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**Fem2forests**

## **D 2.1.2**

# **Transnational alumni study of female graduates in forestry professions**

**This document is issued by the consortium formed for the implementation of the Fem2forests project by the following partners:**

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- Foundation for Improvement of Employment Possibilities PRIZMA (PRIZMA), Slovenia
- University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty (UL(BF)), Slovenia
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- Forest Trainings Center PICHL (FAST Pichl), Austria
- NOWA Training Counselling Project management (NOWA), Austria
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# 1 Introduction

This report presents the findings from the transnational alumni study conducted as part of the Fem2forests project focused on female forestry graduates from both university and vocational training programs across the participating countries: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Ukraine. This comparative study is unique in its approach, as it encompasses alumni from diverse educational backgrounds in the forestry sector and is the first comprehensive study covering this topic across countries in the Danube Region. The research aims to trace the career trajectories of female forestry professionals while analysing recruitment patterns within forestry organizations and companies. Additionally, the study investigates the support systems that women have encountered throughout their education/training and careers, identifies the skills and competencies that have contributed to their success, and highlights the measures and resources they feel are lacking in both, education and professional life. This report presents findings, which aims to explore the career paths, challenges, and opportunities for female graduates in forestry professions across various countries and shows solutions on how to improve the career paths of female forestry professionals in the Danube Region.

## 2 Methodology

The transnational alumni study employed a mixed-methods approach, gathering quantitative and qualitative data from female graduates in forestry. Key areas of focus included career paths, job search strategies, perceived opportunities and constraints, and gender-related challenges faced in the workplace. The research questions addressed in the Fem2forests transnational alumni study are:

- 1) What are the opportunities and constraints for women who enter work life after a forestry education/training?
- 2) Do women (in forestry) face gender-specific challenges when pursuing their careers?
- 3) How can forestry education be improved to better prepare female students for their professional life?
- 4) How can employers in forestry increase the share of female professionals in the workforce and improve their career opportunities?

The evidence for this study is derived from a robust data collection process, which includes survey responses from 633 participants and 90 qualitative interviews with forestry professionals. This research has been conducted in close collaboration with institutions involved in the educational and training systems of the participating countries, ensuring a thorough and contextually relevant understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by women in the forestry profession.

The data collection for the Fem2Forests Alumni Study included two instruments for data collection which are described in the following sections.

## 2.1 Online-Questionnaire

**Content research:** Before starting the design of the questionnaire a content analysis of existing alumni surveys with forestry graduates across the Danube Region was conducted with the collaboration of all project partners. The revision of the existing surveys provided a baseline to start with the design of the Fem2forests questionnaire for the Alumni Study.

**Design:** The online questionnaire was designed to provide answers for the four research questions of this study: collect quantitative and qualitative data about the career path of female forestry graduates, their educational and professional challenges as well as the recommendations for forestry education and employers. The questionnaire was composed of four sections: 1. General Information, 2. Education and training, 3. Job search and career and 4. Employment situation. The structure of the questionnaire was outlined to analyse the different stations during the career path of forestry graduates from their education until their current occupation.

**Target Group:** The target group for the survey were graduates from forestry educational facilities regardless of their current occupation (e.g. working in and outside the forestry sector, unemployed, etc.). The minimum number of participants were 30 female forestry graduates per country. All countries exceeded the minimum required and a total of 633 responses was collected.

**Implementation:** The questionnaire was developed in English and translated into all national languages of the Fem2forests project (Appendix 1). The questionnaire put online using the Lime Survey Tool of LWF as a common platform to conduct the transnational survey. Project partners spread the survey in their countries by contacting all relevant national stakeholders. The survey was online from 15 January until 25 March 2025.

## 2.2 Guided interviews

**Design:** The guided interviews conducted with female forestry professionals for the transnational alumni study help to complement the qualitative data gathered through the online questionnaire: they allow gaining in-depth insights about the career paths of women in the forest sector. To this end, LWF designed an interview template (Appendix 2) covering questions on four main topics: 1. General Information including career path, 2. Gender-specific challenges in forestry professional training, 3. Gender-specific challenges in forestry jobs and 4. Recommendations to increase gender awareness in forestry education and recommendations for career starters.

**Target Group:** The target group for the guided interviews were women working in forestry/forest-based sector. In order to obtain a broad spectrum of experiences, the interviewees selected displayed varied backgrounds: incl. early stage and more experienced professionals; different types of employers, etc.

**Implementation:** The minimum number of guided interviews was 10 per country, so that a total of 90 interviews were conducted for this study. Project partners contacted relevant forestry employers and other stakeholders in their respective countries to find their interview partners. Before the interviews all participants were informed about the study and the confidential treatment of the data and filled out and signed a "Consent to the Processing Operations Form and Data Protection Statement".

The interviews had a duration of approximately 60 minutes and were conducted in person, online and via phone based on interview guidelines developed by LWF (Appendix 2). All interviews took place from 11 November 2024 until 31 January 2025. The data was anonymized for the study and project partners analyzed the interviews according to interview evaluation template provided by LWF (Appendix 3). In a final step, project partners summarized the main findings of all national interviews for this report in Chapter 4.

### 3 Results of the Alumni Survey

#### 3.1 Description of participants

The distribution of the survey respondents is not uniform (Fig. 1). The highest percentage of participants lives in Germany (mainly Bavaria), followed by Slovenia, Austria, Ukraine, and Croatia. In contrast, the number of respondents from other countries, such as Serbia, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Czech Republic, varies between nearly 40 to 50 participants.

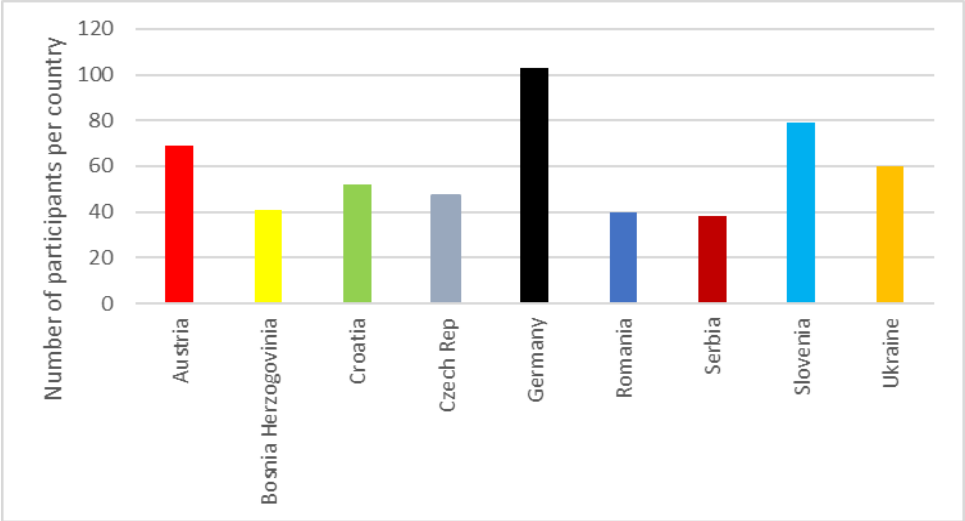


Figure 1: Distribution of participants per country

The majority of participants (32.4%) in the Fem2forests transnational alumni survey were aged between 32 and 41 years, corresponding to those born between 1984 and 1993 (Table 1). This indicates that mid-career professionals form a significant portion of the survey's participants. Women aged 42 to 51 years (born between 1974 and 1983) and younger women aged 22 to 31 years were represented in nearly equal proportions (25.4% and 23.5%), suggesting a balanced participation from early-career and more experienced professionals. Most respondents fell within the age range of 20 to 40 years, born between 1983 and 2003. The smallest proportion of participants consisted of women over 60 or under 20 years of age.

Table 1: Age Distribution of participants

Age of respondents (Born)		
2004 or younger	3	0.6%
1994 - 2003	121	23.5%
1984 - 1993	167	32.4%
1974 - 1983	131	25.4%
1964 - 1973	87	16.9%
1955 - 1963	4	0.8%
1954 or older	2	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>100%</b>

The majority of participants (58.1%) had completed a Master's degree indicating a high level of academic qualification among the sample group (Fig. 2). This is followed by 25.7% of participants who had attained a Bachelor's degree, and 9.6% who had completed a doctorate. These findings indicate that forestry education attracts women who pursue advanced academic training and may reflect the increasing demand for specialized knowledge and skills in the forestry sector. The results clearly show that women are underrepresented in professional and vocational training which underscores the findings from the Fem2forests cross-country comparison of the forestry educational systems in the Danube Region which showed that the minority of women pursue a vocational education in forestry.

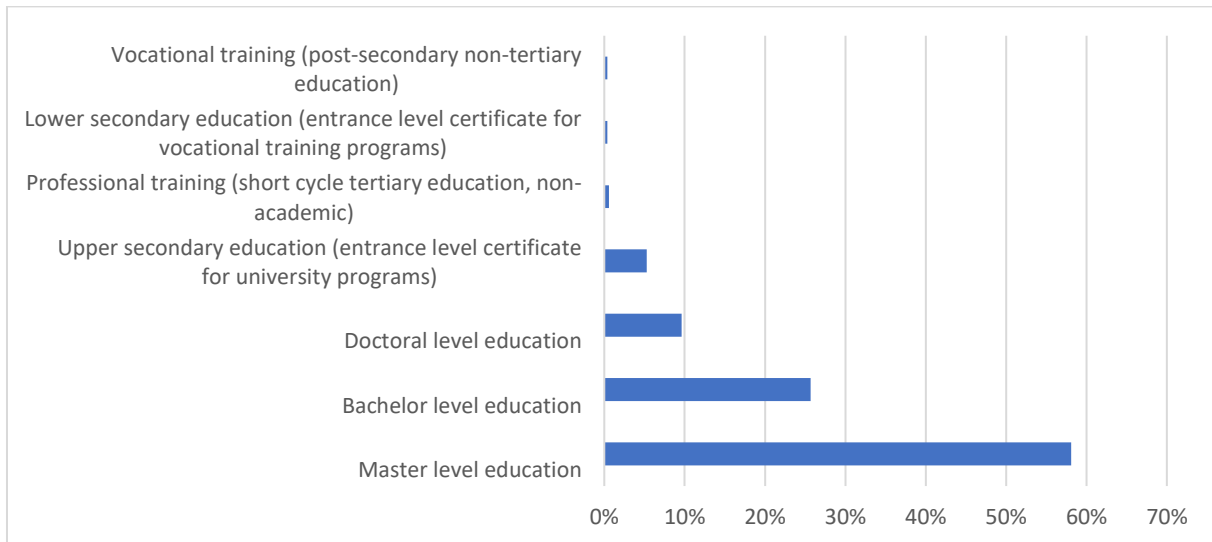


Figure 2: Education level of respondents

### 3.2 Overview of Forestry education

The data highlights a significant gender imbalance in forestry education, with most participants (46%) reporting that women made up less than 20% of their peers (Fig. 3). This was followed by programs where up to 40% of students were female, indicating that women remain underrepresented in the majority of forestry-related study programs. Only in 8% of the study programmes there was an equal distribution of genders highlighting how uncommon equal gender representation still is in forestry education. The underrepresentation of women in educational settings may have a cascading effect, contributing to gender disparities in the forestry workforce. Addressing this imbalance requires targeted efforts to attract and retain female students in forestry programs. Initiatives such as those outlined in the Fem2forests O1.2 – *Compilation of Good Practice Examples of Career Orientation in Forestry* promote forestry education to young women and can serve as a source of inspiration to confront this issue.

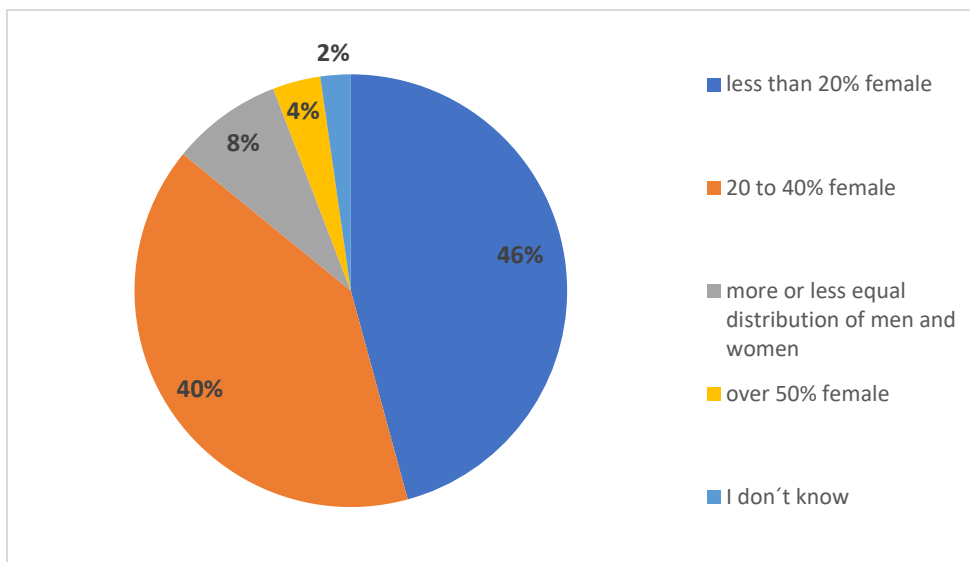


Figure 3: Gender distribution in forestry educational study and training programs

The results shown in Figure 4 reveal a mixed approach to addressing gender equality within forestry education programs. While the majority of participants reported that gender equality was not a topic in their educational curricula, it is remarkable that nearly one-third of respondents indicated that it was included in their forestry education. This finding is surprising, as it suggests that some programs are making efforts to integrate gender equality into their teaching, even though it remains absent in most cases. The lack of emphasis on gender equality in many programs highlights a missed opportunity towards a more inclusive forestry sector. By not incorporating discussions on gender equality, educational institutions may inadvertently perpetuate existing biases and stereotypes, that are then carried on into the working environment. On the other hand, the inclusion of gender equality in some

programs demonstrates a growing awareness of its importance and a willingness to challenge traditional norms, which can be considered a positive development for forestry education in the Danube Region.

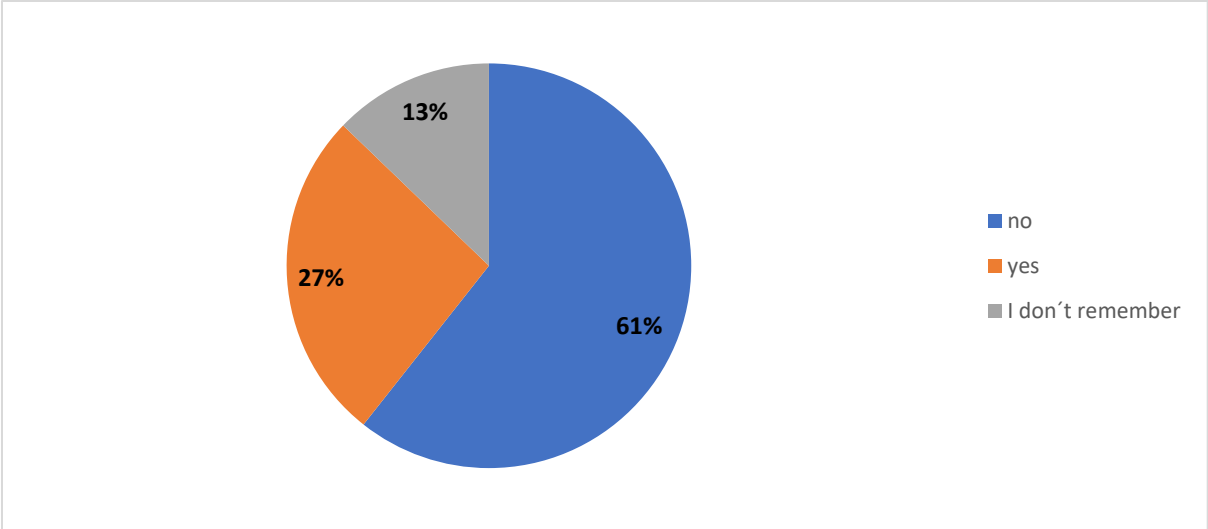


Figure 4: Consideration of gender equality in forestry educational study and training programs

Overall, most participants pointed out that their forestry education was a good preparation for their professional career (Table 2). This positive result suggests that most educational programs in the Danube Region effectively prepared graduates with the skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary to succeed in their professional life. However, while most participants expressed satisfaction, it remains important to continuously evaluate and adapt educational programs to address emerging challenges in the forestry sector, such as climate change, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable resource management among others.

Table 2: Quality of forestry education

<b>My education in forestry was a good preparation for my professional career.</b>		
strongly agree	125	24.3%
agree	252	48.9%
neither agree nor disagree	96	18.6%
disagree	33	6.4%
strongly disagree	9	1.8%

In the survey, participants also reflected on the skills and competencies that are essential for success in the forestry profession (Fig. 5). When looking back, participants expressed a desire for more practical fieldwork (19.0%), networking opportunities (15.7%) as well as internships and mentorship (both about 12.0%) during their forestry education. This feedback suggests that while participants feel prepared for their careers as indicated in Table 2, there is room for improvement in their educational experiences.

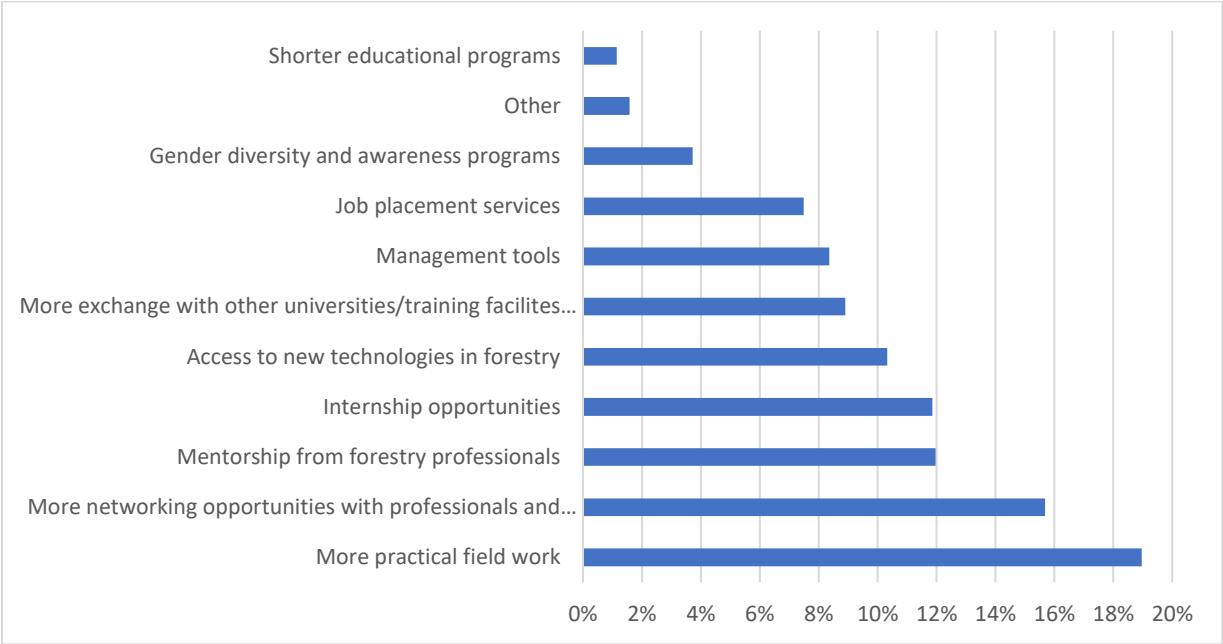


Figure 5: Ideas for improvement of forestry education

### 3.3 Job search and recruitment process

Communication skills (11.7%), teamwork (10.6%), and professional specialization (10.1%) were identified as the most critical factors for finding employment (Fig. 6). Additionally, self-confidence (8.9%) and problem-solving abilities (7.8%) were highlighted as essential. The emphasis on communication, teamwork, and self-confidence highlights the importance of "soft" skills in the job market. At the same time, professional specialization and problem-solving abilities underline the need to for technical expertise and critical thinking. Employers and educational institutions could offer targeted training to help individuals improve communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.

