as coppice forest, which needs urgent treatment to improve quality and optimize possible production. The main products from this type of forest are small diameter timber which can be used for biomass production. To achieve this, best practices from other countries need to be introduced, as well appropriate technology, since there is no local expertise. In the end, there is the need to establish a regular monitoring system, such as a national forest inventory, to monitor adaptation to the effects of climate change.

Current situation in forestry and biodiversity

Information about Kosovo

Kosovo is located in southeastern Europe, and is characterized by its central position in the Balkan Peninsula, being surrounded by Albania, Macedonia (FYR), Serbia and Montenegro. The country is a geographical basin, with a total land area of 10 877 km², situated at an altitude of about 500 m, surrounded by mountains and divided by a central north–south ridge into two subregions of roughly equal size and population. It enjoys a continental climate, with temperatures ranging from -20°C during the winter to +40°C during the summer. Average annual rainfall is 720 mm. In the western areas (Peja, Gjakova), precipitation increases to between 900 and 1000 mm, while areas in the north (Mitrovica) and centre and east (Pristina, Lipjan) are considerably drier, with annual average precipitation of circa 600 mm. Most rainfall occurs during the May-June and October-January periods. February, March and August are the driest months.

Kosovo has a varied geology that ranges in age from the Neo-Proterozoic to the Holocene. The geology is characterized by substantial structural features on a regional scale, including normal faulting and thrusting. Soils are relatively free-draining and fertile, with an average pH value of 6. Overall the conditions for forestry are quite favourable, with no pronounced dry periods or other extreme conditions.

Forestry and biodiversity

The national forest inventory, which was completed in 2003, estimated the total forest area to be 464 800 ha, or 42% of the land area. Some 278 880 ha are public forest lands and under the control of the Kosovo Forest Agency (KFA), which is organized into six geographical regions. The KFA has a regulatory function in relation to the 185 920 ha of private forest lands. Broadleaved forest, created through natural seeding, accounts for more than 90% of the forest area, with the main species being oak and beech. Coniferous forest, covering 7% of the total forest area, is dominated by *Abies alba*, *Picea abies* and *Pinus* spp.

The total standing volume on public forestlands was estimated at 33.5 million m³ and in private forests circa 19.5 million m³. The gross annual increment is approximately 1.3 million m³. The inventory estimated the annual allowable cut as being of the order of 900 000 m³ gross, corresponding to 77% of the calculated increment on the areas surveyed. About 700 000 m³ would be harvested in high forest and about 200 000 m³ in low forest. The main harvesting operations in Kosovo are cleaning and thinning. The road infrastructure is relatively poor, with a low road density and lack of maintenance in recent years. This has resulted in harvesting concentrating in areas with easy access and increasingly the allowable volume is located in remote areas where access is difficult. Official harvesting is currently some 200 000 m³ per annum. Since the war, the majority of timber harvested is used for fuelwood and this is the main source of heating, even in some urban areas. The demand for fuelwood is currently great and some analysts estimate that the national requirement is close to 1 million m³ per annum.

Afforestation in Kosovo has averaged around 240 ha per annum in recent years and is mainly of coniferous species. There is one forest nursery, in Peja, under the control of the Forest Research Institute, which produces circa 700 000 seedlings annually. The main species are pines (*Pinus Nigra* and *Pinus sylvestris*), spruce (*Picea abies*) and Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga taxifolia*). Each year KFA allocate some 10% of seedling production to the private sector. Continued planting of coniferous species in future should be reconsidered with regard to stability if climate change affects ecosystems. To date the success of afforestation has at best been considered as mixed, whether undertaken by KFA or the private sector.

A 2001 Forest Sector Study concluded that the annual value of products and other benefits from forests and forest lands was in the range of € 50–75 million. The current contribution of the forestry sector to GDP is estimated at between 1.8% and 2.6%. The inventory estimated that some 40% of public forests and 29% of private forests have been subject to uncontrolled or illegal harvesting activities. The inventory results also confirm expert opinions that coppice forest, especially public owned, is exposed to heavy harvesting for fuelwood. The results also show that many young and middle-aged forests are in urgent need of management interventions, ranging from cleaning and pre-commercial thinning to commercial thinning.

