

Legal instruments for protection of soils

Abstract

Diploma thesis analyses the topic of legal instruments for soil protection. Significance of soil, as one of the components of environment, lies especially in securing livelihood for the inhabitants of our planet, water circulation and retention, and in the fact that soil provides living space for a substantial portion of living organisms. In this context the legal instruments represent means by which we can successfully protect soil from its degradation. Considering that soil degradation is rapidly increasing in the last couple of decades, the topic of this diploma thesis becomes more and more pressing, though sometimes overlooked by general public. Thesis primarily analyses legal instruments which exist in the Czech legislation and are most significant for the state of soil in the Czech Republic. The objective of this thesis is particularly to analyse individual legal instruments, to critically evaluate them and suggest possible improvements to the current state of soil protection in the Czech Republic.

The first chapter highlights the environmental importance of soil and characterizes its specificities as one of the components of environment. Subsequently current soil degradation processes are presented. In the end of the chapter the thesis summarizes international, European and Czech legislation on protection of soils.

The second and third chapter are focused on legal instruments which protect the most ecologically and economically valuable types of soil – agricultural and forest soil which cover 87 % of the Czech Republic's total land area. Emphasis is placed on the analysis of protection of agricultural soil that is currently the most heavily affected. Legal instruments in this chapter are broken down by the types of instruments commonly used in environmental law and by their effect either on quality of soil or on its quantity.

The penultimate chapter is dedicated to the process of land consolidation which has a potential to substantially affect the state of soil in the Czech Republic. First, the process of land consolidation and its historical context is introduced and properly characterized. Second, the thesis examines legal instruments for soil protection used in the process of land consolidation.

The final chapter explores the soil protection in connection with protection of other components of the environment. This part of diploma thesis is focused on legal instruments for soil protection that occur in water, nature and landscape protection legislation. Among other things the analysis carried out in this chapter again proves the interconnection of individual components of environment.

Key words: soil; legal instruments; soil protection