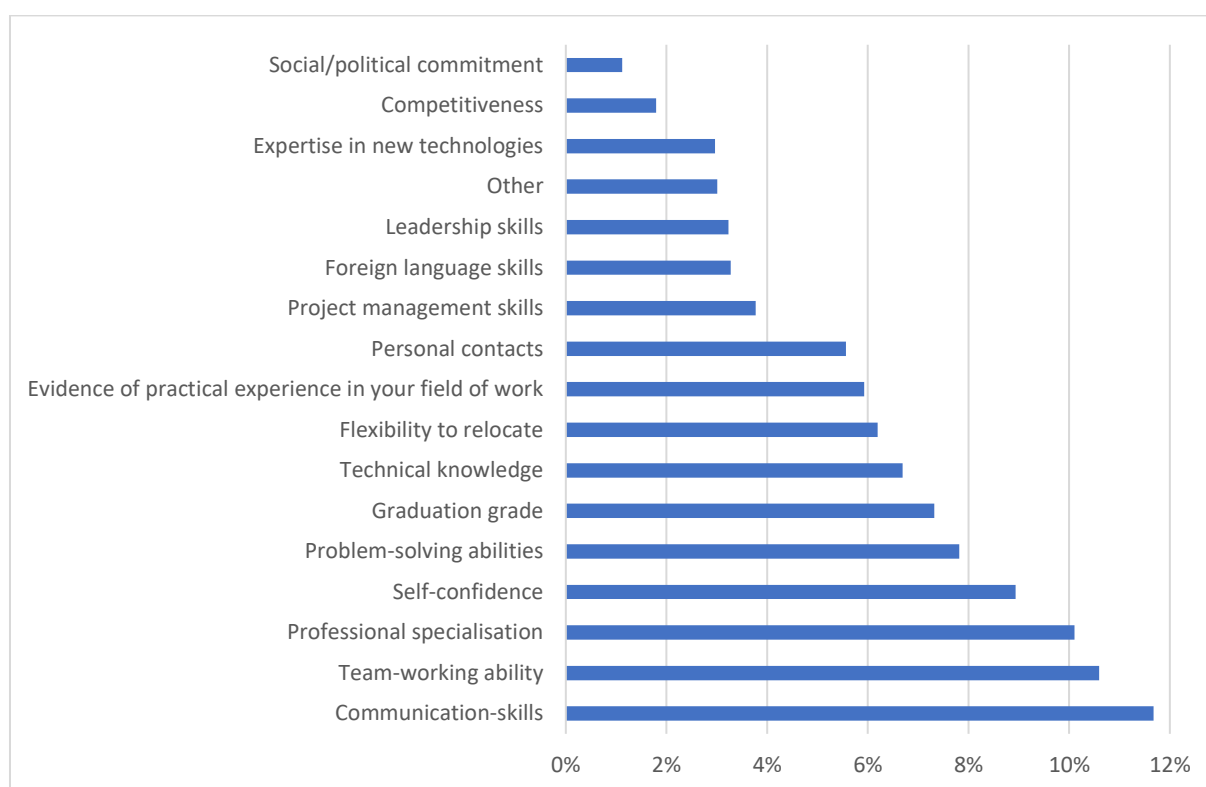


Figure 6: Key skills for finding employment

This section outlines common methods for finding employment, with job postings (21%) and personal contacts (17%) being the most utilized strategies (Fig. 7). This reliance on personal networks suggests that mentorship and networking opportunities are crucial for women entering the forestry profession. The data also highlights the importance of online job searches, indicating a shift towards digital platforms for job hunting. The least used strategies were own job advertisements and self-employment/freelancing or job-agency (3% each).

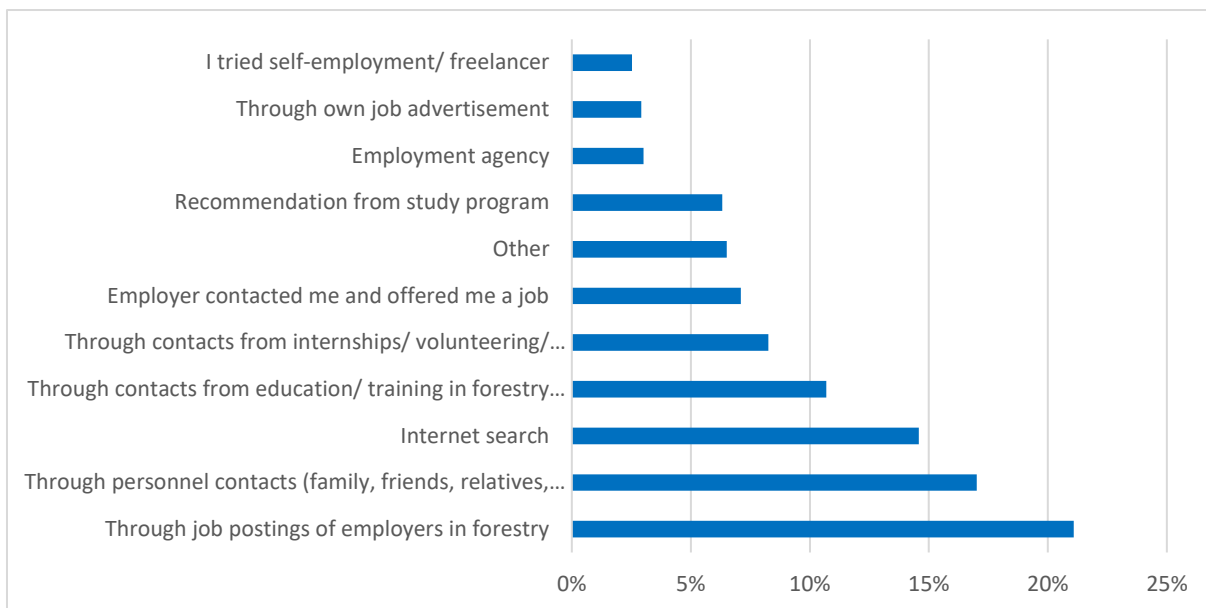


Figure 7: Job search strategies

**Recruitment patterns of forestry organizations/ companies:** The findings highlight efforts by employers to attract female talent and promote inclusive working environments, as well as areas where further progress is needed (Table 3). According to the results, 28% of job advertisements explicitly encourage women to apply, and 20% of positions offer part-time or remote work options. The answers indicate that women recognize employers' measures towards gender equality in recruitment processes. Such initiatives reflect broader trends in fostering gender equality and work-life balance, aligning with policies that aim to create more equitable labor market conditions.

However, the presence of gender equality officers during job interviews, reported by only 11% of respondents, suggests that hiring practices still have room for improvement. While the inclusion of such officers is a positive step toward ensuring fairness in recruitment processes, the relatively low percentage indicates that this practice is not yet widespread. This gap underscores the need for more consistent implementation of measures to promote equity and mitigate potential biases in hiring.

Table 3: Gender equality criteria during recruitment

What gender equality criteria during your recruitment process are you aware of?		
Women are encouraged to apply in job advertisements	142	28%
Part time/ home office is possible for the position	98	19%
Gender equality/ equal opportunity officers were present during job interview	56	11%

### 3.4 Career Paths of Female Forestry Professionals

The data reveals that a significant majority (59%) of survey participants across the Danube Region are employed directly in forestry (Fig. 8). This indicates that women who have completed a forestry degree mostly continue their professional activities in this field, with only 8% engaged in education or management/administration.

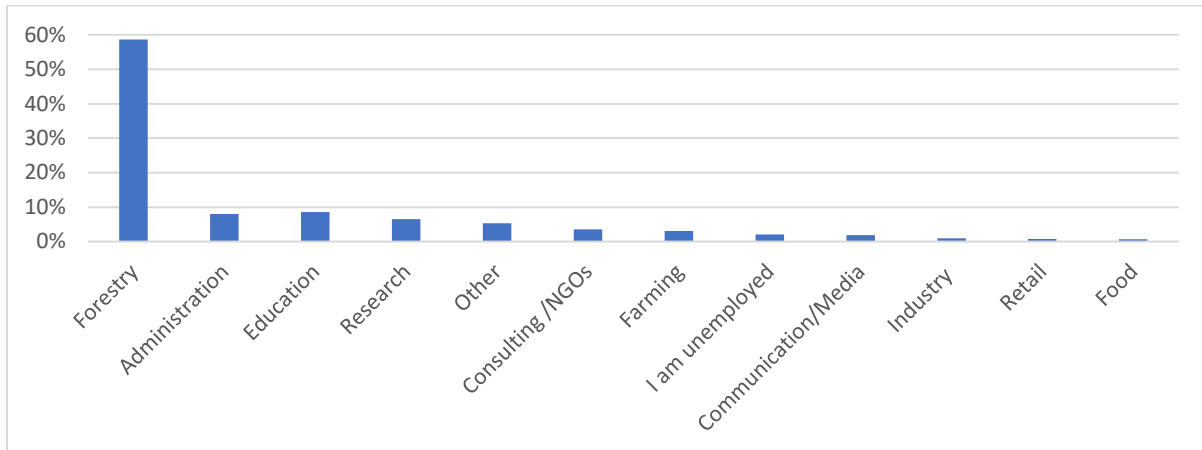


Figure 8: Distribution of employment areas among participants (all countries)

Among those employed in the forestry sector, a notable share of 75% work for forest enterprises or national public forest administrations (Fig. 9). This concentration in specific types of organizations may reflect the availability of positions and the nature of work within the forestry sector. The data also indicates a diversity of roles, with women participating in various areas, including research and consulting.

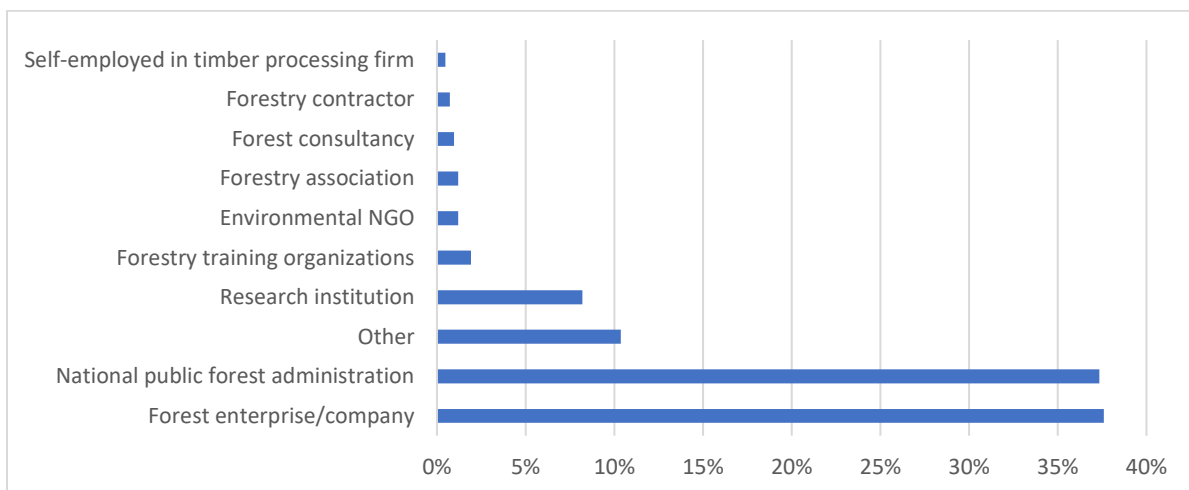


Figure 9: Employment allocation of participants working in the forest sector

The analysis of professional positions shows that nearly half (46%) of the participants occupy non-leadership roles, while 37% hold middle management positions (Fig. 10). This distribution suggests that while women are advancing in their careers, there is still a significant gap in representation at the highest levels of management. The presence of women in leadership roles (9% in top management) indicates a need for further initiatives to support women in advancing to these positions.

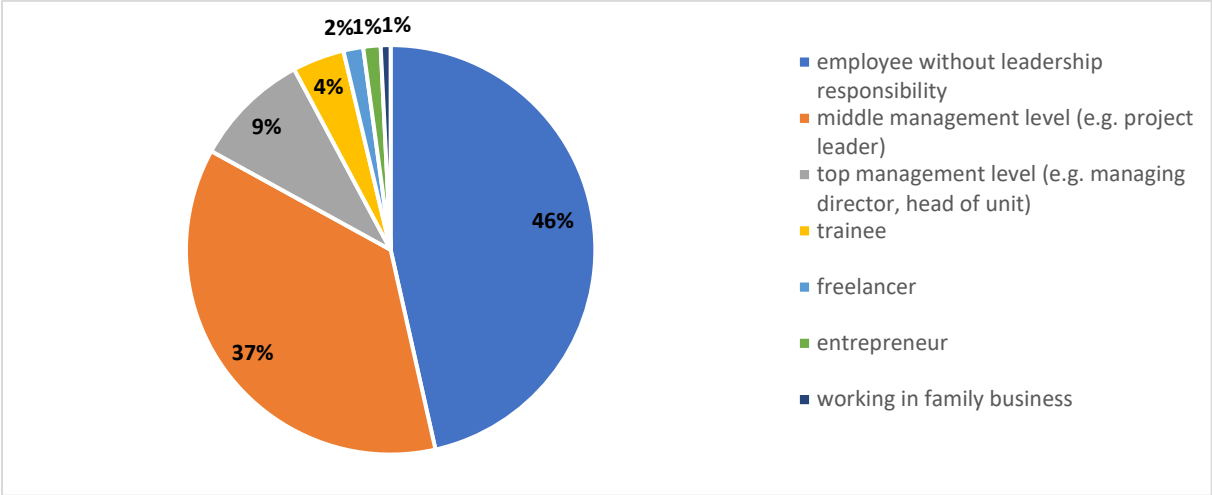


Figure 10: Professional positions

### 3.5 Part-Time Employment and Work-Life Balance

In this study 13% of the participants reported part-time employment. The primary reason cited is childcare responsibilities, accounting for 37% of responses, which underscores the significant role family obligations play in shaping employment decisions. This finding highlights the ongoing challenges of balancing professional and personal responsibilities, particularly for individuals with caregiving duties. Additionally, 17% of participants indicated that they work part-time due to holding additional jobs, suggesting that some individuals may need to juggle multiple sources of income to meet financial needs. Work-life balance considerations were also an important factor, cited by 13%, reflecting the importance of flexible work arrangements in maintaining overall well-being and managing competing priorities. 10% indicated that part-time work was the only option available for their position (Fig. 11).

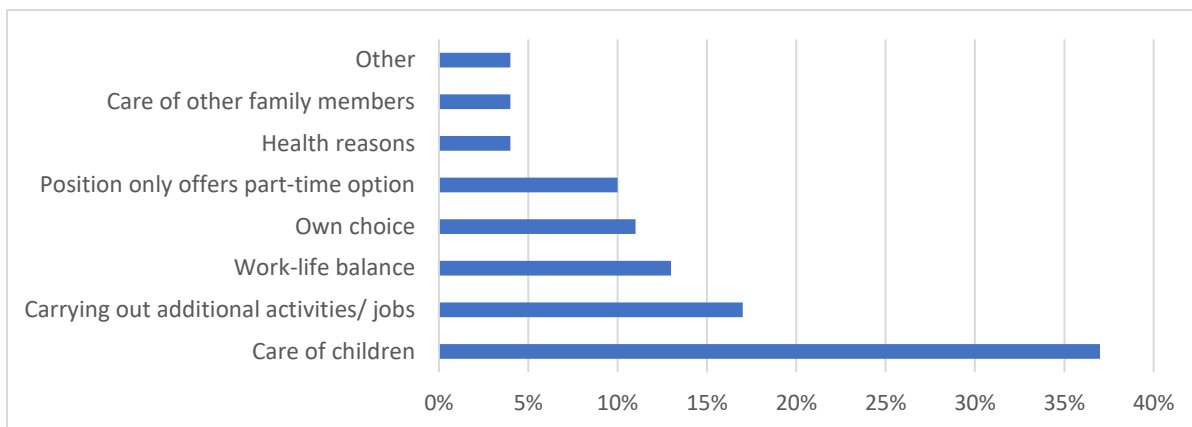


Figure 11: Reasons for part-time employment

The analysis of work-life balance opportunities in their current job reveals that a significant portion of respondents rated their work-life balance as very good, good or sufficient (86%). Only a minor percentage of the women in this study considers the work-life opportunities that their current job offers as bad, which shows that the working conditions for forestry graduates in the Danube Region do largely meet the needs of professional women.

Table 4: Work-Life Balance at the Workplace

How would you rank the opportunities for work life balance in your current job?		
very bad	16	4%
bad	40	10%
sufficient	116	29%
good	162	40%
very good	70	17%

### 3.6 Experiences in the Workplace

The survey provides insights into the workplace experiences of women, particularly in their interactions with male colleagues (Table 5). A significant portion of women, 43%, report experiencing friendly and equal treatment, while 19% note a willingness to help from their male counterparts. These findings suggest that many women encounter supportive and respectful environments in their professional settings, which can foster collaboration and inclusivity.

However, the data also reveals that about one-third of participants face challenges rooted in traditional gender dynamics. These include confrontations with traditional gender roles (6%), the need to outperform colleagues to receive the same recognition (8%) and being treated in a superficially friendly manner while not being taken seriously or feeling critically observed. These issues highlight persistent gender biases that undermine women’s professional experiences and contributions.

Table 5: Interactions at the workplace

<b>How are you treated by colleagues with a different sex than yours?</b>		
I experience friendly interaction.	286	25%
I experience willingness to help.	214	19%
I experience equal treatment.	201	18%
I have to perform better than my colleagues to get the same recognition for my work.	96	8%
I am treated friendly but not taken seriously.	79	7%
I am confronted with traditional gender-roles.	71	6%
I am critically observed.	65	6%
I am not involved in decision-making.	38	3%
I have the feeling of being treated unfairly.	31	3%
I am not part of a network.	23	2%
I feel like an outsider.	22	2%
Other	8	1%

The survey results reveal a generally positive outlook of forestry graduates regarding their current professional circumstances (Table 6). 63% of participants expressed satisfaction with their current positions and 66% reported feeling supported in their working environments. This indicates that many graduates have made a successful transition into professional life. This finding is encouraging and reflects the effectiveness of forestry education and workplace integration in fostering positive outcomes for graduates in the Danube Region.

Table 6: Support and job satisfaction

Rank	Do you feel supported in your working environment?			Are you satisfied with your current position?		
	5	yes, always	112	27%	very satisfied	122
4	most of the time	159	39%	satisfied	198	39%
3	more or less	91	22%	quite satisfied	112	22%
2	sometimes	38	9%	slightly dissatisfied	52	10%
1	no, not at all	12	3%	dissatisfied	29	6%

### 3.7 Challenges in education and work

The gender-related challenges faced by women in forestry education are significant (Table 7). The majority of respondents in this study reported encountering gender-related challenges during their education, with around 60% indicating they faced these issues either often or sometimes. This indicates

that gender biases and obstacles are still widespread within forestry education and could discourage women from fully engaging in their education or pursuing careers in forestry, perpetuating gender imbalances in the field.

Table 7: Gender-related challenges in forestry education

Did you face gender-related challenges in your forestry education?		
I don't know	22	4,1%
I don't want to answer	2	0,4%
no	193	36,4%
yes, a lot	66	12,4%
yes, sometimes	248	46,7%

The respondents identified different barriers, that could hinder women's efforts to pursue a career in forestry after completing their forestry education. (Fig. 12). Among the most prominent challenges is the underestimation of women's abilities, mentioned by 18% of respondents. This reflects a broader issue of gender bias, where women's skills and competencies are undervalued in a traditionally male-dominated sector. Additionally, 17% of respondents identified the male-dominated working environment and the lack of female role models as potential barrier. These factors not only limit opportunities for women but also perpetuate a culture where women may feel isolated or unsupported. Gender stereotypes associated with forestry professions, reported by 15%, further reinforce these challenges, as they create societal perceptions that discourage women from entering the field. The data also points to work-life balance challenges (14%), which are particularly relevant for women managing family responsibilities alongside their careers.