Forests are a key resource for the economic, social and environmental well-being of the people of Kosovo. A high proportion of Kosovo's biodiversity is forest based, and forest management will have a key future role in meeting Natura 2000 network requirements under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. Forests are also diverse ecosystems. They provide a wide range of important habitats, give shelter, reduce the levels of CO₂ in the atmosphere, act as "green lungs" in urban areas, add to the diversity of the landscape and ultimately to the quality of life. Forests are also a source of non-wood products. These include wild fungi, berries, fruits, nuts and the products derived from them (jams, jelly, juices, etc.), honey, sand, gravel and stone/minerals. There are also possibilities to develop hunting and agro-cum-eco-tourism. The multiple benefits of forests can only be assured if they are managed wisely and in line with principles of sustainable forest management (SFM).

Forest management

The management plans in most public forest areas have expired and valid ones are outdated. The ministry every year produces new management plans (for approximately 8 000 ha) through its own budget, but budget limitations prevent more expansive plans. In future years, as management plans are prepared for the publicly owned forest areas, it will be possible to use the data. However, in private forestry there is lack of best practices for forest management, even though some 40% of the total forest area in Kosovo is private property.

Illegal activities in both public and private forests are a big challenge for the future of forestry. A national strategy is needed to stop illegal activities and to find the best solution. Most old forest has been cut, where the average age of forest from the national forest inventory is between 40 and 50 years old. There is an urgent need for silviculture treatment to improve the quality of growing stock.

Since the main biodiversity in Kosovo is in the forest, the exact location of biodiversity hotspots is unknown. Those areas should be mapped with coordinates, after inventorying them. This will help forest operator to pay special attention to those areas during harvesting and extraction of timber from forest areas.

Legislation and policies

The law that is in force and that directly affects the forest sector is Law No.2003/3, on Forests in Kosovo. So far the new law has been complemented by seven Administrative Directives, and a Wildlife Management Law. The new legislation defines the mandate, responsibilities and tasks of the different actors involved in forestry. The new law provides a basis for sustainable forest management and efficient forest land use. In general, the new law is built on principles of major global policies on sustainable forest management, such as: a precautionary approach, conservation of biological diversity, intergenerational equity and ecologically sustainable development, as set forth in Annex III to the Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) (Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992). Based on such criteria, all international communities of democratic society with a free market economy system, including both developed and developing countries, should try to adjust their forest management systems. A similar effort is proceeding in Kosovo.

According to the law in force: *“the forests of Kosovo are a national resource. It shall be managed in such a way as to provide a valuable yield and at the same time preserve biodiversity. Forest management shall also take into account other public interests.”*

The new law on forestry is of great importance for the forest sector in Kosovo. The new law incorporates disclosure, transparency and sustainability in forest management, as well as new approaches, and a move toward free market-oriented economy in forestry. The main actors identified for the forestry sector in Kosovo are the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD) Forestry Department (FD) and the Kosovo Forest Agency (KFA), with its regional and municipal units. Other relevant stakeholders in the sector are various NGOs (Association of Wood Processors of Kosovo; Association of Private Forest Owners; Association of Forestry Engineers; Era-association; Ecological Association Prizren; Hunters' Association; etc.), Private Operative Contractors, Courts, Kosovo Police Service (KPS), non-wood product collectors and local communities. Stakeholders' activities have been minimal until now, despite their role and responsibilities to represent and address the interest of the members regarding sustainable forest management through coordination, advice and general support in the interests of the members at national level. They are at the initial stage of their growth. So, under the present circumstances, they do not represent a strong lobby that can influence the decision-making process. The situation must be changed rapidly in the near future.

If Kosovo's forest resources are managed in a sustainable way, then it is possible to fulfil most of the needs of population for fuelwood and possibly lumber as well (the needs of the population for lumber wood are not known due to the absence of any assessments). At the moment, domestic production capacities are not exploited as much as they should, due to the lack of management plans and lack of road infrastructure, as well as neglect through limited financial commitment to forest activities by the government.

One of the most urgent needs for the forest sector in Kosovo is to compose a “Strategy and Policy on Development for Forests”. Due to the lack of any development strategy in the forest sector, many problems arise, especially for the department planning management, and problems due to the lack of a strategy have ramifications for the whole forest planning and exploitation process. The cost of drafting managing plans, plans for opening new roads, the inclusion of the needs and interests of the community, and that of the wood processing sector, all of these problems are closely linked to the development of the forest strategy. Thus, MAFRD and KFA need technical and financial assistance from investors in order to develop a comprehensive forest strategy.

