

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS OF THE ROMANIAN FOREST SECTOR

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Abstract:

This study undertakes a stakeholder analysis of the forest sector in Romania, in order to gain a better understanding of how the various stakeholders are involved in the creation of forest policies in Romania. It evaluates the existing relationships among stakeholders in the forest sector and their interests with regard to the forest resources. The data for this analysis has been collected through in-depth interviews. There have been carried out a number of 49 interviews with the main actors and key-informants within the forest sector. Using a matrix diagram, the stakeholders have been classified in different categories. The matrix is a result of evaluation of the interest and influence of the stakeholders over the forest policy. Conceptual content analysis suggested the following: among all stakeholders, the National Forest Administration is the most important and influential stakeholder. Although the Association of Private Forest Owners, the Association of Forest Administrators and trade unions are important, they don't participate much in the decision-making process, thus being less influential as stakeholders. There is a similar situation for the environmental non-governmental organizations, due to their weak representation. The stakeholder analysis of the Romanian forest sector conducted in this paper contributes to an improved understanding of the stakeholder structure and of interactions among them. Increased public participation, improved communication and cooperation between different actors are the foundations for good forest governance, therefore for supporting sustainable forest management and the sustainable development of the forest-based industries in Romania.

Keywords: stakeholder analysis, forest sector, forest policy, Romania

JEL Classification: Q23

INTRODUCTION

Background

The forest sector consists of a range of industry branches: wood processing industries, wood manufacturing industries (furniture and wood construction), pulp and paper industries and non-wood forest products and services (NWFPs). The forest sector is characterized by a large number of stakeholder groups, representing these industry branches.

Among the characteristics of good governance there is public participation. Therefore, in order to achieve good governance within the forestry sector, the stakeholder participation and their influence in designing forest policies has to increase. This can be done through strengthening capacity, supporting equity and fostering empowerment (Gow, 1998).

The stakeholder analysis has gained increasing attention and it is central to many participatory natural resource management initiatives (Mushove and Vogel, 2005). The popularity of stakeholder analysis in natural resource management and policies reflects an increasing recognition that stakeholders should influence environmental decision-making.

In Romania, stakeholder participation in designing and formulating forest policies is relatively faint. In the near past, only forestry experts have participated in the creation of forest policies (Austroprojekt, 2008). Generally, the collaboration among different forest institutions is weak and fragmented.

In order to describe the Romanian forest policy arena, a stakeholder analysis will be carried out. The main objective of this research is to gain a better understanding of how the various stakeholders are involved in the creation of forest policies in Romania. The study evaluates the existing relationships among stakeholders in the forestry sector in Romania and their interests with regard to the forest resources, through a stakeholder analysis.

General facts about the Romanian forest sector

Romania is rich in forests, with about 27.7% (6,495 million hectares) of the country total area covered by forest and forest land (Marin, 2010). Forests are categorized by their functions: 53.3% are forests with special protective functions and 46.7% are forests with production and protection functions.

Historically, forests have played an important role in Romania's economic and social development. They were a source of rural employment and income mainly through harvesting, wood processing and non-timber forest product industries. The forest contribution to the GDP (gross domestic product) accounted constantly around 2.4% in production and 2% as gross value added (COST E30 Romania Country Report, 2005). Wood industries represent around 5.6% of the manufacturing industry in term of production, and 12% in term of employees (Bouriaud et al., 2004).

Romania's forests are ecologically important, due to their rich and diverse flora and fauna. Romania's forests comprise some of the last natural and old growth forests still remaining in Europe.

After the fall of communism in December 1989, the Romanian Government has started a program of forest restitution. New property rights have arisen and these new transformations in the property rights system have led to important changes in the Romanian forest sector. The main critique regarding the governance of the forest restitution process is that it has been done without a proper institutional framework.