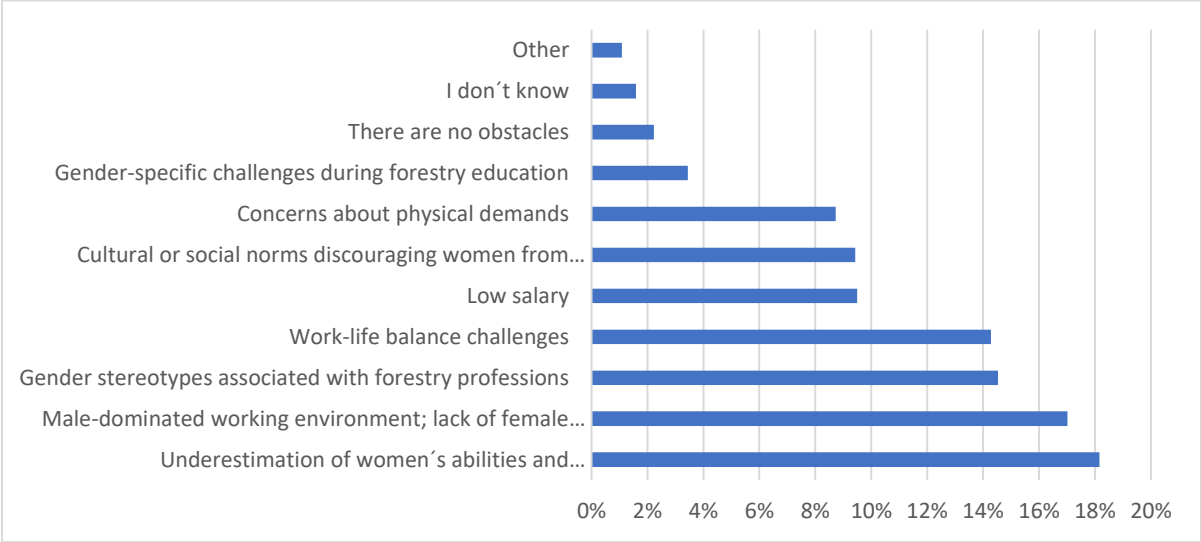


Figure 12: Barriers to continue a career in forestry

The results presented in Table 8 highlight the main difficulties faced by participants in securing employment after completing their forestry education. These challenges provide valuable insights into the barriers that female forestry graduates face during their job search. The most commonly reported challenge was competition with other applicants who had more professional experience. This suggests that recent graduates may struggle to compete in a job market that prioritizes experience over potential. This finding underscores the importance of providing more practical training and internship opportunities during forestry education to better prepare graduates for the workforce. The second most significant barrier was the availability of positions too far from home. This reflects the geographic limitations of forestry jobs, which are often located in rural or remote areas. For many graduates, particularly women with family or caregiving responsibilities, relocating may not be a feasible option. This highlights the need for employers to consider flexible working arrangements, such as remote work or regional job opportunities, to attract a broader talent pool. Gender-related challenges were identified by 10% of participants as a barrier to employment. This finding points to persistent issues of gender bias and inequality in the hiring process within the forestry sector. Another 10% of participants reported that available positions did not meet their salary expectations. This suggests a potential mismatch between the financial aspirations of graduates and the compensation offered in the forestry sector. Employers may need to reassess their salary structures to attract and retain qualified candidates, particularly as competitive compensation is a key factor in career decisions.

Table 8: Challenges for job search

<b>Which difficulties did you have in your job search?</b>		
There were no difficulties.	179	22.3%
Applicants with more professional experience were preferred.	107	13.3%
Most positions were too far away from my home.	91	11.3%
The positions did not match my salary expectations.	81	10.1%
I was disadvantaged because of my gender.	76	9.5%
The positions did not meet my personal interests.	34	4.2%
The positions were not compatible with my family situation.	33	4.1%
Another degree was required (e.g. Master, PhD, etc.).	28	3.5%
Graduates with a different professional focus were preferred.	28	3.5%
The positions did not match my ideas about working hours and working conditions.	27	3.4%
Professional skills that I don't have were required.	23	2.9%
Other	95	11.8 %

The challenges faced by participants during their first job after completing their forestry education were diverse (Fig. 13). Notably, 15% of participants reported having no difficulties in their first job. This suggests that a segment of graduates successfully navigated the transition from education to employment, indicating that their training adequately prepared them for the challenges of the workplace. This positive experience may be attributed to effective educational programs, supportive work environments, or strong personal resilience. The second most common challenge reported was work overload, experienced by 14% of participants. This indicates that many graduates faced high expectations and demanding workloads upon entering their roles. Another significant challenge, reported by 10% of participants, involved difficulties with colleagues or supervisors. This highlights potential issues related to workplace dynamics, communication, and collaboration. Additionally, 10% of respondents felt underchallenged in their roles. This suggests that some graduates may have encountered positions that did not fully utilize their skills or provide opportunities for growth. Finally, 9% of participants identified gender-related challenges as a significant factor in their work experience. This finding points to the ongoing issues of gender inequality and bias within the forestry sector. Such challenges can manifest in various ways, including discrimination, lack of representation, and limited access to mentorship opportunities among others. These findings highlight the need for organizations to implement supportive measures, such as workload management, mentorship programs, and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality, to enhance the experiences and career advancement of new forestry professionals.

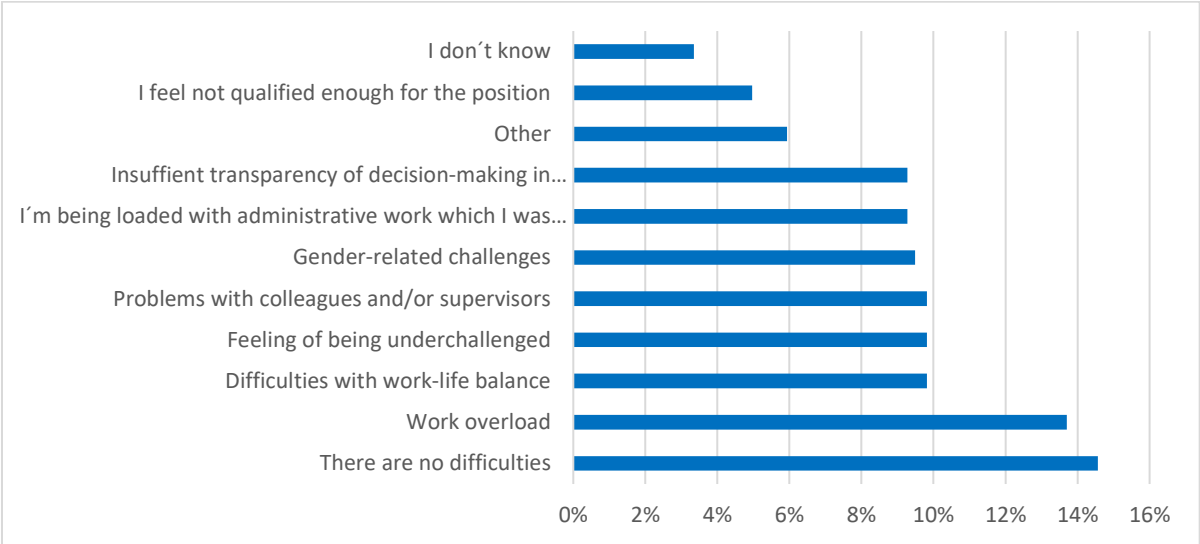


Figure 13: Challenges for career starters

The survey also explores the main barriers to career advancement as reported by participants, shedding light on the challenges faced in the workplace (Fig. 14). The most frequently cited obstacles include roles and stereotypes (13%) and a male-dominated work environment (12%). These findings suggest that traditional gender norms and workplace cultures continue to limit opportunities for career progression, particularly for women. Such stereotypes may influence perceptions of competence and suitability for leadership roles, while a male-dominated environment can perpetuate exclusionary practices and hinder inclusivity. Additionally, family responsibilities or caregiving duties and a lack of self-confidence were

each identified by 10% of respondents as significant barriers. Family responsibilities often place additional demands on women, making it more difficult to dedicate time and energy to career advancement. Similarly, a lack of self-confidence may have multiple causes, such as limited representation of women in leadership roles or a lack of mentorship and support networks.

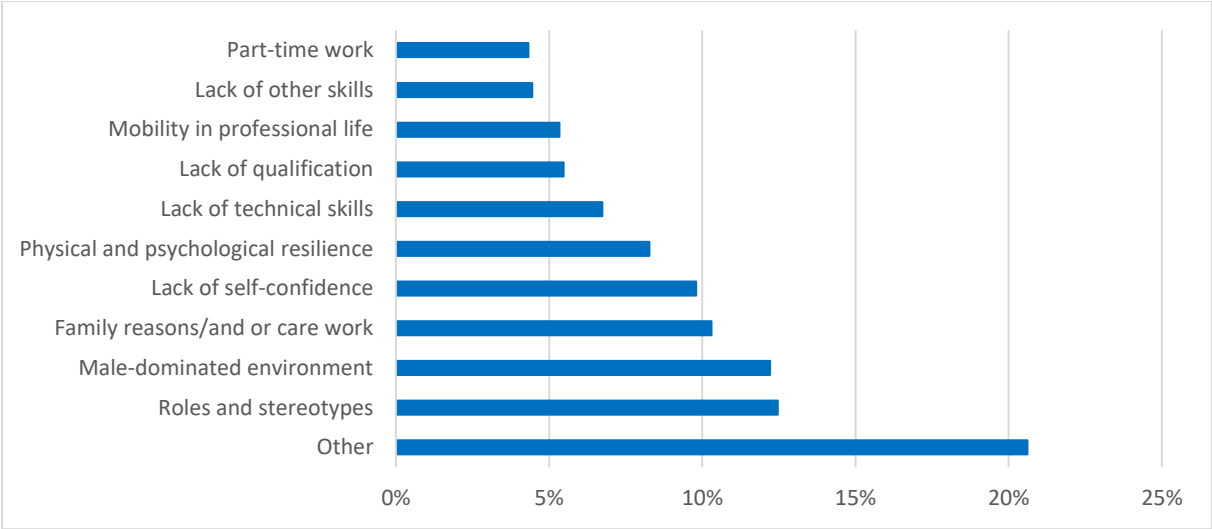


Figure 14: Barriers for career advancement

## 3.8 Recommendations from survey

### Ideas to improve forestry education

The survey asked women how forestry education could be improved to better prepare female students for their professional life. **This section summarizes the main ideas from the participants and provides a set of recommendations for educational facilities in forestry.**

In the survey the topic of gender equality in terms of respectful and considerate interaction received the most mentions. It is a broader complex that also includes strengthening women's self-confidence in dealing with "difficult situations", while simultaneously suggesting the sensitization of lecturers and leaders through courses or training. Interestingly, this was followed by the desire for more practical training content. This suggests that it could help to address stereotypes about "typical weaknesses of women", strengthen self-confidence in traditionally male-dominated areas, or generally enhance the quality of training.

The table below gives an overview and ranks the answers to the open question "Forestry education for women can be improved by..... "

Table 9: Ideas to improve forestry education

Topic	Number of mentions
<b>Gender Sensitivity/Women-Specific Support:</b> Awareness (sensitivity training courses, wit/self-confidence, also for men and leaders), consideration (taking periods into account, better hygiene conditions), information and advising (women can work hard too), zero tolerance for misogyny, scholarships, and raising awareness of support services.	126
<b>More Practical Experience and Better Internship Opportunities</b>	54
<b>More Female Role Models:</b> Women in leadership positions, women in teaching, making women more visible or giving them more space to present themselves.	40
<b>Mentoring:</b> Guidance, promoting awareness of career opportunities.	30
<b>Improved Work and Training Models:</b> Safety, job exchange programs, part-time work, childcare.	30
<b>Creating a Modern Image:</b> Strengthening the representation of the profession, breaking down stereotypes, modern technology.	30
<b>Women's networking:</b> networking, contact with women in the workplace	20

## Recommendations for forestry education

### 1. Gender Sensitivity/Women-Specific Support

Gender sensitivity and women-specific support are crucial for creating an inclusive learning environment. This involves raising awareness through sensitivity training courses that not only empower women but also educate men and leaders about the challenges women face. Consideration for women's unique needs, such as accommodating menstrual cycles and ensuring better hygiene conditions, is essential. Furthermore, promoting the message that women can work hard and excel in their fields is vital. Establishing a zero-tolerance policy for misogyny, offering scholarships, and making support services known can significantly enhance the educational environment for women.

### 2. More Practical Experience and Better Internship Opportunities

To better prepare women for their careers, it is essential to provide more practical experience and improved internship opportunities. Educational institutions should actively seek partnerships with organizations to create internship programs that offer meaningful experiences. By prioritizing practical training, institutions can help bridge the gap between education and employment, ensuring that women are well-equipped to enter the workforce.

### 3. More Female Role Models

Increasing the visibility of female role models in various fields is vital for inspiring the next generation of women leaders. Educational institutions should actively promote women in leadership positions and in teaching roles, showcasing their achievements and contributions. By highlighting successful women, institutions can create a culture that values diversity and encourages young women to pursue careers in areas where they may feel underrepresented. Providing platforms for women to present their work and share their experiences can further empower them and foster a supportive community.

### 4. Mentoring

Mentoring is an effective way to support women's career development and promote awareness of available opportunities. Educational institutions should establish mentoring programs that connect experienced professionals with women seeking guidance in their careers. These programs can help women navigate challenges, build confidence, and develop essential skills. By fostering a culture of mentorship, institutions can empower women to take charge of their career paths and encourage them to pursue leadership roles.

### 5. Improved Work and Training Models

Improved work and training models are important to create a supportive and flexible work environment. Forestry educational institutions should prioritize work-life balance by offering part-time study programs and flexible working hours for trainees.

### 6. Creating a Modern Image

Creating a modern image of the profession is crucial for attracting diverse talent and breaking down stereotypes. Educational facilities should actively work to represent their fields in a way that reflects contemporary values and practices. This includes showcasing the use of modern technology and emphasizing the diverse roles within the profession. By promoting a progressive image, educational

institutions can challenge outdated perceptions and encourage more women to consider careers in traditionally male-dominated fields.

## 7. Women’s Networking

Networking is a powerful tool for professional growth, and educational institutions should actively promote opportunities for women to connect. Establishing networks specifically for women can facilitate collaboration, mentorship, and support among peers. Hosting conferences, workshops, and training sessions can provide platforms for women to share their experiences and knowledge, fostering a sense of community.

### Ideas to improve the working conditions in the forestry sector

The survey also asked participants how companies can foster the career of women in the forestry sector. **This section summarizes the main ideas from the participants and provides a set of recommendations for forest companies.**

Equality and equal treatment are significant desires among women. Social equality and appreciation in the workplace are considered equally important. The issue of work models is also a crucial topic. Criticism is frequently directed at the lack of or insufficiently implemented/supported part-time models. Remote work and flexible working hours are described as important in this context. The promotion of networks and role models also appear to be key factors for employers to foster the career of women. When it comes to treatment in the workplace, women prefer to be included but rarely want to be favoured.

The table below gives an overview and ranks the most important answers to the open question “Employers in forestry can foster the career of females in the forest sector through...”

Table 10: Ideas to improve the working conditions in the forestry sector

Topic	Number of mentions
<b>Equality and Transparency:</b> Transparency in hiring, equal treatment, salary, job position, tasks & decisions, reduction of stereotypes (anti-discrimination).	84
<b>More Recognition and Appreciation in the Workplace:</b> More trust in women, respect, taking women seriously, eliminating clichés/sexism and prejudices, believing in women's capabilities, promoting women according to their potential, tolerance, recognition of women's achievements, menstrual leave, understanding for physical work.	82
<b>Improved Work Models:</b> Work-life balance, flexible or suitable working hours (implementing and modelling by leaders, not just on paper), remote work options, long-term positions that allow re-entry after parental leave, supporting childcare	59
<b>Improved Work Models - Part-Time:</b> Part-time models, normalizing part-time work, part-time for all positions, improving part-time options, ensuring part-time is not a career obstacle, training/instructors in part-time, additionally supporting part-time management.	43

<b>Promoting Women's Networking:</b> Conferences for women, education, training to network women and promote equal treatment.	23
<b>Creating Female Role Models:</b> Promoting women in leadership positions, showcasing and recognizing women's achievements.	17
<b>Women's Quota:</b> Especially in leadership positions, preferential hiring of women.	10

## Recommendations for forestry employers

### 1. Equality and Transparency

Equality and transparency in the workplace are essential for fostering an inclusive environment. Organizations should ensure that hiring processes are transparent, allowing all candidates to understand the criteria for selection. Equal treatment in terms of salary, job positions, tasks, and decision-making is crucial for building trust among employees. Additionally, addressing and reducing stereotypes through anti-discrimination policies can help create a more equitable workplace where everyone feels valued and respected.

### 2. More Recognition and Appreciation in the Workplace

Recognition and appreciation are vital components of a positive work environment. Women should be trusted and respected in their roles, with their contributions taken seriously. Organizations must actively work to eliminate clichés, sexism, and prejudices that undermine women's capabilities. By fostering a culture that believes in women's potential and promotes their achievements, companies can enhance motivation among their employees. Implementing policies such as menstrual leave and providing understanding for physical work can further demonstrate appreciation for women's unique challenges.

### 3. Improved Work Models

To support a healthy work-life balance, organizations need to adopt improved work models. This includes offering flexible working hours that are not just theoretical but actively practiced by leadership. Part-time work models should be normalized across all positions within organizations. It is essential to improve part-time options and ensure that they do not serve as a barrier to career advancement. Remote work options should be made available to accommodate diverse needs, while long-term positions should facilitate re-entry after parental leave. Additionally, supporting childcare solutions can alleviate the burden on working parents, allowing them to focus on their professional responsibilities without compromising their family commitments. By promoting part-time roles for training and management positions, companies can create a more inclusive environment that accommodates diverse working styles. This approach not only supports women but also encourages a broader range of talent to thrive within the organization.

### 4. Promoting Women's Networking

Networking is a powerful tool for professional growth, and organizations should actively promote opportunities for women to connect. Hosting conferences and training sessions specifically for women can facilitate networking and foster a sense of community. By providing platforms for women to share

experiences and knowledge, companies can help promote equal treatment and create a supportive environment where women can thrive in their careers.

#### 5. Creating Female Role Models

Creating female role models within organizations is crucial for inspiring the next generation of women leaders. By promoting women in leadership positions and recognizing their achievements, companies can showcase the diverse talents and capabilities of women. Highlighting these role models not only empowers current employees but also encourages young women to pursue careers in fields where they may have previously felt underrepresented.

#### 6. Women's Quota

Implementing a women's quota, particularly in leadership positions, can help address gender imbalances in the workplace. By prioritizing the hiring of women, organizations can create a more diverse leadership team that reflects the broader workforce.

## 4 Results from interviews with forestry professionals

The interviews with forest professionals from the nine partner countries are presented below. Each partner country has summarized the ten interviews conducted, highlighting key findings, challenges and lessons learned. These summaries offer valuable insights into the current developments and practical experiences of forestry professionals across the Danube Region.

### 4.1 Austria

#### The interview partners

The interviewees represented four different educational paths: Two of the graduates had completed a forestry skilled worker education, one of these had completed an additional apprenticeship as a forestry technician and as a professional huntress. Five of the interviewees attended the Technical Forestry High School and four completed a degree at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences (Diplom-Ingenieur = Master's degree; one of these four attended previously the Technical Forestry High School).

In terms of age, a relatively wide range was covered: the oldest participant was born in 1968, the youngest in 2003. One half of the interviewees were born in the 1980s. Accordingly, the professional education periods also cover a large period of time: the first graduation took place in 1987, the last in 2024. Most of the interviewees completed their vocational training between 2007 and 2015. This results in an equally wide range in terms of professional experience and career stages.

All interviewees are employed or self-employed, and one of them has only recently returned from maternity leave. Three of them are working for the Austrian Federal forests in different positions, the other ones are employed by another public forest owner, in the field of natural hazard management (public administration), by a private forest owner, a forest owner association, a forest service company and a forest training center/research institution (public owned). One of the interviewees is self-employed.

#### Gender-specific challenges in forestry professional training in Austria

##### ***Share of women in training programs:***

In the very practice-oriented vocational training courses (forest Skilled worker and forest technician), the proportion of women was very low – interviewees were the only woman or one of two (low single-digit percentage range).

In the Technical Forestry High School (foresters), the proportion of women has gradually increased over the years. The oldest female graduate (graduated in 1987) had a very low percentage of girls; she was one of the first female graduates of the school. "We were the unicorns." (FFP\_1\_AT). Even later on in the early 2000s, the proportion was still well below 10%. The class of the latest graduate (2022), on the other hand, was the strongest class of girls to date, with a proportion of one third.

At university level the proportion of women is significantly higher, most interviewees put it at 20-25%. However, this is probably also related to the fact that forestry studies include different master's degree programs (e.g. wildlife management, torrent and avalanche control and wood technology), in which the proportion of women is significantly higher than in the master's degree program in forestry.

### **Treatment of women in training programs:**

Especially female skilled workers, forest technicians and foresters emphasize that they were treated equally to their male colleagues during training and that they expressly support this and do not want to be favored. Only two (older) female graduates mentioned that they were definitely put to the test.

*"We were shown everything equally well during the internship, I can't say that we weren't allowed to cut with the chainsaw or anything like that." (FFP\_6\_AT)*

*"We were treated absolutely equally. I want to be treated the same way and not be treated separately as a woman." (FFP\_7\_AT)*

*"I have made the observation, how you organise the situation, that's how it is." (FFP\_5\_AT)*

The female university graduates also did not notice any difference in their treatment during their education. In contrast, this was at least sometimes the case with internships.

