

Uneven ground

Navigating gender and diversity in the forestry sector

Barbara Öllerer

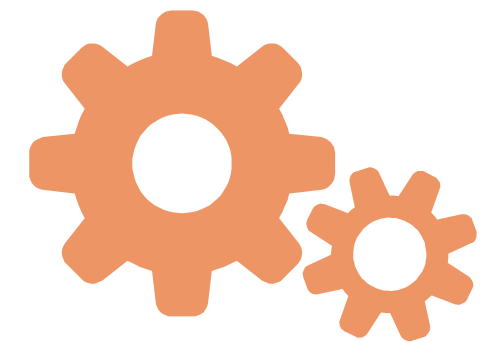
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Overview

- **Background and data**
- **Underrepresentation and its consequences**
- **Perceptions in the Austrian forestry sector**
- **Gender-specific barriers**
- **Ways forward**



Background and data

Europe and Austria

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Background and data – Europe

Women employed in forestry

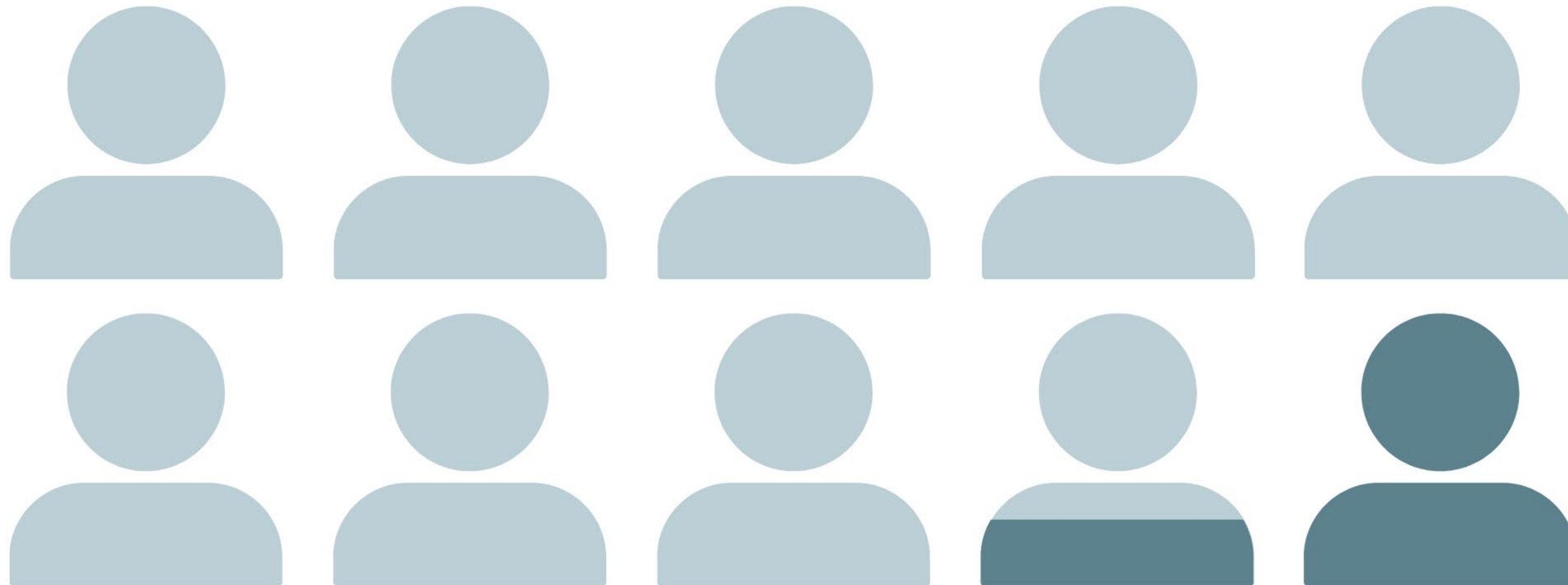
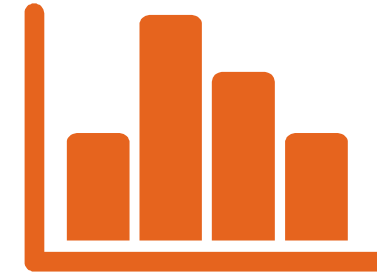
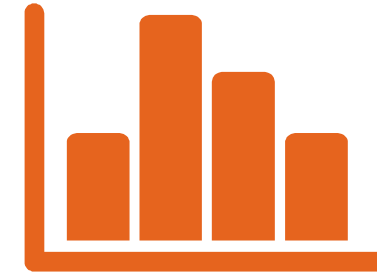