At present, the structure of the forest area after their restitution to former owners is: 53% state forests, 15% municipalities, towns and communes' forests, 2% forest belonging to churches and educational institutions, 11% forests of communities / undivided private ownership and 19% private individuals's forests (Marin, 2010).

The legislative framework consists of law, regulations, governmental decisions, ministerial orders, guidelines and the Forest Code (Law 46 / 2008).

The country's forest policies and management practices are designed to ensure the sustainable management of the Romanian forests and also they are based on the concept of multi-functionality of forest. Sustainable forest management is the management of forests according to the principles of sustainable development, aiming to ensure that the goods and services derived from the forest meet the present-day needs; at the same time, it contributes to long-term development while respecting the values people attach to forests.

After the last ministerial reorganization in December 2009, the Department of Forests was transferred from the former Ministry of Agriculture, Forest and Rural Development (MAFRD) to the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MEF) (Governmental Decision no. 1635 / 2009 of December 29, 2009). The former MAFF has designed the forest strategy – the Policy and Development Strategy of the forest sector in Romania for the period 2001 – 2010 (*Politica i Strategia de dezvoltare a Sectorului Forestier din România, 2001-2010*). At present, the Ministry of Environment and Forests is the public central authority for forestry in Romania, responsible for the elaboration of an updated forest strategy.

The National Forest Programme has been issued in 2005 also by the former Ministry of Agriculture, Forest and Rural Development, with the participation of 28 persons from: three ministries (the Ministry of Agriculture, Forest and Rural Development, the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, and the Ministry of Waters and Environmental Protection), the Academy for Agriculture and Forest Sciences, the National Institute for Forest Research and Forest Management Planning, the National Forest Administration, two faculties (Suceava Forestry Faculty and Oradea Environmental Protection Faculty), the National Agency for Tourism, the Association of Private Forest Owners (APPR), the Association of Forest Administrators (AAP), the Association of Romanian Foresters and one non-governmental organization (*Grupul Verde Oradea*).

Concluding, the Romanian forests are naturally of great interest to many groups: the foresters who have managed it all as state property through the years of communism; the rural

communities who live and farm around it; to those concerned with conservation of it; and not the latest, the companies who need wood as the raw material for their operations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The development of the framework for stakeholder analysis of forest sector in Romania was based on scientific concepts and methods of stakeholder analysis.

The initiator of the *stakeholder theory* is considered to be R. Edward Freeman, with his book "Strategic management: A Stakeholder Approach", published in 1984. He has defined the stakeholder as "*any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives*" (Freeman, 1984). Further, the definition of the term *stakeholder* has been extended in order to include all groups which have interests with respect to an institution or a domain, regardless of their interest' nature. According to Carroll (1989) the word "*stake*" refers at having "*an interest or a share in an undertaking*". Yet, the stakeholder theory appears as opposite to Friedman shareholder paradigm (Friedman, 1962), which states that the shareholders are the only one having a claim on the business.

Stakeholder analysis is a process of systematically gathering and analyzing qualitative information, in order to decide whose interests should be taken into account when developing or implementing a policy. The analysis includes: stakeholder characteristics, interests related to the policy, position for or against the policy and potential alliances with other stakeholders, as well as their ability to affect the policy process.

Stakeholder analysis can be defined as a methodology for gaining an understanding of a system, and for assessing the impact of changes to that system, by means of identifying the key stakeholders and assessing their respective interests (Grimble, 1998).

The goal of the stakeholder analysis is to develop a strategic view of the human and institutional landscape, as well as the relationships between different stakeholders.

Grimble and Wellard (1996) highlight the usefulness of stakeholder analysis in understanding complexity and compatibility problems between objectives and stakeholders. Freeman and Gilbert (1987) propose the concept of "stakeholder management" as a framework to help managers understand the turbulent and complex business environment. Therefore, the term "stakeholder" is often associated with corporate management. According to Freeman, an important supposition is the manager's ability to manage stakeholder relationships.