*"You had to make an insane effort to gain the respect of the district forester. Also as the only woman at events, I was often seen as a secretary, assistant or trainee and not as someone who had something to say professionally" (FFP\_2\_AT).*

### **Gender equality in training programs:**

Gender equality was not explicitly dealt with in the educational pathways, but was mentioned in two cases outside the forestry training (in general education subjects or outside the training program). One graduate (Technical Forestry High School) mentioned that gender-specific challenges were an issue insofar as male classmates felt disadvantaged because a public employer favoured women for internships.

The interviewees were divided on the question of whether there should be supportive programs for women during training. Half – predominantly graduates of practice-oriented educational pathways – meant that no special support was needed and that male and female students should be treated exactly the same. These reasons given were: *"The categories of women who can't cope with it might be better suited to a different profession." (FFP\_9\_AT)*. Some of them argued that support programs could even be interpreted as facilitating training to the disadvantage of women and that it could reinforce the "envy culture" of men. *"In my job, support isn't necessary, then it's just 'you did the women's course'. For me, equality means that everyone is allowed to do what they want to do and that women are also allowed to enter this profession." (FFP\_7\_AT)*. One interviewee stated that support programs should not be necessary in principle, as *"what is needed is to communicate the attitude that it is 'normal' that women work in forestry." (FFP\_2\_AT)*.

Four of the interviewees believe that there should be support for female students, e.g. possibilities of exchange, mentoring programs, networks for female students or female role models. These programs would particularly help women who find it more difficult to enter a male domain and motivate them to work in the forestry industry in the long term.

*"Some women can handle it better, some less, and some might need support and could be motivated to stay and work in forestry. I think it makes sense if women with professional experience could do something like that, like the Forstfrauen, for example. But men should also be invited again and again to make the young women visible." (FFP\_3\_AT)*

One interviewee emphasized also the responsibility of people who are already successful in forestry: *"It's important to take responsibility as a leader." (FFP\_1\_AT)*

## Gender specific challenges in forestry jobs in Austria

### **Share of women in the workplace:**

The proportion of women in forestry roles varies significantly. In some cases the interviewees are the only women in forestry-specific use in their department. At the other end of the spectrum, one interviewee put the proportion of women at almost 50%. Most commonly, women represent around 5–10% of the forest-specific workforce.

The share of women varies according to employer and function. In simple terms, it can be stated that the proportion of women tends to be lower in positions that are very close to traditional forestry work or forestry technology, and that the proportion of women increases in higher positions, in the service sector and with public or semi-public employers, but this assumption is not consistent in all cases.

*"As a woman, you are in good hands at the Austrian Federal Forest, you are valued, issues are simply addressed, we are pioneers in this respect." (FFP\_1\_AT)*

### **Female sex and recruitment:**

As far as interviewees addressed the job advertisements, positions were advertised as gender-neutral. With one exception, no gender-specific rejections of applications were reported. In this one case – an previous job interview – the reason was that the interviewee was newly married and would certainly have children soon. However, four interviewees acknowledged that being a woman may have positively influenced hiring due to diversity goals or perceived strengths in communication and precision. Two of these working for a public employer mentioned, that they got the job because they were women reflecting political efforts to increase female representation. The other two interviewees stated:

*"I don't think the fact that I'm a woman was decisive or even relevant. But I do believe that the managing director sees advantages in women because they are more precise, and that was fine with him." (FFP\_5\_AT)*

*"It was definitely positive that I am a woman, and I do believe that the managing director welcomed it because he thinks that women have better opportunities in sales." (FFP\_8\_AT)*

In one case, the accusation of preferential treatment of women was articulated by colleagues:

*"I also had the better qualifications because I had a bachelor's degree in forestry and the other best qualified person (a man) came from a different field. However, it was said that I got the job because I was a woman." (FFP\_3\_AT)*

### **Support from colleagues:**

There is a noticeable gap between internal support and external skepticism. Most women reported strong support both from colleagues and superiors.

*"There is a very respectful atmosphere here at my current company, which I really appreciate! I feel very well supported and accepted due to an orderly and intensive onboarding process." (FFP\_8\_AT)*

However, nearly all of them faced skepticism or exclusion, one from subordinates and several interviewees from external stakeholders, such as rural population, service providers or suppliers.

*"My colleagues and my line manager also often made it clear, I had their support. Personally, it (note: skepticism of the rural population) never bothered me so much that I didn't want to do my job. But I can imagine that it's not so easy if you're more sensitive." (FFP\_3\_AT)*

*"But generally speaking, if you say something as a woman, you won't be heard in the same way as male colleagues." (FFP\_10\_AT)*

One interviewee mentioned timber truck drivers and women as having a very a positive attitude towards women: *"The intuition that a woman often has, more empathy and acceptance of the situation, is not a bad thing in this business. And women have more trust in a woman that the work done will fit and that no timber will get lost, especially if they have been ripped off before." (FFP\_5\_AT)*

### **Barriers in career development and work-life balance:**

Career progression remains challenging. One interviewee was overlooked for promotions due to perceived lack of assertiveness: "I never thought about gender until I started my career – that you have to make more of an effort and fight harder to be accepted by colleagues." (FFP\_2\_AT)

Work-life balance is a recurring issue, especially for those with caregiving responsibilities and working in part-time. "Forestry is very anti-family according to the old role model" (FFP\_6\_AT), and unpredictable work hours (note: self-employed) make it hard to reconcile family and career.

"If you really want to be successful, you can't combine the two in such a way that one part doesn't suffer – family or job – you can't do both." (FFP\_9\_AT)

Working in the public sector is seen as a great advantage here, as the structures offer better opportunities to reconcile family and work, and also some private companies act very family-friendly: "My direct supervisor also actively ensures that I keep to my working hours. If something is not possible, then it just not possible, it's absolutely compatible." (FFP\_8\_AT)

### **Recommendations**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
<b>Training &amp; Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Integrate gender topics like ethics to raise awareness early and to bring everyone on board</li><li>• Address gender dynamics and "old structures" in curricula</li><li>• Use inclusive imagery (men and women working together)</li><li>• Encourage open discussion and reflection</li></ul>
<b>Professional Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote networking among women for mutual support</li><li>• Encourage authenticity – women should not feel pressured to adapt to male norms</li><li>• Give young people a chance to show their skills and the opportunity to gain a foothold</li><li>• Value professional competence over appearance</li><li>• Foster confidence and visibility</li><li>• Support from experienced women is valuable</li></ul>
<b>General Attitudes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gender equality should be a given principle, not a special topic</li><li>• Everyone should be treated equally and judged on merit</li><li>• Perseverance, courage, and self-belief are key</li><li>• Avoid overemphasis on emotional aspects in male-dominated fields</li></ul>

"The motto is to persevere, don't give up at the first problem, network!" (FFP\_1\_AT)

"My advice: Young female colleagues don't have to adapt to men, they should remain themselves. They should network with other female colleagues to create a support system so that they don't feel alone in this somewhat larger male world." (FFP\_2\_AT)

"But I also deliver my performance, and when my superiors see that, it is rewarded." (FFP\_3\_AT)

"You always come across as a lone fighter – If you can see that there are several women and men in a group, I think that might make a more positive impression." (FFP\_7\_AT)

"Be confident, like the boys do. Stop being a mouse and speak up. Young women often don't dare to say anything because they're afraid it might be wrong. Be visible, make yourself big." (FFP\_8\_AT)

The recommendations show a wide range of views on gender awareness. While some believe gender should not at all or no longer be a topic of discussion, others emphasize the importance of early education, inclusive representation, and support systems. A recurring theme is the value of self-confidence, networking, and professionalism. Some interviewees stress that gender equality should be normalized, while others highlight the need for practical strategies to navigate male-dominated environments.

### Lessons learned

1. There appears to be a correlation between educational background, professional position or activity and attitudes towards the importance of gender equality measures. The more practice-oriented the training or the closer the professional position is to practical forest management, the less importance is attached to specific equality measures and support programs and the more emphasis is placed on women asserting themselves independently.
2. Female and male students are essentially treated equally by the trainers/teachers (Note: Conversations with girls in other settings suggest that this is not always the case.), but women were often put to the test during internships.
3. Gender equality is not addressed in any of the curricula, and the interviewees did not mention any supporting formal programs or measures. The interviewees are divided on the necessity of such measures (see point 1). The mentioned measures were exchange, mentoring programs, networks for female students and female role models.
4. The share of women varies according to employer and function. Public employers tend to have a higher proportion of women, although this also depends on the specific positions or jobs.
5. At least officially gender is not an obstacle when applying for a job. In some cases, women even seem to have an advantage due to the characteristics attributed to them. Nevertheless, professional expertise is considered to be of the utmost importance.
6. There is a noticeable gap between internal support and external skepticism. While support from colleagues and superiors is consistently strong, women are met with skepticism from customers, stakeholders and business partners.
7. The most frequently mentioned obstacle to a career path is the compatibility of family and career or part-time work, although in some areas, especially in the public sector and in some private companies, a great deal of flexibility is already possible.

## 4.2 Bosnia and Herzegovina

### The interview partners

The ten women interviewed for this report represent a diverse cross-section of forestry professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina, spanning multiple generations and institutional profiles. All participants completed formal higher education in forestry at accredited public institutions, holding degrees at various levels: from traditional engineering diplomas (Dipl. Ing.) to master's and doctoral degrees. Most interviewees completed their studies between the late 1980s and mid-2010s, with birth years ranging from 1962 to 1993, reflecting both early-career and highly experienced professionals.

The interviewees are currently employed in a variety of roles across the public forestry sector, including cantonal administrations, forest enterprises, ministerial bodies, and academic institutions. Their professional responsibilities range from technical positions in ecology, GIS, and forest certification to senior advisory, management, and research roles. Two participants currently work in academia, while others are engaged in administrative or regulatory functions with significant influence on policy implementation and sectoral coordination.

Career trajectories among participants reveal a mix of linear advancement within a single institutional framework and more complex pathways involving cross-sector transitions or periods of professional reorientation. Several women have navigated interruptions in employment or roles outside their primary field before returning to forestry, while others have remained continuously engaged in sector-specific work.

## **Gender-specific challenges in forestry professional training in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

### ***Share of women in training programs:***

Across all interviews, a consistent theme was the low presence of women in forestry programs during earlier decades. Several participants who studied in the 1980s and 1990s recalled that women comprised only 10–20% of student cohorts (FFP\_4\_BiH, FFP\_10\_BiH). In one case, a participant from the 1980s reported being one of only 7–8 women in a class of around 100 students (FFP\_3\_BiH). More recent graduates observed a significant improvement in gender balance, with some estimating an almost equal 50/50 distribution in newer generations (FFP\_3\_BiH, FFP\_6\_BiH, FFP\_10\_BiH).

### ***Treatment of women in training programs:***

Most participants stated that they were not treated differently by faculty staff during their studies. Female students were given equal access to all components of education—including fieldwork, laboratory exercises, and practical sessions (e.g., FFP\_1\_BiH, FFP\_6\_BiH, FFP\_8\_BiH). In some cases, practical accommodations were made—such as distributing physically demanding field tasks in a way that matched individual capacities—but participants emphasized that this did not compromise the sense of equality (FFP\_10\_BiH).

However, a few participants, particularly from older generations, recalled more subtle forms of unequal treatment, mostly from peers rather than professors. One interviewee noted that, during the early years of her studies, female students were sometimes judged based on appearance or evaluated more critically during presentations (FFP\_9\_BiH). Another observed that female students often opted out of field activities, not because of institutional restrictions, but due to prevailing social norms suggesting that fieldwork was "not for women" (FFP\_7\_BiH).

### ***Gender equality in training programs:***

Gender equality was not a formal part of the curriculum for any of the interviewees. While some noted that this was not perceived as a critical issue during their time of study (FFP\_6\_BiH, FFP\_8\_BiH), nearly all agreed that such content should now be introduced in a systematic way. Suggested formats include seminars, elective courses, and guest lectures by women working in the forestry sector (FFP\_2\_BiH, FFP\_4\_BiH, FFP\_9\_BiH). Several participants emphasized the importance of exposing female students to the practical realities of the forestry sector—both physical and institutional—early in their training, to ensure better preparedness (FFP\_7\_BiH).

A clear generational shift was observed: older cohorts studied in male-dominated academic environments with little or no discourse on gender-related topics, while younger women entered more

gender-balanced classrooms with greater awareness of systemic challenges. However, across all generations, there was consensus that forestry education in Bosnia and Herzegovina still lacks an institutionally grounded approach to gender equality—both in content and structure—and that addressing this gap is essential for preparing future female professionals in the sector.

## **Gender specific challenges in forestry jobs in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

### ***Share of women in the workplace:***

In most interviewed institutions, women remain underrepresented. Several respondents estimated that women make up 10–25% of staff (FFP\_1\_BiH, FFP\_8\_BiH, FFP\_9\_BiH), with some workplaces employing only one woman with formal forestry education (FFP\_4\_BiH, FFP\_10\_BiH). Even in institutions viewed as more inclusive, such as public forest enterprises, women typically occupy administrative or specialized roles, while field and leadership positions remain male-dominated (FFP\_1\_BiH, FFP\_7\_BiH).

### ***Female sex and recruitment:***

Most participants stated that their gender did not influence recruitment outcomes. Most reported fair and transparent selection procedures based on qualifications (FFP\_2\_BiH, FFP\_8\_BiH, FFP\_10\_BiH). However, several noted that informal preferences may persist for men in field-intensive roles. For instance, forestry departments have inquired in advance whether selected trainees were men or women, suggesting assumptions about physical suitability (FFP\_5\_BiH). In another case, a participant was invited to meetings merely to take notes, rather than to contribute professionally (FFP\_9\_BiH).

### ***Support from colleagues:***

Most interviewees described collegial and respectful environments (FFP\_4\_BiH, FFP\_6\_BiH, FFP\_8\_BiH). Some reported strong solidarity among female colleagues, especially in overcoming institutional barriers or navigating maternity-related issues (FFP\_9\_BiH, FFP\_10\_BiH). However, subtle forms of exclusion persist. One respondent mentioned being bypassed in internal communications or discussions despite equal qualifications (FFP\_6\_BiH). Another noted that colleagues expressed doubts about women's suitability for leadership roles (FFP\_3\_BiH).

### ***Barriers in career development and work-life balance:***

Multiple participants identified persistent challenges related to leadership opportunities, fieldwork expectations, and balancing professional responsibilities with caregiving roles. Several emphasized that women are less frequently considered for senior roles and often self-exclude from field assignments due to systemic norms, not personal limitations (FFP\_1\_BiH, FFP\_7\_BiH). Work-life balance was particularly difficult for women in field positions, especially in earlier stages of their careers or while raising children (FFP\_5\_BiH, FFP\_7\_BiH). Supportive spouses, flexible institutions, or proximity to home were cited as key enablers for managing dual responsibilities (FFP\_8\_BiH, FFP\_10\_BiH).

## **Recommendations**

Insights gathered from ten female forestry professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina show a shared conviction that gender equality in forestry is not about preferential treatment but about visibility, access, and systemic fairness. Interviewees stressed that while forestry is no longer seen solely through the lens of field labor and physical endurance, the lingering stereotypes still discourage young women from entering the sector or seeking leadership roles. They emphasized that promoting gender awareness should not result in overexposure or performative actions, but rather in measured, structural improvements: education that reflects the diversity of forestry; recruitment practices that value potential

over assumptions; and institutions that enable women to thrive while balancing professional and personal responsibilities.

The table below summarizes the most frequent and impactful recommendations expressed by female forestry professionals across different career stages. They highlight the importance of starting early—by shaping perceptions in education—and continuing through institutional and cultural change in professional environments. While most participants reject quotas or excessive emphasis on gender in isolation, they emphasize the need for visibility, representation, and targeted support.

Focus area	Recommendation(s)	Target stakeholders
<b>Forestry education</b>	Integrate gender awareness in forestry curricula through seminars, electives, and mentorship programs	Forestry faculties, educational ministries
	Introduce gender-sensitive career guidance starting from primary and secondary education	Schools, NGOs, educational authorities
	Offer realistic and diverse portrayals of forestry in the media and educational materials	Media, forestry institutions
<b>Sector image &amp; visibility</b>	Promote success stories of women in forestry to counter stereotypes and attract new generations	Forest agencies, associations, universities
<b>Professional culture</b>	Develop internal gender-sensitive policies in public forest enterprises and administrations	HR departments, management structures
	Encourage mixed teams and discourage informal bias in work assignment or leadership opportunities	
<b>Personal development</b>	Support training for confidence building, leadership, digital skills, and language learning	Professional bodies, donors
<b>Workplace conditions</b>	Ensure fair allocation of roles regardless of gender, particularly in field operations	Managers, technical departments
<b>Work-life balance</b>	Support women with flexible working conditions, especially during maternity and family-care periods	Employers, institutions, lawmakers

## Lessons learned

One of the clearest insights from the interviews with ten female professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s forestry sector is that while formal discrimination is rarely reported, subtle forms of exclusion, stereotyping, and self-censorship persist—particularly in field-related positions and leadership trajectories. Women are often perceived as more suited for administrative or technical support roles, and even when institutions operate with formally neutral procedures, informal norms and expectations still shape access to opportunity.

Another key takeaway is that gender awareness in forestry cannot be treated as a siloed or one-time intervention. Instead, it must be woven into education, recruitment, policy, and everyday institutional culture. Many interviewees emphasized that change begins with early exposure—through education that challenges outdated perceptions of forestry—and must be sustained through visible female role models, supportive workplace structures, and open conversations on work-life balance.

Importantly, women in forestry are not asking for special treatment—they are asking for recognition of their contributions, equitable conditions for advancement, and the ability to thrive without sacrificing their personal lives.

### 4.3 Croatia

#### The interview partners

The age range of the respondents spanned almost three decades, with the oldest born in 1964 and the youngest in 1992, representing a group of women at different stages of their career paths. Among them are recent diplomats and experienced experts with long careers in this field.

Nine of them had a university degree in forestry, from the Faculty of Forestry. The women completed their studies between 1995 and 2014, which was useful to determine whether their education and employment situation had changed over time.

The participants currently work in various positions in the public forestry sector and forestry institutions. Their professional responsibilities range from technical positions to senior advisory, management and research roles. Two participants achieved Doctor of Science degrees.

	1_CRO	2_CRO	3_CRO	4_CRO	5_CRO	6_CRO	7_CRO	8_CRO	9_CRO	10_CRO
<b>Year of graduation</b>	2019	1996		2014	2005	1995	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Formal professional degree</b>	Master's degree engineer in urban forestry, nature and environmental protection	Magister degree - Forestry	Magister degree - Forestry	Magister degree - Forestry	Magister degree - Forestry	Magister degree - Forestry	Magister degree - Forestry	Doctor of Science – Biotechnical Sciences (Forestry)	Magister degree - Forestry	Doctor of Science – Biotechnical Sciences (Forestry)
<b>Forestry education</b>	Faculty of forestry and wood technology of the University of Zagreb	Faculty of Science and Mathematics (PMF); Master in Forestry	Faculty of forestry and wood technology of the University of Zagreb	Faculty of forestry and wood technology of the University of Zagreb	Faculty of forestry and wood technology of the University of Zagreb	Faculty of forestry and wood technology of the University of Zagreb	Faculty of forestry and wood technology of the University of Zagreb	Faculty of forestry and wood technology of the University of Zagreb	Faculty of forestry and wood technology of the University of Zagreb	Faculty of forestry and wood technology of the University of Zagreb
<b>Year of birth</b>	1992	1973		1990	1982	1971	1977	1982	1982	1983

## **Gender-specific challenges in forestry professional training in Croatia**

### **Share of women in training programs:**

When asked about the ratio of female to male students during her studies, one respondent replied: *"As far as I remember, the number of students was pretty equal, maybe around 55:45 in favor of men, and in the EU projects course there were 100% women."* Classes are intended for both male and female students, and there were no differences between students. When she was finishing her studies at the Faculty of Forestry and Wood Technology in Zagreb, she was one of 10% of girls who graduated that year. She mentioned that in previous years of study there were more girls, but that not all of them graduated.

Respondent FFP\_3\_CRO emphasized that when she studied forestry at the master's degree program in 2023, there were more girls than boys (60%-40%). She thinks that more and more girls are interested in a career and study in forestry. *"At the end of the study, I was the only girl among 25 students."*

The ratio of female to male students was very uneven. It is estimated that the female share was one quarter of the total number. Compared to the number of graduates (this was around the years when there was war in Croatia and many students had to give up their studies, so out of 120 enrolled students, only 30 graduated), there were many more girls, almost half.