Image: based on UNECE, 2020
Author: Öllerer, 2022

Background and data – Europe



- Share of women in the forestry workforce **approx. 14%** (UNECE, 2020)
 - Range: 3% - 32%
- Fewer women in **decision-making bodies and interest groups** (Böhling et al., 2021)
- 23 % women in higher forest education (FAO, 2020)

Background and data – Europe

Women employed in forestry

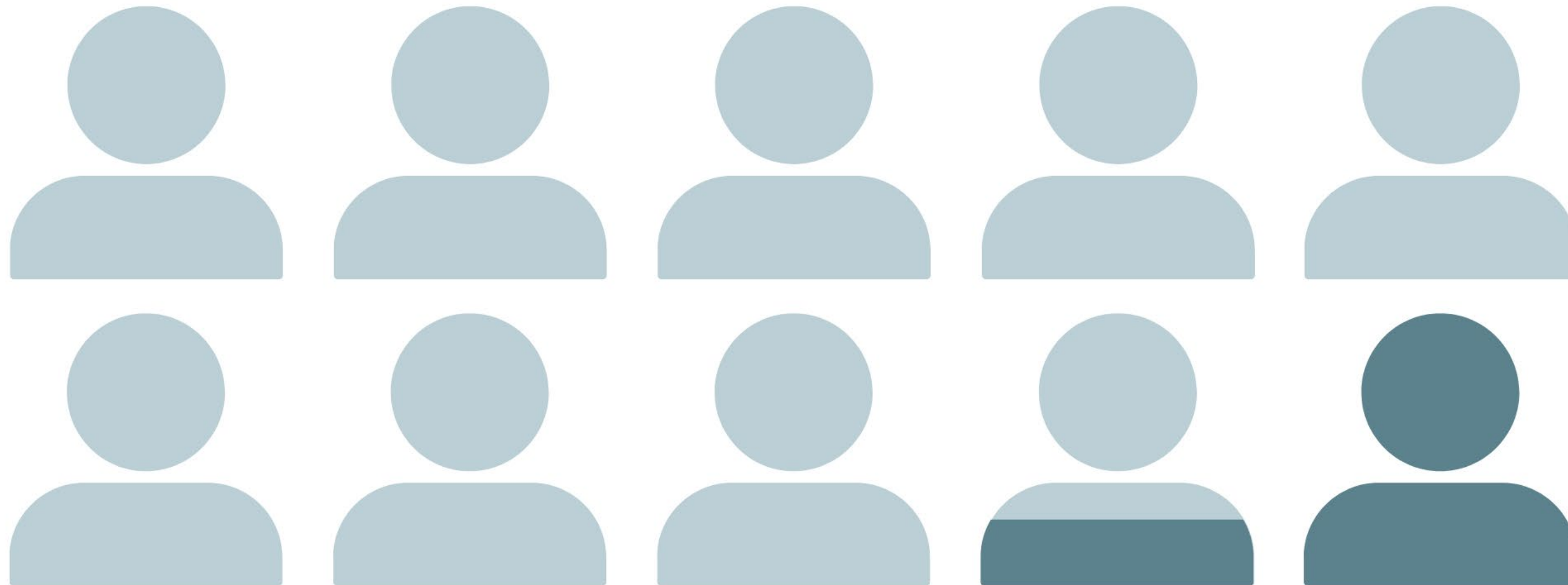
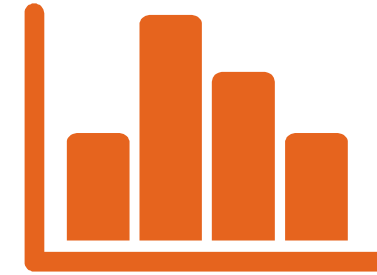


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Background and data – Austria

