

## Priorities and Progress

The Banská Bystrica self-governing region (BBSK) hosts the largest expanse of forest stand land in Slovakia—**468,645.52 hectares**. Its **Envirostrategy** clearly positions forests as a cornerstone of environmental quality, climate adaptation, and landscape structure, including water retention, soil stability, and biodiversity. These priorities align closely with Slovakia's **National Forestry Programme 2025–2030 (NLP)**, which treats forests as a public interest delivering a wide portfolio of ecosystem services. The NLP emphasizes sustainable and close-to-nature management, climate adaptation, strengthened monitoring, and active stakeholder participation.

Successful delivery of concrete measures depends on close cooperation with **forest owners and managers**, since actions are implemented directly on their lands. Among the most important managers are **land associations and private owners**. Operating at the local level, they generate economic value for members and are often the **sole employers** in rural areas. Their work also advances broader forest functions, from nature protection to tourism. Yet they are constrained by **small and fragmented holdings**, which often limit growth potential. Precisely targeted **projects** can unlock more efficient use of forest ecosystem services and help overcome scale barriers.

BBSK has a long tradition of organizing non-state owners. The **Association of Owners of Communal and Private Forests of the Banská Bystrica Region (ZVSaSL BBK)** counts 190 members, collectively managing 31,451 hectares—**representing over 22%** of the forest area managed by other operators in the region. Its formation improved coordination among private owners, strengthened dialogue with public institutions, and accelerated **knowledge transfer** to raise management standards.

Looking ahead, ZVSaSL BBK can serve as a practical delivery partner for BBSK: shaping **project-ready measures**, advising members during implementation, and directly advancing the strategic objectives set in the Envirostrategy. In short, **partnership plus projects** equals tangible progress for forests, communities, and the region's climate resilience.

Beyond regional work, we participate in international initiatives—most recently the SMURF project under Horizon Europe—bringing EU-level expertise and funding to concrete forest projects in BBSK.

#SMURFProject