The Law on Nature Conservation (2006/22) is the principal legal instrument that governs nature conservation and biodiversity in Kosovo. There are also other laws that regulate activities related to nature conservation and biodiversity. A list of relevant laws is given below:

- Law on Nature Conservation (2006/22)
- Law on Protection of Environment (2003/9)
- Law on Water (2004/41)
- Law on Spatial Planning (2003/30)
- Law on National Park Sharri Mountain (1986)
- Law on Forests (2003/6), (2004/40)
- Law on Hunting (2006/41)
- Law on Fishery and Aquaculture (2006/58)
- In addition there are a number of administrative instructions on:
- Evaluation of Environment Impact (No.09/2004-MESP)
- Form and manner of maintaining a Central Register of nature conservation zones (No.04/2006-MESP, September 2006)

- Marking method of nature conservation zones (No.01/07-MESP, December 2006)
- Issuance of ecological permit (No.26/05-MESP, 07.11.2005)
- Licensing individuals and enterprises for drafting evaluation report on environment impacts (No.03/2004-MESP)
- Criteria for identification of water conservation areas and measures for conservation of drinking water resources (No.13/07-MESP)
- Implementation of Law on spatial planning on main elements of plan content for areas of special importance (No.2005/42-MESP, 04.03.2005)
- Decisions on conservation areas (a total of 75 habitats).

Status of assessment and research on climate change

Capacity and research institutions

Kosovo governmental institutions do not have sufficient budget and capacity for monitoring forest resources in terms of impact of climate change. Before 1999 in Kosovo, the main data collection for research purposes were done by forestry research institutes, including inventory, health monitoring and other research in forestry within the country. Most professionals engaged in the activities were from the Forestry Institute in Belgrade, which was the main body for data processing and data analysis. After 1999, there were few forestry experts in the country. Beside the lack of human resources, the Institute has very small budget, and the main activities have been seedling production. During reorganization of the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD), there have also been changes in forestry. Today the forestry institute no longer exists. Most professional activities such as forest inventory or forest management planning are done by private professional companies.

There is one professional private company currently licensed by MAFRD, which provides extension services for KFA. This company is specialized and well equipped with modern technology, such as GIS and remote sensing, with well trained staff for inventory, management planning and monitoring. Their activities depend on the budget available to government institutions, which sometime are very low. All management plans based on the procurement law in Kosovo should be executed through tendering with private contractors, as well other measures like national forest inventory or harvesting operation.

Projects and research

Forestry in Kosovo has passed through many challenges. Since 1990, forest resources have been overused. The same situation continued during and after the war. Most forest operations were in the most accessible areas, while remote areas with no road access were ignored. There have been some investments, mainly in increasing technical capacities, but no major investment. Government institutions have very little budget to support forestry, which means forestry is not a priority.

Within the last 10 years several projects have been implemented in the forestry sector to improve management, based on EU standards, including:

- Emergency phase in Forestry (1999–2003)
- National Forest Inventory (2002–2003)
- Forest management planning with GIS (2006–continuing)
- Sustainable forest management
- Forest certification (2008–continuing)
- Forest Industry Challenges of Development and Balanced Use

Emergency phase in forestry

Through FAO after the war in 1999, an emergency phase in forestry project was implemented. The objective was to support Kosovo in establishing government institutions and reorganizing the forestry sector in Kosovo. The other outputs of this project were preparation of a forestry law as well as legislation on hunting. This project supported the drafting of forest policy and strategy, while the hunting strategy has been finalized and approved.

National Forest Inventory

The National Forest Inventory was undertaken during the period 2002–2003, through FAO with Swedish government funding. It provides valuable information on Kosovo's forests in terms of ownership and location, forest type and species, growing stock and increment, treatment required (e.g. thinning), and allowable harvesting levels. The data, although collected six years ago, still represents the most up to date and comprehensive data available for both public and private forests. In past, data at national level was derived from management plans, in the absence of any national forest inventory database. The aim of this project was to establish a regularly updated inventory to be taken every 5 years, but this did not occur, primarily because there was no budget provision for the activity and it was regarded as of low priority. Continuing the national forest inventory will help government institutions and private businesses to know what is happening in the national forests, what potentials for income are and how nature is being protected. Based on a national forest inventory in 1/3 of the forest area in Kosovo, illegal harvesting is a challenge for the country. Inventory would provide updated information about forest protection and health monitoring if it is taken further, as was planned. This inventory for the first time in Kosovo inventoried also private forest areas.