Women employed in forestry

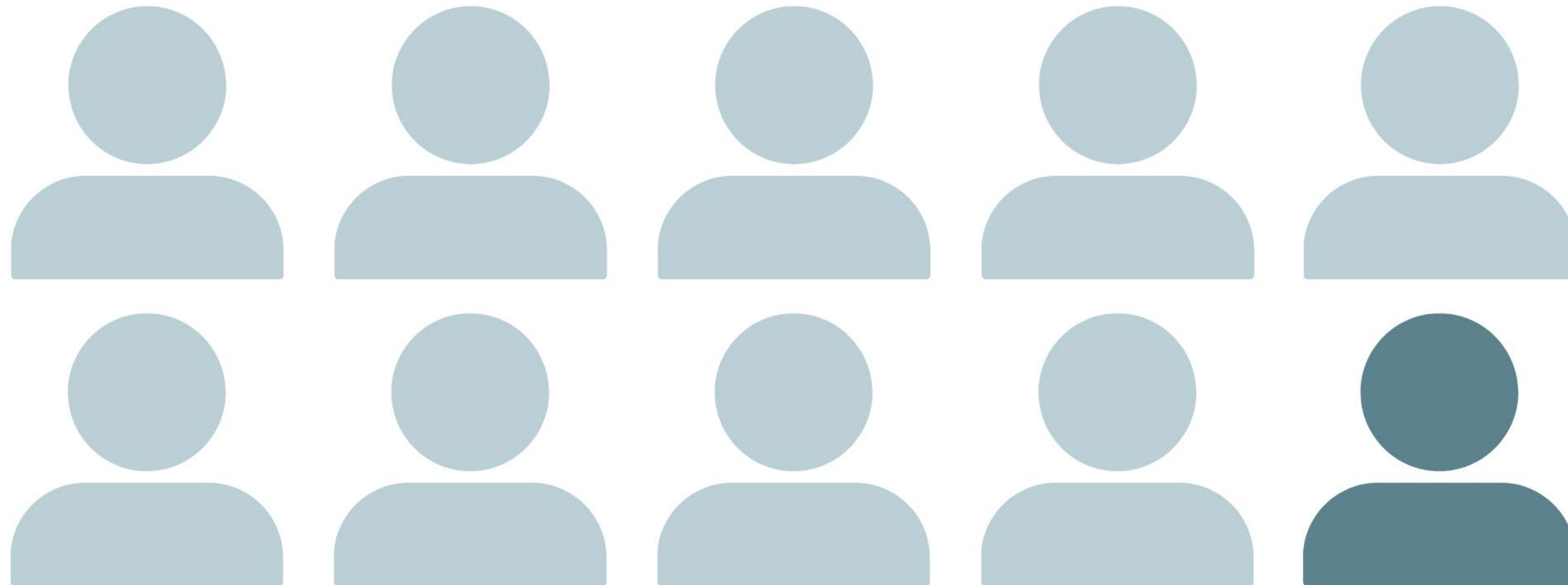
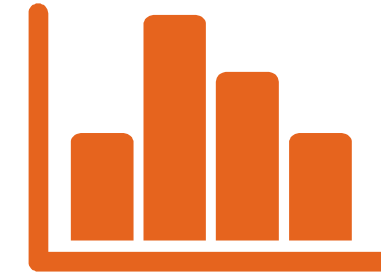
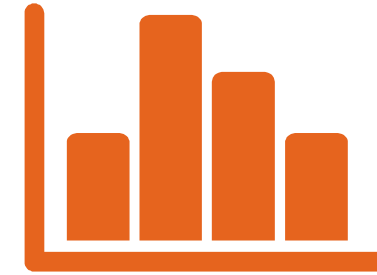


Image: based on UNECE, 2020
Author: Öllerer, 2022

Background and data – Austria



- 10% women in forestry compared to the total workforce (UNECE, 2020)
- 8% female employees (Linser, 2020)
- 19.5% women in the wood-based sector (WKO, 2022)

→ **Reflected in data availability**

Underrepresentation

and its consequences

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Underrepresentation and its consequences

- Disproportionate to the share of women in the total population
 - Gender imbalance
- Low representation of a considerable share of the population among actors in the forestry sector
- Not just a question of fairness
 - Implications for the sector
- 152 years to close the global gender gap in economic participation and opportunity (WEF, 2024)



Image: [freepik](#)

Number based on World Economic Forum, 2024;
152 years until the Economic Participation and Opportunity gap is closed

2176



Gender-specific barriers

and how to overcome them

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Gender-specific barriers

- Semi-structured, qualitative, in-depth interviews
- Most prominent women leaders in the Austrian forestry sector
- **How do women leaders in the Austrian forestry sector perceive the barriers they encountered in their careers, and what are the strategies they used to overcome them?**
- Going beyond mere numbers to measure gender equality (Follo et al., 2017)



Gender-specific barriers

- **Being „singled out“** in a male-dominated field
 - Being treated as „symbol“ rather than an individual (Kanter, 1977)
- **Glass ceiling**
- **Legal discrimination**
- **Ascriptions of lack of competence**
 - Education and training
 - Careers