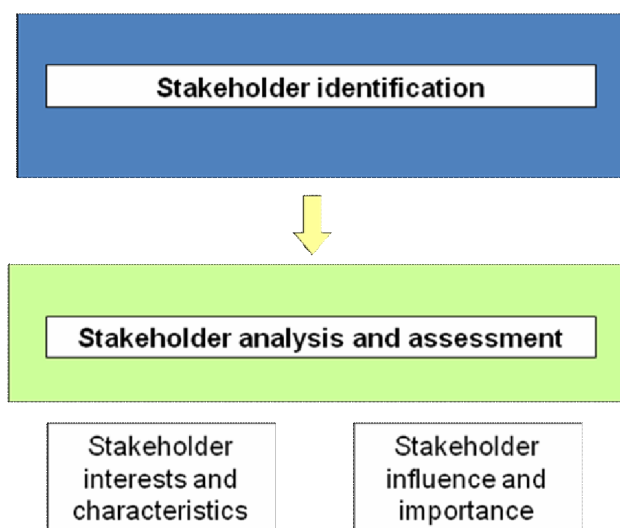


Figure 1. Framework of stakeholder analysis of the forest sector in Romania

The framework of stakeholder analysis of the forest sector in Romania is shown in Figure 1. The framework consists of two major modules, the second one comprising two categories. The first module "Stakeholder identification" covers the identification and selection of relevant stakeholders within the forest sector. The second module "Stakeholder analysis and assessment" includes the development of stakeholder profiles and the identification of stakeholder influence on forest policies and their importance. The first category "Stakeholder interests and characteristics" deals with general characteristics like the type of the organization, its goals and main activities carried out.

The literature presents different approaches for stakeholders' classification. Kakabadse et al. have compiled from the literature some sub-categories, for example voluntary and involuntary stakeholders, social and non-social stakeholders, intrinsic and instrumental stakeholders (Kakabadse et al., 2005). Lantos (2001) has described four levels on which stakeholders can be pictured: the macro-environmental level, the micro-environmental level, the business organization level and the personal level (Lantos, 2001).

Most commonly form of classification is that in primary and secondary stakeholders, depending on whether they are immediately affected by (positively or negatively), or can immediately affect the system. The primary stakeholder is the group "*without whose continuing participation the corporation cannot survive as a going concern*" and the secondary ones are "*those who influence or affect, or are influenced or affected by the corporation, but they are not engaged in transactions with the corporation and are not essential for its survival*" (Clarkson, 1995). However, some groups can be involved in natural resource management in both active and passive way (for example the local communities).

Another classification groups the stakeholders in *internal*, *interface* and *external* (IIED, 2005). The internal stakeholders are those people operating entirely within the boundaries of an organisation. External stakeholders are further divided into three categories, depending on their relationship to the organisation: those who provide inputs to the organisation, those who compete with the organisation, and those with a special interest in how the organisation functions. Interface stakeholders are those who function both internally and externally in relation to the organisation.

There is a range of conceptual frameworks which can be used to analyse and map key strengths, weaknesses, linkages and areas of potential conflict: Importance / Influence matrix, Conflict / Complementarity matrix, Actor linkage matrix (Matsaert, 2002).

Influence is the power that stakeholders have over the forest policies, through controlling what decisions are made, facilitating the implementation of forest policies, or exerting positive or negative influence on the formulation of forest policies. Thus, influence is the extent to which stakeholders are able to convince the decision makers to take different actions.

Importance refers to the stakeholders which needs and interests are a priority for forest policies. Not all the stakeholders are equally important and they have different degrees of influence on the decision-making process.

RESEARCH METHODS

Methodologically, the research uses a socio-political qualitative approach for data collection and data analysis.

The research uses the framework proposed by Grimble et al. (1994) for the identification of the stakeholders from micro level to macro level, based on literature review and discussion with key informants. This method provides a checklist of the many different levels at which stakeholders can be found: local, regional, national, international and global (Figure 2).