The inventory methodology should be updated to incorporate data showing the effects of climate change, including species distribution, forest vitality, mortality and yield. The inventory permanent sample plots should be regularly evaluated and should be funded through the Kosovo budget or international donor support. This is only way to build a forest information system in Kosovo that will provide data for national and international needs.

Forest Management Planning with GIS

The last forest management plans in Kosovo were produced in 1996 by the Forest Research Institute in Belgrade. After the war, due to numerous legal and illegal activities, the forest situation has changed drastically and most forest management plans have become outdated. There was an urgent need to apply modern methodology for forest management preparation. This new methodology has to incorporate advanced technology beyond inventory, which will help KFA advance use of those plans. Due to limited capacity in Kosovo, there was a need for outside support.

Through support of the Norwegian government, a project "Forest management planning with GIS" was started. There is only one private company in the country with the capacity to produce management plans applying the new methodology. The Ministry every year prepares new management plans (for approximately 8 000 ha) with its own budget, but does not have resources to cover a greater area.

In private forest (some 40% of total forest area in Kosovo) there is a lack of best practices in forest management. There are no management plans for private forest areas and there is an urgent need to support this sector with management best practices.

Management plan methodology is now very modern, incorporating all concepts of sustainable forest management. All data collected and final management plans are available as digital GIS and as hard (printed) copy. In addition to growing stock, all trees cut illegally are estimated and

volume calculated for the last 5 years. Dead standing timber volume is also calculated. The new management planning methodology differs from the old system, which makes it impossible to compare data to assess climate change impact. Areas of high conservation value, water resources and animal habitats are recorded and delineated on the maps.

Sustainable forest management

The main objectives of this project were to:

- introduce forestation at community and household levels to diversify rural farm activity;
- develop commercial forestry management within Kosovo's national parks;
- define areas and zones matching Natura 2000 criteria;
- support the implementation of new legislation on wildlife management and hunting; and
- support the establishment of a silvicultural thinning programme.

This project was supported by EU funds, where the best practices of EU forest management have been introduced. Beyond best practice in forest management, biodiversity and potential for woody biomass have been analysed. The period of this project was short and there is need for continuation of some activities to improve the current situation in the forestry sector and environment. Most components of this project are linked with climate change. The project's terms of reference included afforestation of privately owned, unused or degraded land. In a country which has 42% forest cover (cf. EU average of 34%, Bulgaria 33%, Britain 12% and Ireland 10%), afforestation should perhaps not be given high priority. Additionally, the reduction in traditional grazing has meant that areas are becoming reforested naturally by native trees of local provenance.

It takes at least three years from planning an afforestation programme (year 1: planning, collecting, and treating seed; years 2 and 3: growing the seedlings in the nursery; and years 3 or 4: undertaking afforestation activities). The project was only of 2 years duration, so it was impossible to plan and then grow suitable seedlings in the forest nursery. In the project design there was no budget to allow for purchase of seedlings from outside of Kosovo.

The Indicative Forest Strategy (IFS) prepared by the project identified mainly species for afforestation different from those grown in the KFA forest nursery and Peja. The IFS approach was to identify the right species for planting in the right places. Due to the time lag, the afforestation undertaken by the project had to be done utilizing species available in the nursery in Peja. However, the project still managed to establish the methodology, undertake planting with private land owners, prepare training materials, train participants and to identify the changes in practice and investments required for the nursery.

Since in Kosovo most rural areas are using wood for heating during winter, there is pressure even in the national parks. Several meetings with relevant stakeholders and with institutions responsible for management of protected areas have shown the need to make available a supply of fuelwood for communities living in national parks. The main activities will be within the sustainable use zone. Harvesting operations will be orientated to a mixed species, more natural approach, with selective silviculture treatment to make the forest less susceptible to the effects of wind, snow and pests and diseases, as well as enriching biodiversity in the forest. Through these activities there will be benefit for community through both job creation and fuelwood supply.

