

Work Package 3: Proposal for integrated development of the network of protected areas in Lithuania

Activity 3.6. Assessment of the shortcomings in the legal basis relevant to development of the network of protected areas

Summary of the report

Analysis revealed gaps in biodiversity protection within existing protected areas, notably a deficiency of areas with more strict protection. An intermediate protected area between the current nature reserve and the strict nature reserve could serve this purpose.

Another important consideration is that, unlike nature reserves, access to these protected areas should not be entirely prohibited. While certain restrictions may apply, they should not fundamentally impede free visits to forests, including activities such as berry and mushroom picking. This approach is expected to reduce resistance from local communities towards establishing new protected areas.

For the approval of borders concerning nature reserves, it is suggested that instead of the Government, the Minister of the Environment could have the authority. This change aims to streamline the approval process.

When establishing new strictly protected territories, it is vital to establish appropriate legal regulations distinguishing between areas where strict activity regulation is necessary and where it is not. Striking a balance between adequate protection and avoiding excessive limitations on economic activities is crucial in preventing the deterioration or disappearance of habitats of European Community importance.

Efforts should also be directed towards legal solutions that ensure a higher percentage of habitats in good condition, extending beyond protected areas. Thus, the regulations defining natural frameworks need clearer delineation.

Given the scale of the proposed protected areas development, it is recommended to formulate a state-level territorial planning document – a scheme of protected areas system, outlining an overarching development strategy. The proposals for protected area boundaries developed during the project could be incorporated into the preparation of master plans of municipalities as well.