There are a variety of methods for data collection on stakeholders' interests and analysis for the various groups which have been identified (Grimble, 1998).

The present data collection has been done in two steps. First, a primary identification of the decision makers and of the stakeholders in the Romanian forest sector has been realized through literature review, including the use of secondary data.

Second, the stakeholder analysis had been undertaken using an interview approach (in-depth interviews with the main actors and key-informants). There have been carried out a number of 49 interviews with representatives of the main stakeholders within the forestry sector in Romania.

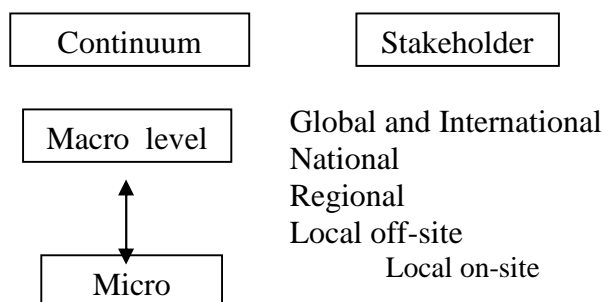


Figure 2. Typology of stakeholders on a macro to micro continuum

Source: Grimble *et al.*, 1994.

Using the above notions, a comprehensive investigation was carried out and the main stakeholders have been identified on the basis of the following questions: (i) Who has been involved in the creation of the *Policy and Strategy for the development of the forest sector in Romania*? (ii) Which are the most interested groups in managing, using and benefiting from the forest resources in Romania? (iii) Which are the most dependent groups on the forest resources in Romania?

After identifying of the stakeholders in the Romanian Forest Sector, the second phase of stakeholder analysis follows the assessment of their influence and importance, as well as their potential impact on forest policy. For data analysis, the identified stakeholders were grouped according to the classifications found in the literature.

The *Importance / Influence matrix* is used to map out the relative importance and influence of key stakeholders. By combining influence and importance using a matrix diagram, stakeholders can be classified into four groups: high importance / high influence, high importance / low influence, low importance / high influence and low importance / low influence (IIED, 2001).

The *Conflict / Complementarity matrix* is used to map areas of conflict and cooperation between key stakeholders. It is a useful tool for establishing area of consensus and therefore starting points for cooperative work.

The *Actor linkage matrix* is relevant to map linkages and flows of information between key stakeholders, in order to gain an understanding of the key institutional linkages.

The key questions for this step that have been addressed to interviewees were: (i) Who is directly responsible for the forest policy formulation? (ii) Who is influential in forest policy? (iii) Who will be affected by the forest policy? (iv) Who will promote / support the forest policy?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Stakeholder identification

Grimble *et al.* (1994) propose the identification of stakeholders from micro level to macro level. Table 1 presents the stakeholders of the Romanian forest sector.

Among all the stakeholders identified the main ones (key stakeholders) are listed below:

- the European Union, represented by its institutional architecture;
- the Ministry of Environment and Forests - the public central authority for forestry, subordinated to the Romanian government;

- the National Forest Administration - NFA (*Regia Na ional a P durilor – Romsilva*) - the main manager of the State public forests, implementing the national strategy in the forest sector;
- Forest Inspectorates (*Inspectoratele Teritoriale de Regim silvic i de Vâ n toare - ITRSV*);
- research and innovation bodies;
- trade associations;
- the Association of Private Forest Owners (*Asocia ia Proprietarilor priva i de P dure - APPR*);
- the Association of Forest Administrators (*Asocia ia Administratorilor de P duri - AAP*);
- “*Progresul Silvic*” - the largest environmental non-governmental organization (ENGO);
- World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF);
- other ENGOs;
- media.