The sustainable management forest programme identified a lack of the scientific data and expertise required to identify Natura 2000 sites. Based on existing data sets and research, the project has significantly increased awareness of Natura 2000 in the relevant institutions and with stakeholders. At the same time, a good start has been made with identification of hotspot sites. However, now the hotspot sites have been identified, there are a number of steps that need to be

taken in terms of undertaking the necessary scientific surveys and establishing a nature protection system conforming to international conventions and agreements (e.g. UN Convention on Biological Diversity; the Berne Convention; the EU Birds and Habitat Directives). This will help forest managers to pay particular attention to the sites when they undertake forest operations. The Red List of species needing protection has been identified for Kosovo.

Almost 60% of the forest area in Kosovo is coppice forest, as a result of coppice rotation for fuelwood. The quality and production potential of those forest is not used. They are characterized by dense stands (>10 000 stems/ha). Increment is only 1.3 m³/ha, whereas the soil quality provides the potential for better increment and better quality production. Most activities in this type of forest are pre-commercial thinning, which needs investment. The activities were organized with the adjacent communities. As payment for thinning, the product extracted from the forest was given free to the people. This is a win-win situation: the forests benefit from the silvicultural treatment, and the people benefit from the fuelwood (thereby reducing demand for illegally sourced supplies). More than 100 000 ha of forests needs such thinning activities. Taking into consideration the amount of illegal harvesting, the product extracted can be used to supply the community with fuelwood or for biomass production. Implementation of thinning activities in the rest of the forest area requires both staff and financing.

Thinning of forests will increase tolerance to drought and resistance to wildfire or pests, contribute to *in situ* genetic conservation of species, assist migration of species to suitable habitat, provide wildlife corridors to facilitate animal migration, and contribute to improved hydrology.

The potential of many National Forests to store additional carbon over the short and medium term is limited because many areas have too many small trees, making forests more susceptible to wildfire, pests and disease. Management activities can reduce the number of small trees, allowing the remaining trees to grow larger, improving ecosystem health and reduce the risk of damaging wildfire. Several policies and strategies, such as the Restoration Policy Framework, provide guidelines for managers. However, the management practices designed to restore forests and grasslands and protect communities (through thinning, fuelwood supply, and controlled burning) are likely, at least in the short to medium term, to reduce total carbon stocks below current levels. However, not taking action to improve ecological health will probably result in substantially lower carbon stocks and substantially increased carbon emissions in the future as a result of severe wildfires and losses from pests and disease.

Forest certification (2008 and continuing)

USAID, Kosovo cluster business support project, with its main objective being support to private businesses in Kosovo, found that secondary wood processing in the private sector needs to certify products for export to EU countries. In 2008, the project started initial activities toward forest certification, in close cooperation with MAFRD and KFA. The main activities so far have been training of local Kosovo experts, and organized study tours in countries where forest certification is in place. The working body is established, and this year they were planning to take real action for a pilot area, which can be extended to other forest areas in Kosovo.

Proposed areas for cooperation

List of problems

Based on previous studies and the current situation in forestry, the main challenges are:

- Illegal harvesting operations (of the estimated 1.2 million m³ of possible annual harvesting potential, KFA is taking 250 000 m³ legally, while more than 500 000 m³ are cut illegally).
- Law enforcement, which lags far behind in terms of implementation of the forestry law and other laws in the field of environmental protection.

- Developing a strategy applying EU standards, with participation of local communities, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders. The current draft forest strategy and policy does not involve local communities and their interests are not incorporated.
- There is no strategy for climate change assessment. The government institutions, as the central main power, ignore NGOs and communities. This is obvious when looking at their contribution to the forestry sector and environmental awareness. Until the Government signs the main conventions for nature protection and works actively to decrease pollution in the country, the situation will remain the same or worsen. The initiative to build a new power station has had no environmental impact assessment, and has ignored the complaints of NGOs and communities.
- Kosovo has not signed the Kyoto Protocol, and this should be done as a matter of urgency.
- There is no institution responsible for monitoring GHGs, and advising on protection and reduction of gas emissions.
- There is no available data for gas emission and pollution in the country.
- There is need to adopt a suitable legal framework.
- There is no strategy or action plan for reducing gas emissions.
- Alternative energy applications are noticeable by their absence.