### **Treatment of women in training programs:**

Respondent FFP\_5\_CRO said: *"The field trips were quite demanding. Alcohol consumption was very excessive, and if you didn't drink, you were classified as unfit for forestry. It was a different time and the professors were often very unpleasant towards the female students. I have to say that the male students were always very protective of us girls and I am grateful to them to this day."*

She continued: *"I was one of the top 3 students and was expected to become an assistant professor. When I came in for an interview for the position, the dean at the time very bluntly said that I wouldn't get the position because he thought there were too many women at the faculty. I have to exaggerate the fact that at that time there was only one assistant professor and no professors at the faculty."*

The youngest female interviewee (FFP\_1\_CRO) believed that the teaching was equal for male and female students, and there were no differences between students. The interviewee mentioned that a certain professor treated some female colleagues differently during oral exams. For example, they were given more opportunities because the professor liked them. Perhaps this is an indication that the situation is improving over the years.

## **Gender specific challenges in forestry jobs in Croatia**

### **Share of women in the workplace:**

The department of the organization where respondent FFP\_1\_CRO currently works employs 22 people, of whom 17 are men and only 5 are women. Moreover, men mainly perform scientific, teaching and research work, while women are primarily employed as cleaners, secretaries and technical assistants. She says:

*"The criteria for the position were clearly communicated and after a year of work I can confirm that they were accurate. It is difficult to say whether the fact that I am a woman influenced my employment, but I know that the two previous employees in this position were also women."*

**Female sex and recruitment:**

In the current organization of the respondent FFP\_2\_CRO, there is an equal share of women and men. She works in a forestry education organization. Her entry into the labor market began with a negative experience where she was openly told that there was no room for women in the forestry office where she applied for a job. Her colleague got the position, but he did not have the necessary qualifications. This hurt her a lot and made her feel insecure.

**Support from colleagues and barriers in career development:**

Interviewee FFP\_2\_CRO says: *"I feel that any opportunities for further education or business trips that came up at work were expected to be taken by my male colleagues, because women have less time for family responsibilities. Women are often put in a mold, staying in the same position for years, even decades, especially because of this collective mindset. If a woman does not loudly express her desires and does not demand recognition and promotion, she most likely will not get them."*

FFP\_3\_CRO has not had any negative experiences at work where she felt mistreated or undervalued because she is a woman. On the contrary, she has always felt understood and appreciated. *"In my workplace, as a woman I am in the minority, but I don't feel any differences between myself and my colleagues. We are all equal in all parts of the job, which I like."*

About 30% of the employees in respondent FFP\_5\_CRO's workplace are women, which is more than in her previous position. However, the fact that it was 10 years ago also contributes to this fact.

She cannot recall a single negative experience in which she felt she was treated differently.

*"The only thing I experienced was lowered expectations at the very beginning, before I could show my abilities."*

**Recommendations**

By conducting these interviews, we came to the conclusion that gender equality in forestry is not a matter of preferential treatment, but of visibility, access and systemic justice. Existing stereotypes continue to discourage young women from entering the sector or seeking leadership roles. They emphasized that the promotion of gender awareness should result in structural improvements. Education that reflects the diversity of forestry; employment practices and institutions that enable women to advance with good role models and mentors in every field of work.

Gender equality topics should be discussed more.

Perhaps workshops could encourage women to support each other more.

They should be well informed about their rights and not allow themselves to be treated differently.

Perhaps they should be a little braver in standing up for themselves and communicating more openly about the problems they face.

1. Equal conditions and opportunities - the ranking system must be the same for women and men. Training institutions should provide information on equal opportunities and gender awareness, together with qualified contacts for support.

2. Presenting role models to students and the opportunities that await them in their future work - they should be encouraged to achieve their goals without focusing on gender. They should seek opportunities in the forestry sector and encourage them to be confident and express their concerns and possible problems.
3. Collaboration and learning: The importance of networking during studies and work is emphasized, along with gaining a comprehensive understanding of possible career paths and seeking diverse practical experiences.
4. To encourage the importance of self-confidence and perseverance in a traditionally male-dominated field - "when you really know your job, no one can take that away from you - nor use it to discriminate against you."
5. Offer attractive portrayals of forestry in the media and educational materials.

Respondents highlighted the importance of integrating gender awareness into formal forestry curricula and suggested improvements in mentoring and practical training for women. Role models were cited as an important factor in breaking down stereotypes. The importance of focusing on skills-based advancement was highlighted.

### Lessons learned

There is still a higher representation of men than women, but there is improvement. It is mostly a reminiscence of how things used to be, and today most women feel equal and well accepted. However, problems such as inappropriate behavior by male lecturers and unfairness towards women's abilities are still present, which indicates the need for greater gender awareness.

The share of women in forestry jobs varies significantly depending on the roles, and recruitment processes are generally perceived as unfair.

Women are often perceived as better suited to administrative or lower-skilled roles.

Many respondents emphasized that change starts in the education sector and needs to be sustained through visible female role models, supportive workplace environments, and open conversations.

Women should not be favored but should be given equal working conditions and opportunities for advancement as men.

The forestry sector is still characterized by stereotypes, although women have proven to be capable and sometimes better managers.

One final message from FFP\_2\_CRO:

*"Be assertive and don't be afraid to express your desires and goals. It's good to be flexible and let the flow of opportunity take you, but it can easily lead you to tasks and positions you don't enjoy. If you don't stand up for yourself, no one else will, so get good at asking for what you want."*

## 4.4 Czech Republic

### The interview partners

The ten interviewed women represent a broad spectrum of the Czech forestry sector, spanning academia, public service, forest enterprises, education, and self-employment. They are graduates of

Mendel University in Brno or the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CZU), with degrees ranging from Ing. (MSc) to Ph.D. Most have a technical forestry background; several combined this with pedagogical training or environmental sciences. Their professional roles include researchers, lecturers, forest pedagogues, watercourse and game managers, advisors, and state officials.

Ages vary widely, from early-career professionals in their mid-20s (e.g., FFP\_2\_CZECHIA, born 1998) to experienced foresters nearing or past retirement age (e.g., FFP\_8\_CZECHIA, born 1961). Some transitioned from forestry-related fields into education or advisory roles. Several participants mentioned balancing professional duties with care responsibilities (e.g., small children, aging parents), which shaped their career paths.

## **Gender-specific challenges in forestry professional training in Czech Republic**

### ***Share of women in training programs:***

The ratio of women in forestry education has increased over time. Older graduates reported very low shares (5–17%, e.g., FFP\_7\_CZECHIA, FFP\_8\_CZECHIA), while recent cohorts are close to or over parity (e.g., FFP\_2\_CZECHIA: 60%, FFP\_1\_CZECHIA: 60/40).

### ***Treatment of women in training programs:***

Experiences vary across generations. Several older interviewees reported gendered behavior or unequal expectations. For example, one woman recalls being denied the right to teach expert subjects simply because she was female: *"He said he would never allow a woman to teach expert subjects."* (FFP\_8\_CZECHIA)

Others described gendered division of tasks during apprenticeships: *"Girls were given easier tasks. I was the first woman allowed to take the seed production course."* (FFP\_5\_CZECHIA)

In contrast, many recent graduates stated they did not experience different treatment during their studies. *"There was no different treatment among students (F/M)."* (FFP\_9\_CZECHIA)

### ***Gender equality in training programs:***

Most participants noted that gender equality was not addressed in their curriculum. Opinions on whether it should be included differ. While some oppose gender-targeted support, emphasizing equal treatment (e.g., FFP\_10\_CZECHIA), others recommend subtle awareness-building: *"Rather than feminism, it should be about adding women's perspectives and showing that forestry is also a field for women."* (FFP\_6\_CZECHIA)

*"There should be psychological and social training—so girls wouldn't fear being a woman."* (FFP\_8\_CZECHIA)

## **Gender-specific challenges in forestry jobs in Czech Republic**

### ***Share of women in the workplace:***

Women's presence in professional forestry roles is variable. While some positions like forest pedagogy or public service see close to parity or female dominance (e.g., FFP\_6\_CZECHIA, FFP\_10\_CZECHIA), others—especially field-based roles like enumeration officers or watercourse managers—remain male-dominated.

### **Female sex and recruitment:**

Most respondents reported that gender did not officially influence recruitment. However, subtle biases surfaced: *"The trial period was longer than for men—because of age and gender—but I took it as care rather than discrimination."* (FFP\_9\_CZECHIA)

*"At oral exams, appearance sometimes influenced assessment."* (FFP\_2\_CZECHIA)

In some cases, women were openly excluded from certain roles:

*"They didn't let me teach expert subjects until no men were available."* (FFP\_8\_CZECHIA)

### **Support from colleagues:**

The support from colleagues and superiors was generally described as helpful and respectful, especially when the working environment was inclusive:

*"I got great support from older colleagues—both technical and emotional."* (FFP\_9\_CZECHIA)

*"They never said: 'You're a woman, you can't learn this anyway.'"* (FFP\_7\_CZECHIA)

Still, older women described needing to 'earn' trust or authority more than their male peers:

*"Colleagues doubted my expertise. I had to earn it."* (FFP\_8\_CZECHIA)

### **Barriers in Career Development and work-life balance:**

Recurring themes include difficulty returning to work after maternity leave, caregiving responsibilities, and structural rigidity of jobs: *"After maternity leave, it was hard to find employment—employers had prejudices."* (FFP\_7\_CZECHIA)

*"Even when not at home, a mother still has her children on her mind."* (FFP\_6\_CZECHIA)

*"The academic world is more flexible; in practice, it's difficult to combine work and motherhood."* (FFP\_5\_CZECHIA)

## **Recommendations**

Area: Education

Recommendations: Avoid positive discrimination; ensure equal expectations. Promote forestry as a viable and fulfilling career path for women.

Source Quotes: *"Supporting women would create discrimination against men."* (FFP\_9\_CZECHIA)

Area: Training Enhancements

Recommendations: Include discussions on gender awareness, social and communication skills, and how to assert oneself in a male-dominated field.

Source Quotes: *"Psychological and social education should be promoted—so the girls wouldn't fear being a woman."* (FFP\_8\_CZECHIA)

Area: Work Environment

Recommendations: Promote flexible working conditions and career re-entry after family leave. Improve transparency in pay.

Source Quotes: *"It's not the work itself, it's the system that makes combining motherhood and career hard."* (FFP\_5\_CZECHIA)

Area: Young Women in Forestry

Recommendations: Be self-assured, resilient, and authentic. Don't mimic male behavior, but value feminine perspectives.

Source Quotes: *"Be confident. Don't let yourself feel uncomfortable because of male colleagues."* (FFP\_4\_CZECHIA)

*"Don't try to copy men, stay true to yourself."* (FFP\_6\_CZECHIA)

## Lessons learned

The interviews highlight generational shifts in both forestry education and workplace culture. While past experiences show exclusion and bias, especially among older women (e.g., denial of teaching posts, belittling), younger generations often experience equal treatment—at least formally. However, implicit biases, especially related to physical ability or motherhood, remain.

Women generally do not seek privilege but equal opportunity. They express pride in their profession and competence. Their voices show forestry as a fulfilling path where women's contribution is not only valid but essential—especially in public communication, pedagogy, and administrative excellence.

*"I'd like to be a granny who tells children about the forest... not only as an ecosystem, but as a workplace and a spiritual temple."* (FFP\_8\_CZECHIA)

## 4.5 Germany – Bavaria

### The interview partners

	1_DE	2_DE	3_DE	4_DE	5_DE	6_DE	7_DE	8_DE	9_DE	10_DE
<b>Year of graduation</b>	2015	2001	2017	2007	2017	2016	2017	1993	2003	2005
<b>Formal professional degree</b>	BA Forestry engineer	BA Forestry engineer	MA Forestry and Wood Sciences	BA Forestry engineer	Forest craftsperson (manual labour)	BA Forestry engineer	BA Forestry engineer	Forestry Engineer	Forestry Engineer	MA Forestry
<b>Forestry Education</b>	University of Applied Sciences HSWT	University of Applied Sciences Rottenburg	Technical Universität München (TUM)	FH Weihenstephan (now HSWT)	Forst-BW, Stützpunkt Mochental	University of Applied Sciences HSWT	University of Applied Sciences HSWT	FH Weihenstephan (now HSWT)	University of Applied Sciences HSWT	Technical Universität München (TUM)
<b>Employment Status</b>	Independent Institution	State-owned forest enterprise	Conservation NGO	Bavarian Forest Administration	State-owned forest enterprise	Bavarian Forest Administration	Forest Owner Collective	Self-Employed	Bavarian Forest Administration	Bavarian Forest Administration
<b>Year of birth</b>	1990	1977	1990	1983	1991	1992	1989	1964	1978	1981

The interviewees in this study displayed the diversity among female professionals in the field of forestry. The age range of the interviewees spanned almost three decades with the oldest one being born in 1964 and the youngest one in 1992, hence displaying a set of women at different levels of their career paths. 9 of 10 interviewees had obtained a forestry degree in higher education (bachelor's and master's). Of them most had graduated from the University of Applied Sciences Weihenstephan-Triesdorf (formerly FH Weihenstephan) and obtained a degree in forestry engineering. Only one of the interviewees had completed a vocational training as a forest craftsman. The women had completed their studies between 1993 and 2017, which was helpful to determine whether education and the job situation had changed over time. The employment status of the interviewees in this study was diverse and included self-employment, an independent institution, a conservation NGO, Forest Owner Collective as well as state-owned forest enterprises and the Bavarian Forestry Administration.

## **Gender-specific challenges in forestry professional training in Bavaria**

### ***Share of women in training programs:***

The representation of women in forestry programs varied according to the age group and the degree pursued. The interview results indicated that the proportion of women in Bachelor study programs has increased over time: While the interviewees born in the 1990s estimated that approximately half to one-third of their peers at forestry engineering were female, the interviewees born a decade earlier estimated lower percentages of female students in forestry engineering of around 10-20%. One interviewee reports lower rates of women enrolled in her Master programme compared to her Bachelor's and attributes it to shifts of students to other fields of study after completing the Bachelor's degree. Another interviewee reported a 50% female participation rate in her TUM study program, which significantly dropped to a maximum of 25% in the CEO traineeship. These findings confirm the statistical data gathered for Bavaria in the D2.1.1 of the Fem2forests project which show that the highest share of women can be found in Bachelor programs with decreasing number of females pursuing further education in forestry (MA, CEO traineeships).

### ***Treatment of women in training programs:***

Three out of ten interviewees reported encountering gender-related challenges during their training, while others did not perceive significant discrimination. Most of the women experienced equal treatment from their peers and had supportive supervisors during their studies. Yet, several of the women who did not experience unequal treatment themselves still perceived gender inequality as an issue in forestry education: *"It felt like a male domain, but it was normal..."* (FFP\_4\_DE). Instances of inappropriate behaviour from male lecturers and scepticism regarding female students' capabilities were noted by several interviewees (e.g. in hunting), indicating that challenges still exist in forestry education. One interviewee faced discouragement from a professor who warned her against pursuing forestry, citing it as a male domain. She remarked, *"For us, it was taken for granted,"* (FFP\_8\_DE) reflecting the biases that can influence female students' experiences. Another interviewee experienced discrimination regarding her grades from male peers, as well as incidents of inappropriate behaviour from male lecturers.

### ***Gender equality in training programs:***

Overall, gender equality was not part of the study and training programs. Most interviewees stated that gender issues were not a topic discussed in the curricula of their educational institutions. Only one of

the interviewees pointed out that she benefited from being in a Mentoring program at her university and has now become a mentor herself. She suggests opening the mentoring for men and women to promote integrative approaches that foster collaboration and interaction at eye-level between women and men: *"That's how I understand equality... that the genders simply communicate with each other on an equal footing."* (FFP\_6\_DE). While some interviewees felt that specific support for women was unnecessary due to their positive experiences, others highlighted the need for awareness of gender dynamics, particularly in practical courses and professional settings.

## **Gender specific challenges in forestry jobs in Bavaria**

### ***Share of women in the workplace:***

The proportion of women working in forestry jobs in Bavaria's differs greatly between the different fields of activities. While women are still underrepresented in physically demanding jobs like forest craftspeople, there is a high number of female employees working in conservation NGOs that focuses on environmental education and offers part-time opportunities *"...in my company we have many, many, many, many part-time jobs, and it's mostly women working"* (FFP\_3\_DE). In one forest research institutions the share of women is around 25% of which 74% have part-time contracts. In the past, the share of female foresters in Bavaria was rather low but has been gradually increasing. An interviewee born in the 1970s who started working as a district forester in 2007 explains: *"Being a woman was an exception"* (FFP\_9\_DE).

### ***Female sex and recruitment:***

The recruitment process did not present a challenge for most of the women interviewed in this study. One interviewee felt that skills and qualifications were prioritized over gender in recruitment: *"Everyone is a professional, irrespective of men or woman"* (FFP\_1\_DE), suggesting that the recruitment process is equitable and fair in the forestry sector. This is supported by another interviewee, who also observed transparency in recruitment criteria and felt her gender may have been a benefit to get her job because it brings in more diversity: *"I believe it is good for the team if it is more diverse, and I also received positive feedback from several sides..."* (FFP\_10\_DE). Only one of the older interviewees faced a gender-related challenges during one job interview and believes that things have changed for the better in the last 20 years because now there is a higher number of women in the forest sector.

### ***Support from colleagues:***

Most interviewees describe positive experiences with their colleagues and supervisors: *"I think that we live in a country where quality, performance, and flexibility are important factors"* (FFP\_8\_DE). The analysis of the interviews also shows that younger male colleagues tend to be more supportive of gender equality, indicating a generational shift in attitudes towards gender dynamics in the workplace. This contrasts with the experiences of older interviewees, who faced more direct competition and scepticism from male colleagues: *"...I was a competitor for him, because within a short time my results were better than what he achieved over the year."* (FFP\_8\_DE). Younger interviewees reported more flexible arrangements and support for maternity leave returnees, indicating that organizations may be becoming more accommodating in response to the challenges faced by working mothers.

### ***Barriers in Career Development and work-life balance:***

While some professionals felt treated equally and noted that skills and qualifications were prioritized over gender, others highlighted significant challenges, particularly related to parenting responsibilities

and the need for support from leadership. The main challenges identified in the interviews were the following:

*Lack of understanding from leadership and parenting responsibilities:* Several interviewees noted a lack of understanding from leadership regarding motherhood, which created barriers for women trying to balance their professional and personal lives. One describes the problems she faced in her role as a district forester. While she felt treated equally at work when childless, the challenges intensified with parenting duties. Despite receiving support from HR and mentors, she encountered a lack of understanding from leadership regarding the realities of motherhood. She described her company as family-friendly on paper but pointed out practical barriers that hindered her ability to balance work and family life: *"Well, the first difficulties actually came at my company... It was about part-time work and things like that, and there was no understanding at all about children."* She further remarked, *"Basically, all of us are equal, but it always depends on the person... If there is a macho man sitting there with no understanding... then you've simply got bad luck."* (FFP\_2\_DE). This highlights the variability in support and understanding that female employees may encounter based on individual attitudes within the workplace. This sentiment was echoed by another interviewee, who expressed concerns about balancing work and potential motherhood, feeling pressure to avoid letting the company down: *"I think about it, because of course, if you always have the feeling as a woman that you're letting the company down"* (FFP\_5\_DE). This statement underscores the pressure that many women feel regarding their professional responsibilities and the fear of not meeting expectations.

*Differential Treatment:* When working in the forestry sector one interviewee experienced direct differential treatment due to her gender and sought additional training to escape a difficult work environment: *„...there was some kind of reservation about me... I was always like a complete idiot I´d say... and then I decided, oh come on, let´s move on. Apply for the master school."*(FFP\_5\_DE). Another interviewee also faced discrimination during job applications, often being the only woman in her role. She recalls one job interview where she found out that she did not get the job because of the clothes that she was wearing: *„Many women have adapted to this. They disappeared as women."* (FFP\_9\_DE).

*Career Advancement Barriers:* Some women faced limited advancement opportunities and scepticism regarding her professional status while working in the forestry sector. One interviewee points out that she experienced gender related challenges with individual forest owners and costumers who were sometimes questioning her professional status and tested her knowledge. In this regard, one of the older interviewees highlighted that career opportunities are influenced by supervisor behaviour, indicating that support from leadership is crucial for women's professional development: *„You need people who open doors and provide support in the background."*(FFP\_10\_DE).