Table 1. Stakeholders in the Romanian forest sector

Level	Stakeholders
Global and International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ European Union ○ International organizations (e.g. World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development etc.) ○ International environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs) ○ Tourists ○ Future generations
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National Government ○ National Political Parties ○ Policy makers ○ Ministry of Environment and Forests / Forest Department ○ National Forest Administration (RNP-ROMSILVA) ○ Forest Inspectorates (ITRSV) ○ Forest-based industries ○ Unions (e.g. CONSILVA) ○ Research and innovation bodies ○ Certification bodies ○ trade associations (ASFOR, APMR, ROMAP) ○ the Association of Private Forest Owners (APPR) ○ the Association of Forest Administrators (AAPR) ○ Hunting Associations ○ Progresul Silvic ○ World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) ○ Real Estate Sector ○ General Public ○ Tourists ○ Media ○ Future generations
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Municipalities ○ Companies within the forest-based industry ○ Church' forests (<i>Fondul Bisericesc</i>) ○ Wood products users ○ Regional Pressure Groups ○ Media
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local communities ○ Local elites ○ Church ○ Non wood forest products users (NWFPs)

The stakeholders have been further divided into primary, secondary and tertiary stakeholders (figure 3).

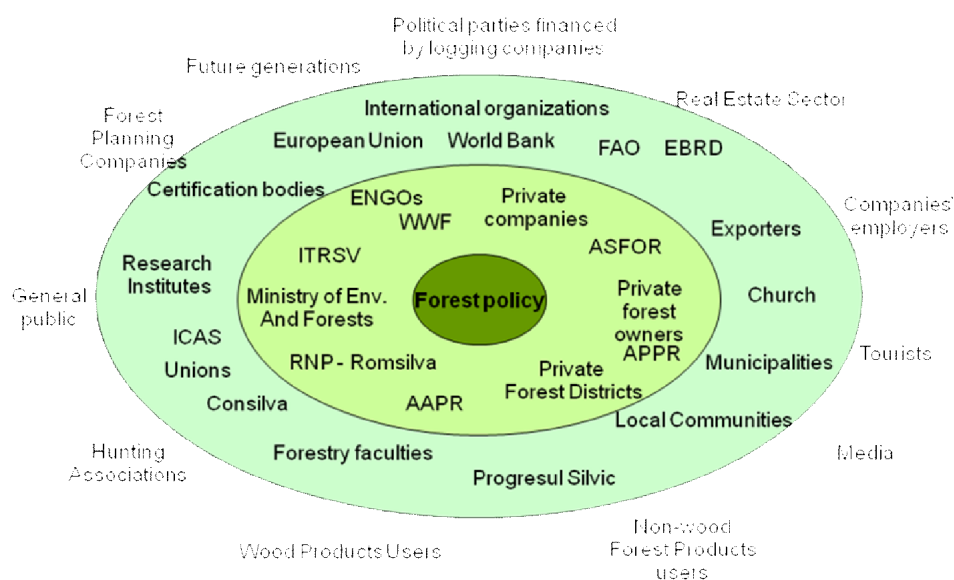


Figure 3. The Identification of stakeholders in the Romanian Forest sector

Stakeholder analysis and assessment

The stakeholder analysis is realized in order to assess the degree of involvement of different actors in forest governance.

Stakeholders' interests and characteristics

The main stakeholders identified within the Romanian Forest Sector are listed below and their activities / functions are shortly described:

The **European Union** (EU) is a central actor on most international environmental issues, playing an important role in global policy making (Vogler, 2005). As a political system, the EU includes political actors, political institutions (Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Court of Justice) and decision-making processes.

The interests of the European Union are related to the accomplishment of the objectives established through its forest policy.

In 1998, the Council Resolution on a Forestry Strategy for the European Union established a framework for forest-related actions in support of sustainable forest management.