Areas for potential international cooperation

Activities where FAO could contribute to improve the current forestry sector situation are to:

- Help Government institutions (MAFRD, KFA, MoSP), to identify possible donor sources in EU and elsewhere for activities related to climate change.
- Support a national forest inventory, and update methodology through incorporation of attributes for monitoring climate change and its impact on forestry.
- Design a project for carbon sequestration, where special EU funds available could be used to support afforestation of abandoned lands, especially areas that are marginal for agricultural production.
- Help MAFRD develop a better forest strategy and policy with broad participation by stakeholders.
- Develop a strategy for reducing illegal and uncontrolled harvesting activities in forestry.
- Help government institutions to participate fully with countries that have signed the conventions for nature protection.
- Help ministries to participate in international conferences, which will contribute to improving the Kosovo professional environment in terms of knowledge of current proposals and actions in world.
- Identify sources of funding for professionals in Kosovo to take post-graduate studies in EU countries. This could be very helpful for Kosovo if FAO could provide scholarships for one or two PhD students to undertake research into climate change monitoring, which will provide information for Kosovo.
- Establish a coordination body related to climate change, based on the Kyoto Protocol.
- Develop a registry of GHG emissions.
- Develop an assessment of air pollution emissions for 1985–1990, in accordance with the Kyoto Protocol, using IPCC methodology for six economic sectors.

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Annexes

Institutional framework and nature protection

The current institutional structures for environmental protection are evolving to meet the particular national circumstances of Kosovo. The ministries and agencies with competency for aspects of environmental protection and management are:

- Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD)
- Kosova Forest Agency (KFA)
- Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning
- Kosova Institute for Nature Protection (KINP)
- Institute for Cultural Heritage Protection

Nature protection areas

Law on Nature conservation (2006/22) Article 16 stipulates that nature conservation means series of measures required for maintaining or restoring the natural habitats and the populations of species of wild fauna and flora at a favourable conservation status. Nature conservation is a strong instrument for protection of nature heritage values and biodiversity. So far, 68 nature sites are protected, and 195 new sites identified for protection. Protected sites cover an area of 46 437 ha (4.25% of Kosovo). There are 1 National Park, 11 nature reserves, 52 nature monuments, 2 protected landscapes and 2 park forests.

Areas proposed for protection

Kosova Institute for Nature Protection (KINP) identified 195 sites of high conservation value in 2000–2005 and proposed that they be protected.

The initiative for establishment of second National Park in Bjeshket e Nemuna was launched in 2003. The proposed area spreads over 60 000 ha and the legal procedure for its establishment is ongoing. If this area gains protected status, the total protected area nationally will extend over 10% of Kosovo.

Protected areas management

The Law on Nature Conservation, Article 17, stipulates that the objectives of protected area management are: (a) scientific research; (b) protection of wildlife, habitats and ecosystems; (c) protection of genetic diversity; (d) protection of environment services; (e) protection of specific characteristics of nature and cultural heritage; (f) tourism and recreation; (g) education and public information; (h) sustainable use of resources; and (i) protection of cultural and traditional features.

The National Park Directorate with its HQ in Prizren manages the ‘Sharri Mountain’ National Park. The ‘Germia’ Regional Park is managed by public enterprise Hortikultura, whereas Gadime Cave is managed by a body that is not supervised by the government. Management of these institutions needs substantial strengthening.

Other reserves, such as Ropsit Peak, Gubavc, Gazimestan, Kozhnjer, Prelep Mountains, and Bifurcation of Nerodime River, Kamilja, and Regional Park Mirusha, have neither managing bodies nor management plans.

“Sharri Mountain” National Park

The national park was established in 1986, and covers 39 000 ha. The Park extends over the municipalities of Prizren (19 500 ha), Shterpce (15 210 ha), Theranda (2 730 ha) and Kaçanik (1 560 ha). The Park is famous for its botanical, faunal, ecological, tourism, recreational and cultural values. Sharri Mountain the habitat of a very important flora, with 86 species declared as important national species, 26 considered as threatened, and 32 included in the Red Book of European threatened species. It can be considered as a centre of diversity in the Balkans and Europe.