*Work Environment Dynamics:* One interviewee experienced difficulties with a male colleague who viewed her as competition, reflecting ongoing challenges in male-dominated environments. However, she emphasized that quality and performance should be the key factors in professional evaluation.

## Recommendations

The following points give an overview of the main recommendations for gender awareness in forestry education/training and professional work environments from the 10 female forestry professionals interviewed in this study:

1. Encouragement for Female Students: Female students are encouraged to pursue their goals without focusing on gender. They should seek opportunities in the forestry sector and consider

obtaining a forest pedagogics certificate. Young women are urged to be self-confident and voice their concerns, particularly regarding family issues.

2. **Equal Assessment and Opportunities:** Young foresters should ensure equal assessment in ranking systems, especially when working part-time. Training institutions should provide information on equal opportunities and gender awareness, along with qualified contacts for support. There is a call for better career opportunities for part-time workers.
3. **Gender Awareness in Training Programs:** The importance of learning about equality and gender in all fields is emphasized, advocating for gender awareness in all forestry training programs. Although most interviewees do not see a need for special training for female students, they suggest communication training for both female and male future foresters to navigate interactions with older forest owners comfortably.
4. **Support Structures and Networking:** Recommendations for supporting female trainees include introducing equal opportunities structures, providing gender-specific work clothing, and communication training. Networking and exchanging experiences with other women in the field are highlighted as essential for professional growth. Employers should demonstrate their commitment to gender equality at the start of forestry programs.
5. **Role Models and Best Practices:** Involvement of experienced individuals as role models in training is recommended, along with the inclusion of diverse individuals in resilience training. The need for soft gender-sensitizing strategies for male colleagues is acknowledged, emphasizing the importance of professionalism and expertise in gaining respect.
6. **Collaboration and Learning:** The importance of networking during studies and traineeships is stressed, along with gaining a comprehensive understanding of possible career paths and seeking diverse practical experiences. Young female foresters are encouraged to excel academically and develop professional skills, with a focus on good performance and soft skills in the field.
7. **Work-Life Balance Solutions:** Young female foresters are encouraged to propose solutions for work-life balance challenges, including the suggestion of part-time traineeships to enhance flexibility for women with children.

In summary, the recommendations advocate for a supportive and inclusive environment in both educational and professional settings, emphasizing the importance of gender awareness, equal opportunities, and networking for female students and professionals in the forestry sector.

### **Lessons learned**

The study reveals that while the representation of women in forestry training programs has increased, challenges persist. Younger interviewees report a more equitable environment, with approximately 50-30% female peers in their programs, compared to just 10-20% among older generations. However, issues such as inappropriate behaviour from male lecturers and scepticism about women's capabilities remain prevalent, indicating a need for greater gender awareness in educational curricula.

In the professional realm, the share of women in forestry jobs varies significantly across different roles, with underrepresentation in physically demanding positions. While recruitment processes are generally perceived as fair, some women experienced gender-related challenges, particularly regarding career advancement and work-life balance. Many interviewees noted a lack of understanding from leadership about the realities of motherhood, creating barriers for women trying to balance their professional and personal lives. Recommendations from the study emphasize the importance of encouraging female students, ensuring equal assessment opportunities, integrating gender awareness into training programs, and fostering supportive networks. Overall, the findings advocate for an inclusive environment that recognizes and addresses gender dynamics within both educational and professional settings in the forestry sector.

## 4.6 Romania

### The interview partners

The interviews were conducted with female forestry professionals from Romania who completed their studies between 2010 and 2022. Most of them pursued their bachelor's and master's degrees at the Faculty of Silviculture and Forest Engineering at the University of Transylvania in Brasov, with some attending the University of Suceava or other forestry institutions. A number of interviewees have also pursued further education and training abroad, including Erasmus+ exchanges in the Czech Republic, master's programs in Sweden (SLU), professional training in Finland, and PhD studies in Germany (Freiburg). Several also participated in international workshops, practical training programs, and certificate courses on safety, biodiversity, climate adaptation, and geospatial tools.

The women are currently employed in various forestry roles, including field engineering, research, protected area management, production forestry, acquisitions and IT coordination, advisory and administrative positions, and NGO environmental programs. Some work in international forestry companies (e.g., Coillte in Ireland, Stora Enso in Finland), while others are employed in Romanian public forest institutions such as RNP-ROMSILVA, or in academia and research institutes like INCDS Marin Dracea. Their ages range from mid-20s to late 30s, reflecting a mix of early-career and experienced professionals. Many have experienced significant mobility, both geographically and sectorally.

### Gender-specific challenges in forestry professional training in Romania

#### ***Share of women in training programs:***

The percentage of women in forestry training programs varies widely depending on the education level and location. During bachelor's programs in Romania, women were consistently underrepresented. One interviewee noted that in her year, there were only 20 women among 170 students (FFP\_6\_RO), while another stated the ratio was 3:20 in BSc and 8:15 in MSc (FFP\_2\_RO). However, gender parity was nearly reached during master's and PhD programs abroad, with women making up 50% of cohorts in Sweden and Germany.

### ***Treatment of women in training programs:***

Many interviewees reported instances of differential treatment. These ranged from subtle exclusion to overtly sexist behavior. Some examples include:

- Male professors making misogynistic jokes (FFP\_1\_RO).
- Being told to return to "women's work" if they couldn't handle forestry tasks (FFP\_2\_RO).
- Exclusion from class discussions or being asked to leave the classroom for unclear reasons (FFP\_6\_RO).

However, some participants stated they experienced no gender-based discrimination during their studies and felt treated equally (FFP\_10\_RO, FFP\_9\_RO)

### ***Gender equality in training programs:***

In Romanian institutions, gender equality was largely absent as a formal topic. Several interviewees remarked that the subject was never discussed, and support programs were not specifically tailored to women. By contrast, those who studied in Sweden or Germany highlighted a more inclusive environment where gender equality was actively addressed through mentorship programs, ombudspersons, and women-focused networks (e.g., FFP\_6\_RO). One respondent emphasized the need for more transparent and safe mentorship programs in Romania that clearly explain their objectives and benefits.

The generational divide is apparent. Older respondents described forestry education as deeply male-dominated with little room for female voices, while younger interviewees (particularly those with international exposure) perceived a shift toward inclusivity. Nevertheless, persistent stereotypes in Romania still limit full inclusion.

## **Gender specific challenges in forestry jobs in Romania**

### ***Share of women in the workplace:***

Women remain a minority in field-oriented forestry jobs. One interviewee noted that in her current company of 1000 employees, only 1-3 out of 20 field engineers are women (FFP\_1\_RO). Others described teams where women constituted 20% to 40% of the workforce (FFP\_5\_RO, FFP\_6\_RO). Roles in administration and education had higher female representation.

### ***Female sex and recruitment:***

Most interviewees stated that recruitment was transparent and not influenced by gender. One described a detailed process involving interviews, group exercises, and presentations with no indication of bias (FFP\_1\_RO). Another stated that her prior volunteering experience was key to her hiring, not her gender (FFP\_2\_RO). However, gender did factor into recruitment abroad where companies have inclusion policies. In Germany, one interviewee mentioned being encouraged to apply as a woman, noting gender-based benefits in academia (FFP\_6\_RO).

### ***Support from colleagues:***

In Finland and Ireland, women felt fully supported, both technically and morally (FFP\_1\_RO, FFP\_5\_RO). In Romania, the situation was mixed. Some described environments of mutual respect (FFP\_9\_RO), while others experienced emotional favoritism toward male employees (FFP\_2\_RO) or resistance from

older colleagues and contractors (FFP\_7\_RO). Women often had to assert themselves in male-dominated teams to gain recognition (FFP\_7\_RO).

**Barriers in Career Development and work-life balance**

- Career progress can be hindered by lack of mentorship, conservative work cultures, or maternity concerns (FFP\_6\_RO).
- Field jobs are physically demanding and can be isolating.
- Women often face emotional labor expectations or assumptions of incompetence in fieldwork (e.g., “Women should stay in the office.” – FFP\_7\_RO).
- Some interviewees noted strong personal coping mechanisms, resilience, and adaptive work environments abroad

**Recommendations**

Area	Recommendation
Education	Integrate gender awareness in curricula; mentorship programs; practical exposure from early stages
Training Programs	Transparency about career paths, mentorship access, inclusion in field training
Workplace culture	Address gender-based assumptions; ensure equal access to equipment and tasks
Policy	Support flexible work arrangements for women with family responsibilities
Visibility	Promote success stories of female foresters in media, academic forums, and schools.
Recruitment	Ensure merit-based recruitment processes and apply affirmative policies where underrepresentation exists.

The data clearly show that mentorship, early field exposure, and a supportive work environment are key to encouraging more women into forestry careers. Female role models and proactive inclusion policies not only motivate entry but also support retention and progression. International examples show how Romanian institutions could integrate structured support systems, like counselling services and mentorship platforms. There is also a need to modernize the narrative around forestry to reflect its evolving, inclusive nature.

**Lessons learned**

The interviews revealed that while women are making significant strides in forestry, structural and cultural barriers remain, especially in Romania. Successful integration into the profession depends largely on the presence of supportive environments, inclusive recruitment, and access to mentorship. International exposure and training were transformative for many interviewees, reinforcing the need for

global learning opportunities. Lastly, promoting a forestry culture based on mutual respect, flexibility, and diversity will be essential for sustainable gender inclusion in the sector.

## 4.7 Serbia

### The interview partners

	1_RS	2_RS	3_RS	4_RS	5_RS	6_RS	7_RS	8_RS	9_RS	10_RS
<b>Year of graduation</b>	1989	2023	2009	2006 / 2009	2002 / 2012	1990 (BSc)	2009 (BSc)	1999 (BSc)	2009 (BSc)	2005 (BSc)
<b>Formal professional degree</b>	BSc Forestry engineer	BSc Forestry engineer	BSc Forestry engineer	BSc Forestry engineer / MSc management of protected areas	BSc Forestry engineer / MSc in landscape architecture	BSc - Forestry engineer / Magister degree - Forestry / Doctor of Science - Biotechnical Sciences (Forestry)	BSc - Forestry engineer / MSc - Forestry / Doctor of Science - Biotechnical Sciences (Forestry)	BSc - Forestry engineer / Magister degree - Forestry / Doctor of Science - Biotechnical Sciences (Forestry)	BSc - Forestry engineer / MSc - Economy	BSc - Engineer of landscape architecture / MSc - Forestry
<b>Forestry education</b>	University of Belgrade - Faculty of forestry	University of Belgrade - Faculty of forestry	University of Belgrade - Faculty of forestry	University of Belgrade - Faculty of forestry (BSc); University of Klagenfurt (MSc)	University of Belgrade - Faculty of forestry	University of Belgrade - Faculty of Forestry	University of Belgrade - Faculty of Forestry	University of Belgrade - Faculty of Forestry	University of Belgrade - Faculty of Forestry (BSc); University of Priština - Faculty of Economics (MSc)	University of Belgrade - Faculty of Forestry
<b>Employment status</b>	public enterprise (national park)	public enterprise (state forest management)	private company for forest management and consulting	public enterprise (state forest management)	public enterprise (state forest management)	higher Education Institution (university)	higher Education Institution (university)	higher Education Institution (university)	public enterprise (state forest management)	public administration (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management)
<b>Year of birth</b>	1965	1965	1980	1981	1977	1965	1985	1974	1981	1976

The respondents represent a diverse group of forestry professionals with varying levels of education, employment and age. All participants hold at least a Bachelor of Science degree, which they obtained at the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Forestry. Several participants have acquired additional qualifications: three have a Master's degree (specialized in management of protected areas and landscape architecture, forestry, economics), and three achieved doctor of Science degrees.

The majority of participants were born between the mid-1960s and mid-1980s and were therefore either late or mid-career. In terms of employment status, respondents work in public enterprises for state forest

management and national parks (five respondents), higher education institutions (three respondents), private sector forestry company (one respondent) and public administration (one respondent).

## **Gender-specific challenges in forestry professional training in Serbia**

### ***Share of women in training programs:***

Interviewees consistently reported a significantly lower proportion of women in forestry programmes, particularly in earlier generations. FFP\_5\_RS noted, *"Out of 180 students, I think there were only 10–15 women, and in the secondary forestry school in Kraljevo, only 2 out of 34 were girls."* FFP\_6\_RS estimated that the proportion of women in her time at university was about 25, while FFP\_7\_RS stated about 20%. Interviewees consistently reported a significantly lower proportion of women in forestry programmes, particularly among the older generations. FFP\_5\_RS recalled: *"Out of 180 students, I think there were only 10–15 women, and in the secondary forestry school in Kraljevo, only 2 out of 34 were girls"*. Similarly, FFP\_6\_RS estimated that the proportion of women at university in their time was about 25%, while FFP\_7\_RS stated that the gender ratio was about 80% men to 20% women. These figures illustrate that forestry education was traditionally dominated by men. Although figures varied slightly by institution and year, the general trend shows that women were a distinct minority in forestry education.

### ***Treatment of women in training programs:***

Yes, and no. Several participants recalled gender discrimination. FFP\_2\_RS reported that some professors said, *"I wonder what you women are doing here,"* and a lab assistant said, *"I would kick all you women out of forestry"*. While these comments were not always consciously understood at the time, they were later recognized as clear signs of gender bias. Similarly, FFP\_5\_RS described how a supervisor deliberately assigned her the most physically demanding tasks in order to push her out of the team, saying: *"Let's see how long she lasts"*.

Others, however, reported more neutral or even supportive experiences. FFP\_3\_RS stated: *"No one ever made a distinction between men and women, i.e. everyone treated us equally"*. FFP\_4\_RS noted that differences in professors' attention were based on academic engagement, not gender.

These contrasting experiences suggest that although there was a gender bias, it was not universal and may have become less pronounced over time.

### ***Gender equality in training programs:***

No. None of the interviewees could recall gender equality being formally addressed in their education. FFP\_1\_RS clearly stated: *"No, the topic was not present at all. Nobody dealt with it"*. Several participants emphasized that such topics should be included now. FFP\_10\_RS, for example, supported this idea, noting that *"in the last five years, this topic has started to be discussed more actively"*, indicating a growing awareness.

### ***Changes over time***

It is clear from the interviews that attitudes and experiences have changed over time. Older respondents (e.g. FFP\_1\_RS, FFP\_2\_RS) reported more overt bias during their training, while younger (e.g. FFP\_4\_RS, FFP\_10\_RS) reported more equitable treatment, although gender stereotypes still persist. Career path also has an impact on experiences. Women working in conservation, planning or administration reported more support, while women working in fieldwork and operational forestry often encountered more resistance. FFP\_5\_RS found that *"women often work more efficiently and responsibly"*, which helped to change attitudes in the workplace.

## Gender specific challenges in forestry jobs in Serbia

### **Share of women in the workplace:**

The presence of women in forestry positions varies greatly depending on the institution and sector. For example, in the case of FFP\_1\_RS, women made up about 30% of forestry engineers in their organization, with none of them employed in forest harvesting. Similarly, FFP\_4 stated that about 15–20% of forestry engineers in their organization were women, mainly in the areas of afforestation and forest planning. FFP\_9\_RS indicated the most extreme gender imbalance, reporting only 2 women among 157 employees in their part of the enterprise (forest estate). This emphasizes the persistent underrepresentation of women, particularly in technical and field-oriented positions in forestry.

### **Female sex and recruitment:**

Experiences related to recruitment were mixed. Several women stated that gender had no explicit influence on recruitment decisions. FFP\_4\_RS, for example, emphasized that her recruitment was based on her merit and professional competence: *"At that time, the company's management was keen to bring the best people into the company, i.e. the principle of 'positive selection' applied. I was hired based on my potential and previous experience; gender had nothing to do with it"*. FFP\_10\_RS similarly reported that gender had no influence on the recruitment outcome as the process involved formal assessment. However, FFP\_2\_RS recalled that at the beginning of her career, women were systematically assigned to work in the nursery or for planning tasks, while management positions were almost exclusively occupied by men.

### **Support from colleagues:**

Support from colleagues was generally perceived as positive. Many women reported strong support from colleagues and managers, particularly in the early stages of their careers. FFP\_1\_RS recalled: *"When I was pregnant, my colleagues made sure I did not have to go out in the field"*, and she now actively ensures similar protection for other women. FFP\_3\_RS highlighted mentorship as a key factor: *"I had tremendous support from experienced colleagues who took the time to teach me everything"*. This mentoring culture proved crucial in helping female professionals overcome technical and organizational challenges. Nevertheless, some of the respondents mentioned the initial skepticism of male colleagues. FFP\_2\_RS described a situation where she was almost excluded from an important meeting: *"They wondered why I was sent instead of a male executive, but I proved myself by being well prepared"*. Her expertise eventually gained her professional respect, showing how initial resistance can be overcome by proven expertise.

### **Barriers in career development and work-life balance:**

Gender-specific barriers to career development were frequently identified, particularly in relation to leadership positions and work-life balance. FFP\_5\_RS stated, *"Often men were favored for some positions on the grounds that women as mothers were more likely to stay away from work"*, although she also noted that once women showed strong performance, the view changed. Structural barriers were also described by FFP\_9\_RS who highlighted the lack of recognition and promotion despite experience: *"My career has not progressed upwards, and I don't know why"*. Others, such as FFP\_1\_RS, attributed slower progression to personal choices, such as prioritizing family life, while acknowledging that societal expectations often place a greater burden on women.

Reconciling work and family life remains a pressing issue. Several participants highlighted the difficulty of balancing family responsibilities with the demands of forestry work, particularly when fieldwork or travelling is involved. As FFP\_6\_RS said: *"Without the support of the family, it would be impossible to*

*dedicate oneself fully to work*". FFP\_8\_RS also emphasized that family support is essential to effectively manage both work and personal commitments.

### Generational shifts

There are signs of change over time. Older respondents, such as FFP\_2\_RS and FFP\_1\_RS, recalled more pronounced gender inequalities in recruitment and promotion. In contrast, younger respondents such as FFP\_10\_RS and FFP\_7\_RS described a more gender-balanced environment, albeit with stereotypes still present. Institutional awareness and policies appear to have improved, but systemic challenges, such as gendered job roles and limited female leadership positions, persist.

### Recommendations

In order to promote gender equality and improve the working conditions of women in the forestry sector, respondents made a number of recommendations. These cover both the educational and professional sectors. The table below highlights the key actions that could promote a more inclusive forestry sector.

Domain	Recommendation	Interview Reference
<b>Education &amp; Training</b>	Integrate gender equality topics into forestry curricula	FFP_1_RS, FFP_4_RS, FFP_10_RS
	Promote non-stereotypical career paths through early exposure	FFP_3_RS, FFP_4_RS
	Include soft-skills training (e.g., communication, negotiation)	FFP_5_RS
	Strengthen practical training and mentorship opportunities for women	FFP_3_RS, FFP_5_RS
	Present role models and career stories of successful women in forestry	FFP_2_RS, FFP_8_RS
	Encourage early gender sensitivity education (even prior to university)	FFP_3_RS
<b>Professional Environment</b>	Promote flexible work arrangements and family-friendly policies	FFP_3_RS, FFP_6_RS
	Ensure equal access to fieldwork, projects, and leadership roles	FFP_5_RS, FFP_9_RS
	Develop gender-sensitive human resource practices	FFP_10_RS, FFP_9_RS
	Provide leadership and negotiation training for women	FFP_2_RS, FFP_5_RS
	Foster inclusive workplace cultures through awareness-raising workshops	FFP_6_RS
	Support peer networks and mentoring systems for professional development	FFP_3_RS, FFP_4_RS

The recommendations relate to two distinct but interlinked areas: education/training and professional practice. In education, respondents emphasized the importance of integrating gender awareness into

formal forestry curricula and suggested improvements in mentorship and practical training for women. Role modelling and representation were also identified as essential to breaking down stereotypes. At a professional level, respondents called for more inclusive HR policies, the removal of informal barriers to career progression and greater institutional support for women's leadership roles. In both areas, the importance focusing on skills-based progression was emphasized.

## Lessons learned

The interviews with female professionals in the Serbian forestry sector reveal an intersection of persistent gender norms and individual efforts to succeed in a traditionally male-dominated field. However, a consistent theme emerges: while women have proven that they are fully capable in this sector, the forestry sector is still characterized by stereotypes.

A key insight is the continued need for gender awareness in forestry education. As FFP\_1\_RS notes, *"Some young women may ask themselves, ' Can I do this? Is this the right profession for me?"* Her reflections illustrate that self-doubt is not rooted in ability, but in prevailing ideas about which roles are suitable for women. This interviewee, like several others, emphasizes how important it is to promote self-confidence: *"They have to believe in themselves, that they can do anything! They must not be shy! They have to fight for themselves"*.