The EU Forestry Strategy emphasises the importance of the multifunctional role of forests and sustainable forest management for the development of society, and identifies a series of key elements, on which it bases its implementation (European Commission website):

- forest policy is mainly a Member State competence, while the EU can contribute to the implementation of sustainable forest management through common policies, based on the principle of subsidiarity and the concept of shared responsibility;
- implementation of international commitments, principles and recommendations through national or sub-national forest programmes developed by the Member States and active participation in all forest-related international processes;
- the need to improve co-ordination, communication and co-operation in all policy areas of relevance to the forest sector, both within the Commission and with the Member States, and also among the Member States.

The harmonization of the forest policies of the member states with the EU forest policy is implemented by the European directives which are transposed in laws or in governmental decisions adopted at the national level. The European Union can exercise its power by means of different

ways, such as financial resources, coercitive measures or by the possibility to initiate the procedure of infringement against Romania.

The **Ministry of Environment and Forests** is the public central authority for forestry, subordinated to the Romanian government. Its activity is regulated by the resolution / governmental decision 1635 / 2009, regarding the organisation and operation of this ministry. The Ministry carries out activities related to sustainable development, climate change, natural protected areas, biodiversity conservation and forestry. Among the ministry's functions there are: creating strategies, implementing and coordinating, regulating and advising, monitoring and controlling, as well as dealing with non-refundable funds from the European Union and other external credits. One of ministry's divisions is the Forest Department (*Direcția Generală Păduri*), comprising the following subdivisions: Forest Policies, Forests and Forestry Development and Forest Control.

At Ministry's order there are the following organizations: the National Agency for the Protection of the Environment, the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, the National Environmental Guard and 9 Forest Inspectorates. The National Forest Administration (RNP Romsilva) is functioning under the authority of the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

The **National Forest Administration - NFA** (Regia Națională a Pădurilor – Romsilva) is the main manager of the state public forests, implementing the national strategy in the forest sector and acting to protect, preserve and manage the public forests in a sustainable way.

In addition to its management function, the NFA oversees timber traffic on public roads. The NFA also fulfils a regulatory function which includes implementing the forest regime within the forests under its jurisdiction (the forest regime is represented by technical, economic and juridical forestry standards regarding the planning, regeneration, harvesting, health and guard of the forests, with the final objective of assuring sustainable forest management).

At the same time, the NFA has been directly involved in the implementation of the forest regime in private forests, through participating in wood marking. It has also been the key institution providing information and technical assistance to private owners, after the restitution of forests.

The **Forest Inspectorates (ITRSV)** are legal entities, empowered to follow up legal actions, as their main function is to control the enforcement of norms and regulations imposed by the ministry, for owners and administrators of public and private forests.

The main **research and innovation bodies** within the forest sector are: the Academy for Agriculture and Forest Sciences, the National Institute for Forest Research and Forest Management Planning, the National Institute for Wood Science, and forestry faculties. Also, in Romania there exist about 50 private firms for forest planning.

There are three main **trade associations** that officially represent the forest logging companies and wood industry operators: the Association of Romanian Foresters (ASFOR), the Association of Romanian Furniture Producers (APMR) and the Association of Romanian Pulp and Paper Producers (ROMPAP). The main goal of these trade associations is to represent members' interests to official authorities.

ASFOR includes the majority of the logging, transport and primary wood processing companies, APMR includes the furniture operators and ROMPAP includes the pulp and paper industry operators.

The **Association of Private Forest Owners (APPR)** is a national level umbrella non-governmental organization representing all categories of private forest owners in Romania.

The **Association of Forest Administrators (AAPR)** is a non-governmental organization of foresters involved in forest management.

The largest environmental non-governmental organization (**ENGO**) is "Progresul Silvic", mainly formed by Romanian forestry engineers. "Progresul Silvic" supports the Romanian forestry and promotes forest and environmental protection awareness.

The most active international non-governmental organization is **Wilde Wide Fund for Nature Romania** (WWF). Their mission is to stop the degradation of the natural environment, through the conservation of biodiversity, the rational use of renewable natural resources and

through promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption. They act as a lobby and advocacy NGO, forming partnerships with the government, other ENGOS and private companies.

WWF has been involved in the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) forest certification process in Romania, being the moral author of the forest management certification of the Forest District Naruja, the first private forest district that has been certified in 2005.

Stakeholders influence and importance

Based on the results of content analysis of the information derived from the interviews, stakeholders have been classified according to their influence and impact, as mapped in figure 4.

Quadrat A includes the stakeholders having high influence in the decision-making and more impacted upon, such as the Ministry of Environment and Forests (including the Forest department) and the NFA. They were the ones most engaged in dialogue, working together and possible form partnerships. In practice, the Ministry and the Forest Department are the sole authorities to take decisions and they consult mainly the NFA.

Within the formulation of the forest policy, the stakeholders within the quadrat B have also been consulted, in a passive or a more interactive way: *Progresul Silvic*, exporters, the local communities etc.

Within the quadrat D, there are the "information giving" actors, which are less impacted by the forest policy, but they have a certain influence on forest policy.

In the quadrat C there are the "information gathering" actors, who are less impacted by the forest policies and they have had also less influence on it.

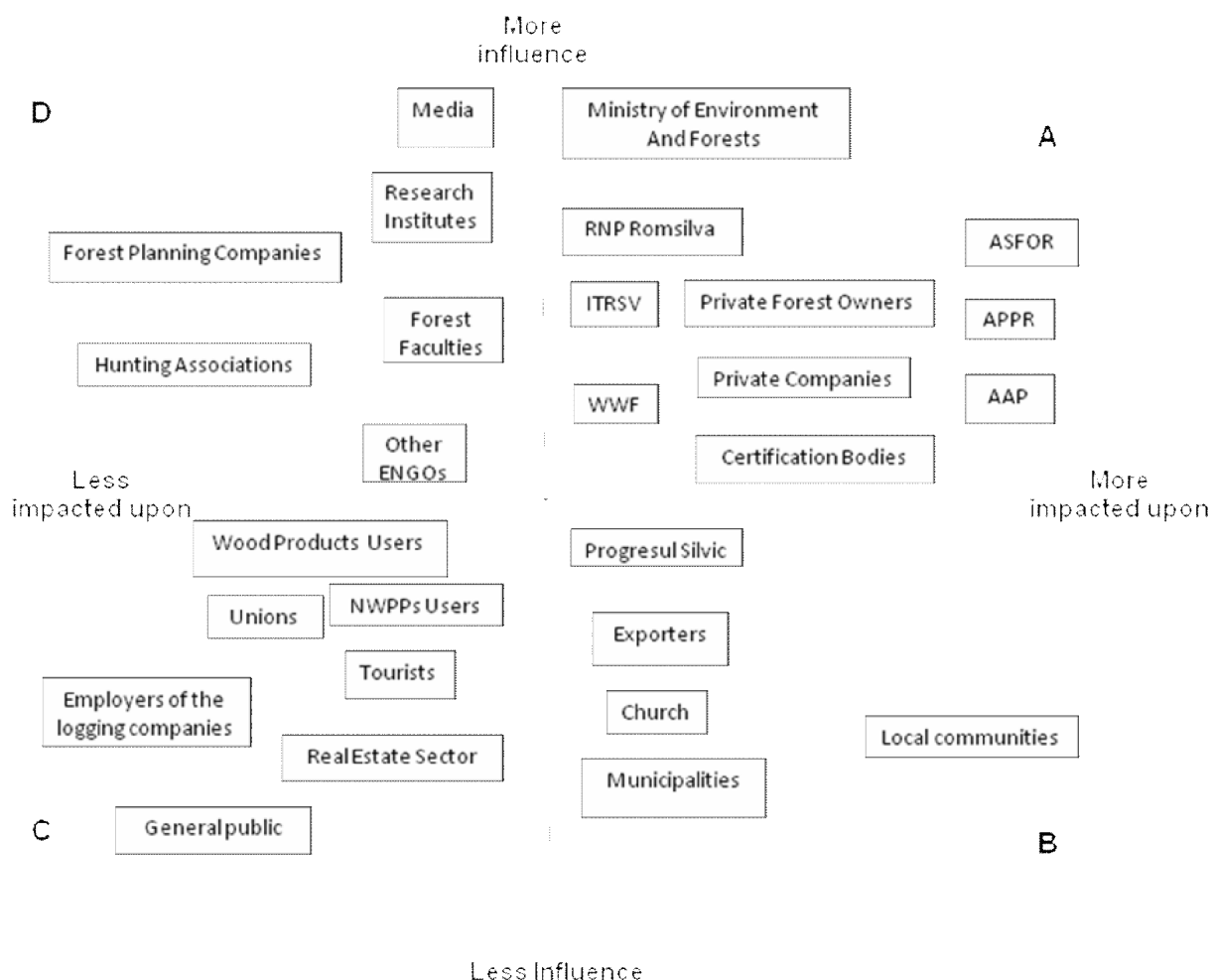


Figure 4. Stakeholders Analysis Grid

Further, using the information derived from the interviews, on their views on other stakeholders' interest in the use of forest, as well as on their interactions with each other over the use and management of the forest, stakeholders have been depicted (table 2), using the framework proposed by ODA, (1995).

Table 2. Stakeholders' table

Stakeholder Group	Nature of interest in policy decision	Potential impact on policy	Relative importance of interest	Importance of group	Influence power of group
EU	Global policy-making	High	High	High	High
MEF	Policy making	High	High	High	High
NFA	Institutional responsibility	High	High	High	High
ITRSV	Law enforcement	High	High	Medium/High	Medium
Research and innovation bodies	Research	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Trade associations	Economic interest	Medium/High	High	Medium/High	Medium
APPR	Forest use	Medium	Medium	Medium/High	Low
AAPR	Forest management	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
Progresul Silvic	Protection of forests	Medium/High	Medium	Medium	Low