However, the interviews also warn against superficial solutions. FFP\_2\_RS argues for balance. She says: *"Yes, gender equality should be addressed, but without exaggeration, otherwise the essentials will be lost. For example, there is a prescribed number of women who must sit on supervisory boards, but sometimes qualifications are overlooked just to reach the required number"*. Her message to younger women is: *"If you have knowledge, no one can take it away from you!"*. This points out that expertise is the cornerstone of equality.

Another important lesson is the need to change the perception of forestry. Several interviewees (e.g. FFP\_3\_RS, FFP\_4\_RS) emphasize that forestry is often misunderstood as exclusively physical and field work. FFP\_4\_RS says: *"forestry is not just about chainsaws"*, arguing for the visibility of careers in trade, analytics and marketing, which could better serve different interests.

Many respondents agree that gender equality education should start earlier, ideally before university. As FFP\_3\_RS notes, *"such awareness should start much earlier in primary school education"*.

To summarize, the key findings are the importance of early and sustained gender education, the need for structural and curricular reforms to broaden perceptions of forestry, and the central role of mentorship

## 4.8 Slovenia

### The interview partners

	1_SI	2_SI	3_SI	4_SI	5_SI	6_SI	7_SI	8_SI	9_SI	10_SI
<b>Year of graduation</b>	2023	2023	2020	2024	2014 Master; 2021 PhD	2014	2014	2007	2013	2023
<b>Formal professional degree</b>	Master of Science	Master of Science	Master of Science	Bachelor of Science	PhD Forestry	PhD Forestry	Bachelor of Science	Bachelor of Science	Bachelor of Science	Bachelor of Science
<b>Forestry education</b>	University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty, Department of Forestry and Renewable Forest Resources									
<b>Employment status</b>	State company	Research institution	Educational institution	State company	Educational institution	Slovenia Forest Service	State company	Slovenia Forest Service	Slovenia Forest Service	Private forest company
<b>Year of birth</b>	1998	1998	1995	1999	1989	1980	1989	1982	1988	1998

The interviewees represent a diverse group of female professionals from the forestry sector, all of whom have completed their formal education at the University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty, Department of Forestry and Renewable Forest Resources. Their educational backgrounds include both bachelor's and master's degrees, with two individuals holding a PhD in forestry.

The age range of respondents is broad, with birth years between 1980 and 1999, indicating a mix of entry-level, mid-career and experienced professionals. In terms of employment status, respondents are employed in various institutions in the forestry sector. These include state-owned company responsible for the management of state forests, educational and research institutions, public forestry service (Slovenia Forest Service), and a private forestry company. Respondents completed their studies between 2007 and 2024.

### Gender-specific challenges in forestry professional training in Slovenia

#### **Share of women in training programs:**

Interviewees reported varying but generally increasing proportions of women in forestry education. Interviewees born in the 1980s mostly reported that the proportion of female students at undergraduate level was around 20–30%, with some programs reaching up to 40% in the masters. One interviewee noted a reversal in the gender ratio during her years of study: *"In my final year the ratio reversed, two thirds were women and one third men"* (FFP\_8\_SI). However, women were still in the minority in master's programs in younger generations. For example, it was reported that in one class there were *"only three women and 15 men"*, while others recalled that *"about one third of the students were women and two thirds were men"*.

#### **Treatment of women in training programs:**

Women were treated differently, but experiences varied by person and generation. While some women did not experience gender discrimination during their studies, several interviewees described situations

in which they were treated differently – either subtly or explicitly – because of their gender. *"I always had the feeling that both genders were treated equally, as we had the same responsibilities and rights."* (FFP\_2\_SI).

However, others reported gender-specific differences ranging from biased grading to exclusionary behavior. One respondent recalled that although her answers were correct, she received a poor grade, and a professor bluntly said: *"Women have no place in forestry."* She added that female students were graded more harshly even though they met all the requirements (FFP\_6\_SI). Another participant mentioned a professor's patronizing remark: *"Princess, you can do it"*, during fieldwork directed at a female student (FFP\_10\_SI). One interviewee recalled a professor's joke that *"women belong in the kitchen"* and noted that while she took it lightly, others might have been offended (FFP\_4\_SI). On the other hand, they sometimes felt privileged. FFP\_3\_SI recounted: *"The male students were kind of gentlemanly because they always helped us carry the heavy measuring equipment..."*. These examples suggest that while overt discrimination was not the norm, subtle forms of gender bias and stereotyping were still present in education, especially among older faculty members. Nevertheless, the general trend indicates a more inclusive and respectful environment for the younger generations, with fewer instances of gender differentiation.

### **Gender equality in training programs:**

In most cases, gender equality was not explicitly addressed in forestry training programs. Interviewees consistently reported that their university curricula and faculty culture did not include formal education or discussion of gender issues. *"Gender equality was not addressed in forestry education and there were no special programs promoting it."* (FFP\_5\_SI). *"I don't recall any discussions or initiatives focusing on supporting female students."* (FFP\_7\_SI). Views on whether gender equality should be integrated into education were mixed. Some were in favor of inclusion, particularly in a subtle or general way: *"Workshops for faculty staff and students could help raise awareness and avoid unintentional violations."* (FFP\_2\_SI). *"It is important to emphasize gender equality, but not just from a women's perspective... Men might feel neglected."* (FFP\_3\_SI). *"It would be beneficial to create some awareness, but cautiously; too much emphasis could have a negative effect."* (FFP\_6\_SI). Others were skeptical and felt that gender should not be overemphasized. *"Female students know why they chose this field... highlighting equal opportunities might do more harm than good."* (FFP\_6\_SI). *"I don't think additional emphasis on gender awareness in education is necessary."* (FFP\_7\_SI).

Although gender equality was rarely part of formal education, several respondents supported the idea of light awareness raising, particularly for teachers and in areas where implicit bias might influence students. Others felt that competence and confidence were more important than gender-specific initiatives.

## **Gender specific challenges in forestry jobs in Slovenia**

### **Share of women in the workplace:**

The proportion of women in Slovenian forestry varies greatly depending on the organization and function. Women are still a small minority in field-orientated and production-focused companies. *"In the company where I work, the proportion of women is less than 20%."* (FFP\_3\_SI). *"In my company, about 5% of the employees are women."* (FFP\_10\_SI). However, the figures are higher in research or higher educational institutions. One respondent observed a balanced gender ratio in her workplace, while another stated that *"the gender distribution is more balanced among younger employees"* (FFP\_2\_SI). A

notable exception is one interviewee: *"I am the only female forestry employee in this type of organization in Slovenia."* (FFP\_5\_SI).

### **Female sex and recruitment:**

Female gender made no difference in the recruitment process in most cases. Interviewees reported that recruitment was based on qualifications and experience: *"Gender had no influence on the selection. I got the job because of my education, my good grades and my work experience."* (FFP\_1\_SI). *"The criteria were clear, and I fulfilled them. There was no gender-specific differences."* (FFP\_4\_SI). However, some noted that gender may have played an underlying role, particularly in cases where women were considered better suited to administrative or short-term project tasks: *"The job was temporary and involved administrative tasks. I think the fact that I was a woman made me a more attractive candidate."* (FFP\_6\_SI). Another reported that she was asked inappropriate questions in a job interview: *"When I applied for a job, I was asked if I wanted to have children and when. That made me a bit uncomfortable."* (FFP\_2\_SI).

### **Support from colleagues:**

Most interviewees described positive experiences with their teams and colleagues: *"I have a great team that offers me support."* (FFP\_2\_SI). *"My colleagues and my boss are happy to work in a mixed-gender team."* (FFP\_4\_SI). *"The drivers of the forestry trucks are always respectful and friendly to me."* (FFP\_3\_SI). However, there were also isolated problems. One interviewee recalled that she was seen as a "grateful" employee because of her small children and her long period of unemployment: *"A colleague said I was a grateful profile because I would do anything after being unemployed with children."* (FFP\_6\_SI). Another admitted that she sometimes holds back in a male-dominated environment: *"I instinctively hold back before I say something because I know that men usually have the last word."* (FFP\_7\_SI).

### **Barriers in career development and work-life balance:**

Several interviewees described barriers related to motherhood and work-life balance. Women often felt disadvantaged after returning from maternity leave. *"Maternity leave holds women back. When I came back, I had to start from scratch."* (FFP\_7\_SI). *"I was seen as an overqualified young mother. Nobody said it directly, but it was clear."* (FFP\_6\_SI).

In some organizations in particular, employees were expected to work overtime: *"It's quite normal to work 10–12 hours a day, even if you're only paid for eight. I set boundaries early on."* (FFP\_2\_SI).

Women were often entrusted with administrative tasks. *"I was assigned more administrative tasks than stated in my job description."* (FFP\_6\_SI).

Despite these problems, many women expressed satisfaction with their role and appreciated the flexibility and support of the team. Over time, conditions have improved, especially for younger professionals who report more equal treatment and an inclusive environment. An older interviewee confirmed this change: *"Ten years ago, people would ask: 'Why did you study forestry? Now they just find it interesting.'" (FFP\_7\_SI).*

Gender-specific challenges in forestry professions still exist, particularly in relation to work-life balance and role expectations. However, the situation has improved significantly over time, with a greater acceptance of women in technical professions and an increasing gender balance among younger employees. Supportive colleagues, evolving social norms and the increasing presence of women in

leadership positions point to a positive development towards more equality in the Slovenian forestry sector.

## Recommendations

The interviews with Slovenian women forestry professionals resulted in several thoughtful and experience-based recommendations. These recommendations focus on promoting gender awareness, reducing inequalities and supporting women and men in developing an inclusive and respectful forestry environment.

1. Raise awareness gently and inclusively
  - *"Workshops for faculty employees and students could help raise awareness... People sometimes unintentionally offend others."* (FFP\_2\_SI)
  - *"Equal opportunities awareness should start as early as possible with children, but in forestry it should be subtle."* (FFP\_6\_SI)
2. Focus on skills, not gender
  - *"Both genders should be allowed to try everything – even the so-called 'male' tasks, such as using a chainsaw."* (FFP\_9\_SI)
3. Encourage transparency of career paths: explaining the different roles in forestry (field vs. office, technical vs. policy work) can help students make an informed decision based on their interests rather than stereotypes.
  - *"Perhaps career options should be explained in more detail... Women need to be better prepared for the pressures of the field."* (FFP\_7\_SI)
4. Emphasize role models: Telling stories about successful female foresters was suggested as an effective inspirational strategy.
  - *"Show examples of successful women in forestry in the national forestry magazine — this can encourage girls who choose their field of study."* (FFP\_6\_SI)
5. Encourage equal workload and responsibility: Avoid assumptions that women are better suited to administrative or support tasks. Instead, focus on equal access to all aspects of forestry work.
6. Encourage self-confidence and assertiveness: Many respondents emphasized that young women should be confident in their own knowledge and speak their minds:
  - *"Young women should be confident. They have the knowledge; they should not hesitate to express their opinion."* (FFP\_4\_SI)
  - *"They should approach the matter with the idea that they are worth the same and should demand equal treatment."* (FFP\_5\_SI)
7. Support for work-life balance: Employers should advocate flexible, family-friendly policies and avoid viewing mothers as less committed professionals.
8. Encourage peer support networks: Creating formal or informal spaces where women can support each other was seen as crucial.
  - *"Women should support each other more, especially those in leadership positions."* (FFP\_9\_SI)

## Lessons learned

1. Positive trend towards equality  
Most younger professionals report fair treatment during their studies and upon recruitment, suggesting that formal barriers are decreasing.
2. Inequality still exists  
Despite general fairness, gender stereotypes and microaggressions still exist: from 'jokes' in class to doubts about women's physical abilities or leadership qualities.
3. Work-life balance remains a barrier  
Maternity leave and caring responsibilities continue to have a disproportionate impact on women's careers. Returning to work is often characterized by the need to "start again" or prove themselves once more.
4. Self-confidence is key  
Many women emphasized the importance of self-confidence and assertiveness. Being aware of one's worth and speaking up is seen as essential to overcoming gender expectations.
5. Gender awareness should be inclusive  
While gender equality was rarely addressed in the education, several participants advocate for light, inclusive awareness initiatives that avoid excluding women while still promoting respect and equal opportunities.

## 4.9 Ukraine

### The interview partners

Interviewed respondents are representing the industry – State specialized enterprise “Forests of Ukraine” (different levels from the central office to the Forest District); the state executive body of the forest management vertical system; Universities (staff) and non-governmental organization. We tried to cover different actors, who are employers of the forestry specialist, with wide range of employment opportunities from the forest protection, to forest management and harvesting to administration, and teaching of the next forestry specialists.

The education of the interviewed specialists is in all cases at least bachelor's degree in forestry, ecology or biology, to the Master and PhD in forest management or forest administration.

### Gender-specific challenges in forestry professional training in Ukraine

#### ***Share of women in training programs:***

The share of women at the forestry studies as experienced by respondents, varies from 7% of female students at the bachelor's degree studies, to 50% at master's degree studies. If we talk about the studies of Ecology or Biology, as a basic education of forestry workers, share of female students is much higher there, sometimes reaching to the 80%.

### **Treatment of women in training programs:**

The challenges for the girls to study forestry often are related to the ideas, that forestry itself is not the profession for women. That is why the attitude towards girls studying forestry often falls towards "taking special care of female students", having less requirements in fulfilling of practical tasks, but also having female students play a role of organizer or leader of the group, because "women do better with papers and organizational functions".

Perfect illustration comes from FFP\_1-UA: *"I would say that girls during the period of study had side "bonuses", sometimes a bit higher grades, boys were taught to give a hand to girls, carry load etc., but during the actual education, I looked back and understood that at the field studies I was also a brigade chief of the group of boys." Boys also were asking girls to become a group leader, because girls are better with remembering things, related to organization of study and associated bureaucracy, also it was easier for girls to negotiate things with teachers."*

### **Gender equality in training programs:**

None of the respondents mentioned that gender equality was a topic in a training program during the Bachelor/Master degree studies, except FFP\_2-UA, who mentioned a topic of gender equality as party of forest certification course. Also, FFP\_1-UA mentioned, that during the PhD studies something related to gender equality was mentioned.

At the same time, all respondents agreed, that it is important to cover the topic of gender equality during the studies, first of all, to bring understanding to all genders that the professional work as well as personal life tasks can be done by anyone, and all should understand that there is no "obligation" of women to put aside professional life when they get married and raise children. All respondents also mention that it is not needed to have gender equality as a separate training course but start with uncovering this topic during the 1<sup>st</sup> year course "Entry to the profession" and then integrate it in different courses. Also, it was mentioned by all, that it is very important for all young specialists, but especially important for female emerging professionals, to get support, informational or organizational, to enter the market as well as mentorship support during the initial years of work.

## **Gender specific challenges in forestry jobs in Ukraine**

### **Share of women in the workplace:**

Share of women at current job varies from 0,6% (forest engineers, guarding and protection) to the share up to 50% at the industry. It is typical that the closer to the field job the position is, the less women there are.

### **Female sex and recruitment:**

Usually female sex has a difference, when it comes to certain job. The leadership/management either don't want to bother with female staff and forest engineer positions, because it takes some time to train staff member and to set up the work, and then women can go for maternity leave; or there is no trust in the capacities of women to do certain work (master of forest position, when you have to be out all the time, the working day is not set, it can take longer than normal day, one has to deal with difficult situations in relation to illegal harvesting or other situations etc.).

FFP\_6-UA: *"there is a prejudice that women are less suitable for skilled work on machines and in manufacturing enterprises in general"*

However, there are several examples, when woman was hired (rotated), because she did the job better (FFP\_2-UA); also another example of women hired, because she performed well during practical training at the enterprise (FFP\_5-UA).

**Support from colleagues:**

Situation with the support from colleagues varies from very strong, actually mentorship, support from the chief (FFP\_2-UA and FFP\_5-UA), support from colleagues and supervisors, which included advice, consultations, and teamwork (FFP\_7-UA and FFP\_6-UA), role model (FFP\_3-UA) to the intentional ignoring of the request of support (FFP\_4-UA).

**Barriers in career development and work-life balance:**

There are certain barriers in career development, first of all related to the family status of women, e.g. maternity leave and family obligations to take care of kids and housekeeping duties. That is why rarely women can combine career and family. Another barrier is related to the gender, which means for women it is more difficult to build career due to envy of colleagues, also male colleagues, and lack of trust in the abilities of women to do the work.

**Recommendations**

No	Gender awareness in both training/education and in professional work environments	Recommendations to young professionals entering the market
1	Bring topic of gender equality within wider scope of issues related to human rights, diversity and differences, equity and equality as a general competence during first year of professional studies, but also during the vocational training or other life-long learning trainings, so people are aware of the topic.	Do not have preconceptions towards yourself, because you are woman, you are the very same player at the labor market as any other, everything depends on your competences, if not in one place, than in another you will always find a place for your work, if you are a good specialist.
2	It is important to talk about gender equality during studies. At the beginning of forestry studies there is a course "Introduction to the profession" and it would be good to open up this question in format of discussion for example, because in forest management, many men don't realize that the situation for women is a bit different, some things are harder for women to perform.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't be afraid</li> <li>• Try, learn from mistakes, the world will not stop spinning if you do something wrong</li> <li>• Build up connections, meet people in the profession, and it will help you later."</li> </ul>
3	The gender issues during the studies should be delicately woven into all programs rather than be taught as a separate topic, also it would be good	<i>"May be, the confidence in oneself; if you like your work, if it is interesting for you, you will be noticed; and if you have a potential, you will get a chance to reach wanted job position and hopefully, wanted salary level".</i>

	to discuss situations with physical work, which can be more difficult to women, than men.	
4	<p>The gender issues during the studies should be definitely taught and communicated, because women are perceived as a housekeepers, those who are responsible for house, kids and family; it is important that people have basic level of education and understanding of equity and equality issues, in order not to humiliate based on gender in minority, understand needs and challenges of each gender.</p> <p>It is important to support women in their career in forestry, because often women, who start career are suppressed by male colleagues to certain lower level jobs, where it is comfortable for them, but women should decide themselves, what jobs they would like to have.</p>	<i>"I would recommend women in forest management not to be afraid. Not to be afraid and try out, not to show fear,... to go towards own goals, try out, because it never happens that we have success from the first try, one should try, try, try, learn, not be afraid."</i>
5	It is important to communicate gender topics, but may be it should be done during school and kindergarten. It is needed to explain that there is a place for women in forestry, it is okay if women want to work in the forest.	To have knowledge and self-confidence, if you have knowledge, you know how to apply it in practice, you will be not worse than men working in forestry.
8	The interviewee believes that increasing gender awareness in forestry education is essential. She points out that this field is still dominated by men, both among students and faculty: <i>"Forestry education is still primarily dominated by male scientists, and most forestry students are also men"</i> .	Advice to young women aspiring to work in the forestry sector is to remain persistent, excel at their work, and be prepared for challenges.
9	The interviewee believes that more attention should be paid to gender equality in forestry education, as women often face difficulties when entering the job market.	She recommends young women who want to work in the forestry sector to acquire additional skills in economics or forest management accounting: <i>"Master the profession of an economist or accountant in forest management"</i> .

### Lessons learned

It is interesting to learn that often women are not facing any gender related discrimination because they are not taking seriously from the very beginning.

Another interesting fact is that women often have preferential treatment (better grades, less demanding of knowledge, not asking to do hard work or to go to the field), but also they are being requested to do organizational work (be a leader of the group etc.).

Most of the respondents mentioned that it is hard to ensure work-life balance in relation to forestry work, because most of the responsibilities related to family and caregiving is still on women.

Only one respondent mentioned gender topic as part of the studies (forest certification course), but all respondents mentioned that there is a need to open up the topic of gender equity and equality during the forestry studies in one way or another.

Support activities for emerging female professionals would be helpful, especially role models; mentorship; market entrance support.

Recommendations to the young forestry professionals largely are about being confident, not to be afraid and acquiring additional skills.

## 4.10 Recommendations from forestry professionals

The recommendations from female forestry professionals across in the Danube Region emphasize the importance of fostering gender equality and inclusivity in the forestry sector through education, professional environments, and cultural change. Early integration of gender awareness into forestry curricula, mentorship programs, and promoting „new images „of forestry are highlighted as essential steps to challenge stereotypes and encourage young women to enter the field. Networking, confidence-building, and equal opportunities in fieldwork and leadership roles are seen as crucial for professional growth.

Interviewees stress the need for fairness and transparency in recruitment and pay. They also recommend flexible work arrangements to support work-life balance, particularly for women with caregiving responsibilities. Role models and success stories are suggested to inspire and motivate women, while soft skills training, such as communication and negotiation, is encouraged to help navigate male-dominated environments.

While some countries advocate for normalizing gender equality without overemphasis, others highlight the importance of practical strategies to address biases and barriers. Across all regions, the focus remains on skills-based advancement, visibility, and creating supportive networks to enable women to thrive in forestry careers.

## 5 Solutions to improve the career path of women in forestry

The following section summarizes the main recommendations from the Fem2forests transnational alumni study of forestry graduates in the Danube Region. It gives an overview of the recommendations obtained from the survey with forestry graduates and from the interviews with forestry professionals hence providing a set of solutions on how to improve the career path of women in forestry in the Danube Region coming directly from women that are actively involved in the forestry area.

### Education & Training

- Integrate gender awareness: Include gender equality topics in forestry curricula, starting from primary education, and offer mentorship programs.
- Practical exposure: Provide early hands-on training and better internship opportunities.
- Soft skills development: Include communication, negotiation, and confidence-building training to prepare women for male-dominated environments.
- Role models: Highlight successful women in forestry to inspire and motivate students.
- Consideration for women's needs (e.g. hygiene, menstruation).
- Offer scholarships and support services.
- Establish zero-tolerance policies for misogyny in forestry education.

### Professional Environment

- Networking: Encourage networking and peer support systems for women.
- Equal opportunities: Ensure equality and fairness in hiring, pay, and career-progression.
- Competence over appearance: Develop gender-sensitive HR practices and value skills and professionalism over gender stereotypes.
- Flexible work arrangements: Adopt family-friendly policies, particularly for women with caregiving responsibilities such as flexible work models.
- Inclusive policies: Develop gender-sensitive HR practices and discourage informal biases.
- Visible role models: Create female role models in leadership.
- Women's quota: Implement women's quotas in leadership positions.

### Cultural Change

- Normalize gender equality: Treat gender equality as a standard principle rather than a special topic.
- Visibility: Promote success stories of women in forestry to counter stereotypes and attract more women to the sector.
- Confidence building: Encourage women to be assertive, authentic, and resilient in their roles.

### Policy Recommendations

- Structural improvements: Advocate for fairness in recruitment, pay transparency, and work-life balance solutions.

- Affirmative actions: Where underrepresentation exists, implement policies to ensure merit-based recruitment and equal access.

### **Key Messages to Young Women**

- Be confident, persistent, and authentic. Avoid conforming to male norms and focus on excelling in your field.
- Build networks, seek mentorship, and take advantage of diverse career opportunities.
- Stand up for your rights and communicate openly about challenges.

## 6 Conclusions

The Fem2forests transnational alumni study of female forestry graduates provides valuable insights into the career path of women who pursued a forestry education in the Danube Region. The results highlight the multifaceted challenges and opportunities faced by women in forestry professions across the nine countries represented in the study. The findings reveal that the majority of forestry graduates that participated in this study work in the forestry sector and express satisfaction with their educational preparation and current roles.

While most female graduates experience friendly interaction and equal treatment at their workplace, they also report encountering barriers related to gender discrimination, work-life balance, and limited access to leadership positions. The results of the study also show that throughout the Danube Region there still is a significant underrepresentation of women in forestry educational programs, with persistent gender biases and stereotypes influencing both educational experiences and career advancement. The interviews conducted with female forestry professionals underscore the importance of supportive networks and targeted initiatives to promote gender equality in the sector.

To foster a more inclusive environment for women in forestry, the participants of this study recommend integrating gender awareness into educational curricula, enhancing practical training opportunities, and promoting female role models within the industry. Additionally, the participants suggest that flexible work arrangements and transparent recruitment practices support women's career progression.

In conclusion, addressing the challenges identified in this study requires a combined effort from educational institutions, employers, and policymakers to create a more equitable forestry sector. By implementing the recommendations proposed in this report, stakeholders can contribute to a more diverse and inclusive workforce that promotes the careers of women in forestry.

## 7 Appendices

### Appendix 1: Online Questionnaire

#### Fem2Forests Alumni Study

Dear forest professional!

The Fem2forests project aims at increasing the share of women working in forestry. We are therefore reaching out to you and would like to ask how you perceive your career path and the forestry training you obtained to get ready for your job.

The anonymised online survey will be conducted by project partners in 9 countries across the Danube Region. The findings will help us to create recommendations for gender awareness in forestry education and employers in the sector. The results of the study will be made available on our website and Fem2forests in Social Media (LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook).

Your details will be analysed anonymously. This means that no conclusions can be drawn about the persons answering the questionnaire.

There are 33 questions in this survey.

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#### I. General Information



[A1] In which country do you work?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Austria
- Germany
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Croatia
- Czech Republic
- Romania
- Serbia
- Slovenia
- Ukraine

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**[A2]What is the highest level of education that you have completed?**

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 0 = early childhood education (less than primary education)
- 1 = primary education I
- 2 = lower secondary education (entrance level certificate for vocational training programs)
- 3 = upper secondary education (entrance level certificate for university programs)
- 4 = vocational training (post-secondary non-tertiary education)
- 5 = professional training (short cycle tertiary education, non-academic)
- 6 = bachelor level education
- 7 = master level education
- 8 = doctoral level education

**[A3]When did you graduate from your forestry university studies/ vocational training in forestry?**

Please enter a date:

**[A4]Do you have a family background in forestry and/or agriculture?**

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

**[A5]Do you have children?**

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

**[A6]What is your year of birth?**

Please enter a date:

**[A7]Sex**

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- female
- male
- diverse

## II. Education and Training

**[B1]**What was the share of women and of men in your forestry study/training program?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- less than 20% female
- 20 to 40% female
- more or less equal distribution of men and women
- over 50% female
- I don't know

**[B2]**Was gender equality addressed in your training program/forestry education?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No
- I don't remember

**[B3]**Did you face gender-related challenges in your forestry education?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- yes, a lot
- yes, sometimes
- no
- I don't know
- I don't want to answer

**[B4]**Please rate the following statement: **My education in forestry was a good preparation for my professional career.**

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

1 = strongly disagree | 2 = disagree | 3 = neither agree nor disagree | 4 = agree | 5 = strongly agree | n.a.

**[B5] When looking back, which contents of your studies/training would have been necessary to better prepare young professionals for a career in forestry?**

Please choose **all** that apply:

- more practical field work
- more networking opportunities with professionals and companies
- more exchange with other universities/training facilities (national; international)
- shorter educational programs
- guidance and mentorship from forestry professionals
- internship opportunities career counseling and job placement services
- access to new technologies in forestry
- access to modern management tools
- gender diversity and awareness programs
- other

**[B6]**

Please complete the sentence:

**Forestry education for women can be improved by...**

Please write your answer here:

### III. Job search and career

**[C1] How did you search for jobs after graduation?**

Please choose **all** that apply:

- through job postings of employers in forestry
- internet search
- through own job advertisement
- employment agency
- recommendation from study program
- through personnel contacts (family, friends, relatives, etc.)
- through contacts from education/ training in forestry (faculty members, etc.)
- through contacts from internships/ volunteering/ trainee programs
- I tried self-employment/ freelancer
- employer contacted me and offered me a job
- other

**[C2] Which skills and competences were important for finding a job?**

Please choose **all** that apply:

- professional specialisation
- leadership skills
- team-working ability
- project management skills
- technical knowledge
- competitiveness
- self-confidence
- expertise in new technologies
- problem-solving abilities
- communication-skills
- evidence of practical experience in your field of work
- flexibility to relocate
- graduation grade
- foreign language skills
- social/political commitment
- personal contacts
- other

**[C3] Which difficulties did you have in your job search?**

Please choose **all** that apply:

- graduates with a different professional focus were preferred
- another degree was required (e.g. Master, PhD, etc)
- the positions did not match my salary expectations
- the positions did not match my ideas about working hours and working conditions
- applicants with more professional experience were preferred
- most positions were too far away from my home
- professional skills that I don't have were required (e.g. IT knowledge, etc)
- the positions were not compatible with my family situation
- the positions did not meet my personal interests
- I was disadvantaged because of my gender
- there were no difficulties
- other

**[C4] What gender equality criteria during your recruitment process are you aware of?**

Please choose **all** that apply:

- women are encouraged to apply in job advertisements;
- gender equality/ equal opportunity officers were present during job interview;
- part time/ home office is possible for the position;
- other

**[C5]What difficulties did you face at your first job?**

Please choose **all** that apply:

- work overload
- insufficient transparency of decision-making in company/organization
- feeling of being underchallenged
- I feel not qualified enough for the position
- problems with colleagues and/or supervisors
- difficulties with work-life balance
- gender-related challenges
- I'm being loaded with administrative work which I was not hired for
- there are no difficulties
- I don't know
- other

**[C6]What are barriers for women to continue a career in forestry after finishing their forestry education?**

Please choose **all** that apply:

- concerns about physical demands
- cultural or social norms discouraging women from forestry careers
- work-life balance challenges
- gender stereotypes associated with forestry professions
- male-dominated working environment
- lack of female role models in forestry
- underestimation of women's abilities and contribution in forestry
- gender-specific challenges during forestry education
- low salary
- there are no obstacles
- i don't know
- other

## IV. Employment situation

**[D1] In which area do you work at the present?**

● Please select at most 3 answers

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Forestry
- Farming
- Research
- Food
- Industry
- Retail
- Policy
- Administration & Management
- Consulting
- Associations/ Foundations/NGOs
- Communication/Media
- Education
- I am unemployed
- Other

**[D2] Which professional position do you have at the moment?**

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- top management level (e.g. managing director, head of unit)
- middle management level (e.g. project leader)
- employee without leadership responsibility
- working in family business
- freelancer
- entrepreneur
- trainee

**[D3] Do you work part-time?**

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

**[D4] For what reason(s) are you working part-time?**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:  
Answer was 'Yes' at question '22 [D3]' (Do you work part-time?)

❶ Please select at most 3 answers

Please choose **all** that apply:

- care of children
- care of other family members
- own choice
- position only offers part-time option
- health reasons
- work-life balance
- carrying out additional activities/ jobs
- other

**[D5] Which criteria were most important for the choice of your current job?**

❶ Please select at most 3 answers

Please choose **all** that apply:

- high income and career opportunities
- proximity to home
- strong personal interest
- position fulfills job expectations
- position enables work-life balance
- independent organization of work
- friendly working environment
- other

**[D6] In your current job, which are the main challenges to pursue a career?**

❶ Please select at most 3 answers

Please choose **all** that apply:

- lack of qualification
- lack of technical skills
- lack of other skills
- roles and stereotypes
- lack of self-confidence
- family reasons and/ or care work
- part-time work
- male-dominated environment
- physical and psychological resilience
- mobility in professional life
- other

**[D7] Are you satisfied with your current position?**

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

1 = dissatisfied | 2 = slightly satisfied | 3 = quite satisfied | 4 = satisfied | 5 = very satisfied | n.a.

**[D8] Do you work in the forest sector? \***

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

**[D9] In which type of forest sector organization are you working now?**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '27 [D8]' (Do you work in the forest sector? )

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- national public forest administration
- forest enterprise/company
- management of forests in protected area
- forestry contractor
- self-employed in timber processing firm
- research institution
- forest consultancy
- environmental NGO
- forestry association
- other

**[D10] What is the share of female forestry professionals in your organization?**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '27 [D8]' (Do you work in the forest sector? )

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- less than 25% women
- more or less equal distribution of men and women
- over 50% women
- I don't know

**[D11] How are you treated by colleagues with a different sex than yours?**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '27 [D8]' (Do you work in the forest sector? )

Please choose **all** that apply:

- I experience friendly interaction
- I experience willingness to help
- I experience equal treatment
- I am confronted with traditional gender-roles
- I am treated friendly but not taken seriously
- I am critically observed
- I have to perform better than my colleagues to get the same recognition for my work
- I am not involved in decision-making
- I feel like an outsider
- I am not part of a network
- I have the feeling of being treated unfairly
- other

**[D12] Do you feel supported in your working environment?**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '27 [D8]' (Do you work in the forest sector? )

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

1 = no, not at all

2 = sometimes

3 = more or less

4 = most of the time

5 = yes, always

n.a.

**[D13] How would you rank the opportunities for work life balance in your current job?**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '27 [D8]' (Do you work in the forest sector? )

Please choose **only one** of the following:

1

2

3

4

5

1 = very bad

2 = bad

3 = sufficient

4 = good

5 = very good

n.a.

**[D14]**

**Please complete the sentence:**

**Employers in forestry can foster the career of females in the forest sector through...**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '27 [D8]' (Do you work in the forest sector? )

Please write your answer here:

*Thank you for taking the time to participate in our questionnaire!*

*Do you want to stay up to date on the Fem2forests project?*

*Follow us on social media:*

Facebook

(<https://www.facebook.com/Fem4Forest/posts/pfbid06m1NpyFhr6V5hPTW5EfzsYeDCPYgWTQ57bf9iUJJ8oinM7ibuxgaxRigeWCEgRdFI>)

LinkedIn ([https://www.linkedin.com/posts/forests-in-women-s-hands\\_fem2forests-interregdanube-activity-7204787202164244481-KLH8?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=member\\_ios](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/forests-in-women-s-hands_fem2forests-interregdanube-activity-7204787202164244481-KLH8?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_ios))

Instagram

(<https://www.instagram.com/fem4forest/p/C76R9PZCSyz/?next=%2Fblayneg%2F&hl=de>)

## Appendix 2: Interview guidelines

**Interview template for qualitative interviews with female forest professionals in the frame of:**

**A2.2 Recommendations and innovative concepts for gender awareness and competences in educational and training institutions**

- 10 interviews per country of women working in forestry/forest-based sector (women only - in person, online, via phone)
- Interview partners: Female professionals in forestry, incl. early stage and more experienced professionals; different types of employers
- Conduct and record interviews until 31.01.2025
- Analyze interviews according to interview evaluation template until 28.02.2025
- Duration of interview: approx. 60 minutes
- Analyze interviews according to evaluation template – transcription of interview is NOT obligatory!




Introduction into the interview:

Dear interview partner,

The Fem2forests project “Innovative pathways for efficient involvement of girls and young women in the forestry sector” aims at increasing the share of women working in forestry. With this interview we would like to learn from female professionals in forestry how they perceive their career paths in forestry and the training they obtained to get ready for the labor market in forestry. We conduct these interviews in the 9 partner countries of the project as part of our transnational Alumni Study.

Everything you say in this interview will be treated confidentially and will be anonymized when preparing the Alumni Study. We use a “Consent to the Processing Operations Form and Data Protection Statement” for this purpose, which I have sent to you. Do you have any questions about it?

<p>0. Warm-up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your current job in forestry and what do you like about it?</li> <li>• Please briefly describe your career path from graduation to your current job.</li> <li>• Do you seek to achieve a specific job position in the future? Which one and why?</li> </ul>
<p>I. Gender-specific challenges in forestry professional training</p>	<p>Looking back to the time when you were trained as a professional in forestry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of professional training did you obtain (university study, vocational training)?</li> <li>• What was the share of women and of men in your professional training?</li> <li>• Do you remember a situation where female students were treated differently than the male students (e.g. internship, fieldwork, excursion, project work)? If yes, can you give an example?</li> <li>• Was gender equality addressed in your training program? If yes, how and in what aspects (e.g., mentoring program, women’s group, gender-sensitive training)?</li> <li>• What is your opinion: Should forestry training programs support female students specifically to help them entering the labor market? If yes, how? If not, why?</li> </ul>
<p>II. Gender-specific challenges in forestry jobs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which organization are you working at today and what is its share of women with professional forestry training?</li> <li>• Looking at the situation when you were hired/recruited for your current job: Were you aware of the selection criteria for the position? How were they applied? Do you</li> </ul>

	<p>believe that you being a woman influenced the final decision of the recruitment committee?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In your current or previous jobs: Do you remember a situation when you felt treated differently working as a woman in forestry? If yes, can you give an example? How did you cope with it?</li> <li>• Did you receive support from your colleagues / supervisors / employer? If yes, what kind of support? Which one was most beneficial?</li> <li>• How about career barriers in your current or previous jobs: Did you experience specific behavior from your colleagues / supervisors / employer that hampered your career opportunities?</li> <li>• How about work-life balance topics like family and other care responsibilities: How do they affect female careers in forestry (e.g. employment status, career path, payment)?</li> </ul>	
<p>III. Recommendations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think: Should gender awareness and equality become a bigger topic in forestry training? If yes, how? If not, why not?</li> <li>• Which recommendations do you have for young women entering the labor market in forestry?</li> </ul>	
<p>Closure</p>	<p>We come to the end. Please take a look at the three pictures: Which one do you like the most and why?</p>	
		

Explanation for pictures: (1) professional in advisory role for forest owners, (2) professional working in production-oriented forestry, (3) professional in upper management position

At the end of the interview – Please ask the interviewee for general information.

Date of interview	
Year of graduation	
Formal professional degree	
Forestry school / university / training institution	
Year of birth	
Place and country of residence	

Thank you for your time!

## Appendix 3: Interview analysis template

**Analysis template** for INTERVIEWERS of Fem2forests project partners

**Aim:** Summarize main insights from interviews with female forestry professionals for Alumni Study. The findings complement the quantitative survey results by providing in-depth perspectives.

### DEMOGRAPHIC INFO

Date of interview	
Year of graduation	
Formal professional degree	
Forestry school / university / training institution	
Year of birth	
Place and country of residence	

### MAIN INSIGHTS FROM INTERVIEW

#### I. WARM-UP

- Summarize the interviewee's career path in forestry and her plans for the future, including motivations.
- Write at least two paragraphs, 2 direct quotes that reflect interviewee's perspective succinctly (one about path, one about career plans)

#### II. GENDER-SPECIFIC CHALLENGES IN FORESTRY PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

- Summarize interviewee's perspective on topic in a few sentences, incl. type of professional training and share of women in training.
- List examples provided in interview and explain briefly what they are about.
- Interviewee's opinion if forestry training programs should support female students specifically to enter labor markets. Summarize in one paragraph.
- Identify relevant quotes and include them.

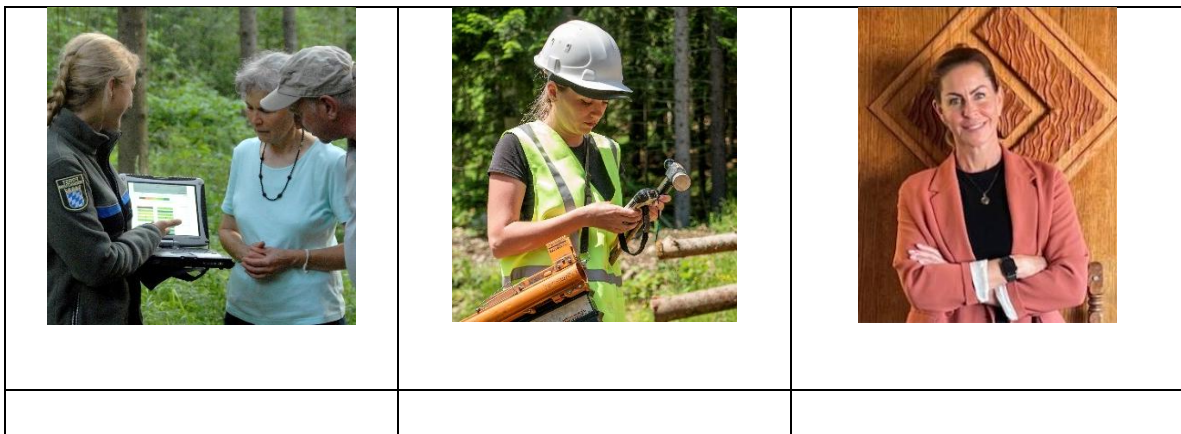
#### III. GENDER-SPECIFIC CHALLENGES IN FORESTRY JOBS

- Summarize in one paragraph interviewee’s perspective whether she feels treated differently at work because she is a woman, incl. share of women in the organization she is working at.
- Summarize interviewee’s perspective on her recruitment: Which skills, competences and gender equality criteria played a role?
- Working as a woman in forestry: uncomfortable situations / received support – list examples provided in interview and explain briefly what they are about.
- Career barriers: behavioral and work-life topics - list examples provided in interview and explain briefly what they are about.
- Identify relevant quotes and include them.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

- What can be learned from interviewee about gender awareness and equality in forestry training?
- Summarize in one paragraph and add quote.

#### V. CLOSURE



Explanation for pictures: (1) forester in advisory role for forest owners, (2) forester working in production-oriented forestry, (3) forester in upper management position

- Please tick relevant box and provide explanation of interviewee – with direct quote if possible. Which image of a professional career does the interviewee associate with?