WWF	Protection of forests Biodiversity conservation	Medium/High	Medium	Medium	Low/Medium
Rural communities	Fuel-wood security	Low	Medium	Medium	Low
Wood and NWFPs users	Income	Low	Medium	Medium	Low

Conceptual content analysis suggested the following: among all stakeholders, the National Forest Administration is the most important and influential stakeholder. Although the Association of Private Forest Owners, the Association of Forest Administrators and trade unions are important, they don't participate much in the decision-making process, thus being less influential as stakeholders. There is a similar situation for the environmental non-governmental organizations, due to their weak representation.

CONCLUSION

Romanian forests and the forest sector are very important from an ecological, economic and social perspective. Due to the heterogeneity of the forest-based industries a large number and a wide range of relevant stakeholders need to be considered in the policy arena.

The stakeholder analysis of the Romanian forest sector conducted in this paper contributes to an improved understanding of the stakeholders' structure and interactions among them, through the identification of the stakeholders who play a central or a peripheral role.

The analyses reveals that, despite the relative high number of organisations with a stake in forest policy, the decision making process is still very centralised and limited to few primary stakeholders (NFA and ITRSV). The private sector, from business and from private forestry is less influential than in the case of other European countries with a long tradition in the market economy. The civil society sector is represented only by the active involvement of WWF in the policy formulation process. Professional organisations have lost their power being merely created with staff belonging to NFA and ITRSV.

Consequently, increased public participation, improved communication and cooperation between different actors are the foundations for good forest governance, therefore for supporting sustainable forest management and the sustainable development of the forest-based industries in Romania.

Further, as complementary to the stakeholder analysis, the "4R Framework" (Dubois, 1998) needs to be applied to the Romanian forest sector, in order to depict better the stakeholders roles, defined by their rights, responsibilities, returns / revenues and relationships. Also, an institutional analysis of the Romanian forest sector needs to be developed.

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