Ludvig, Öllerer & Aubram, 2024;
Öllerer, 2022

Ascriptions of lack of competence

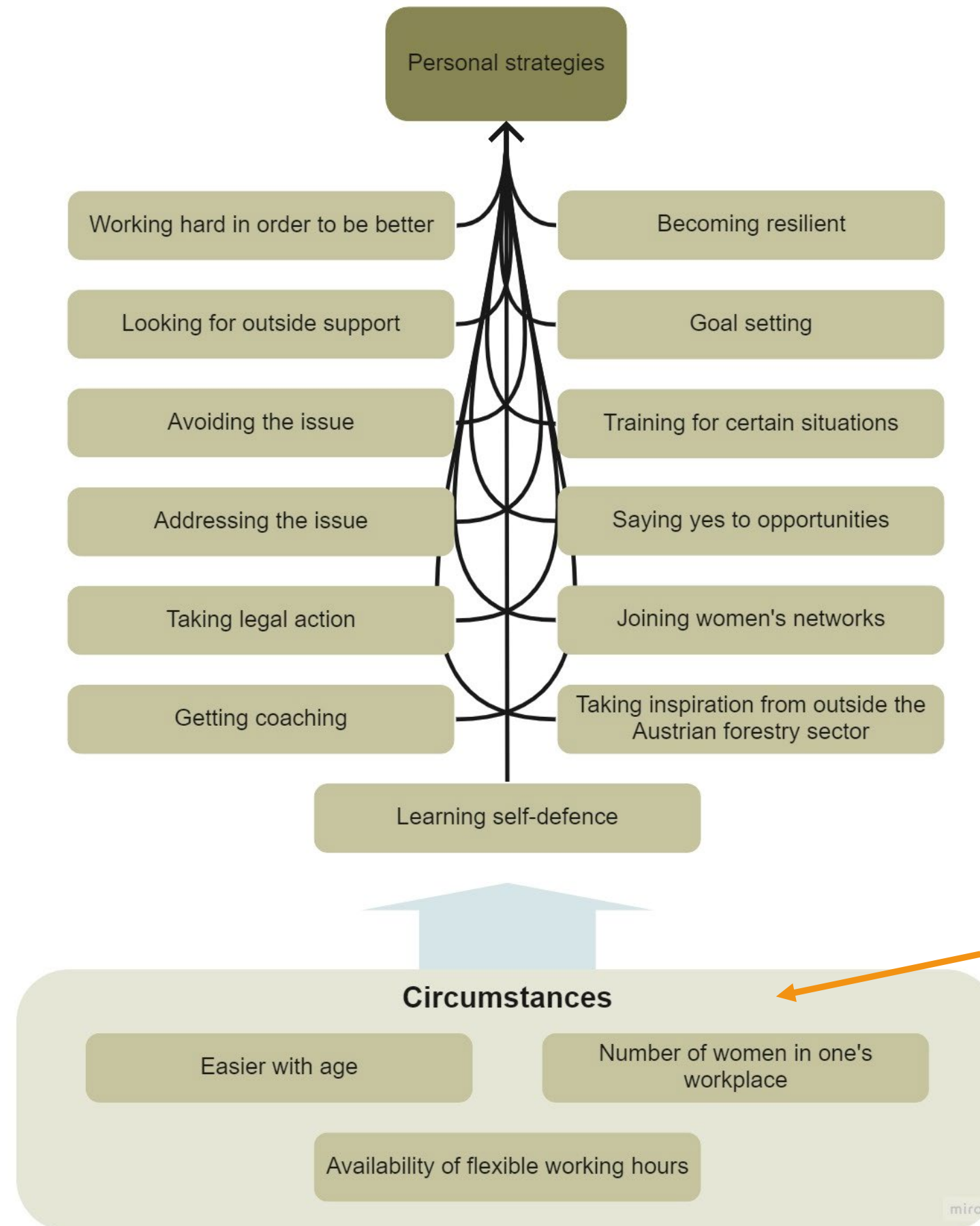
“It takes longer, and you have to work harder. You have to be more present. You can't afford to make mistakes”

“You simply have to be better [...] ‘Women are given preference if they are equally qualified’, as if. [...] It should say ‘Women are only given preference if they are better qualified’”

“when someone vehemently demands something, they are assessed differently as a woman than as a man. [...] men [...] are persistent. But women get different attributes”

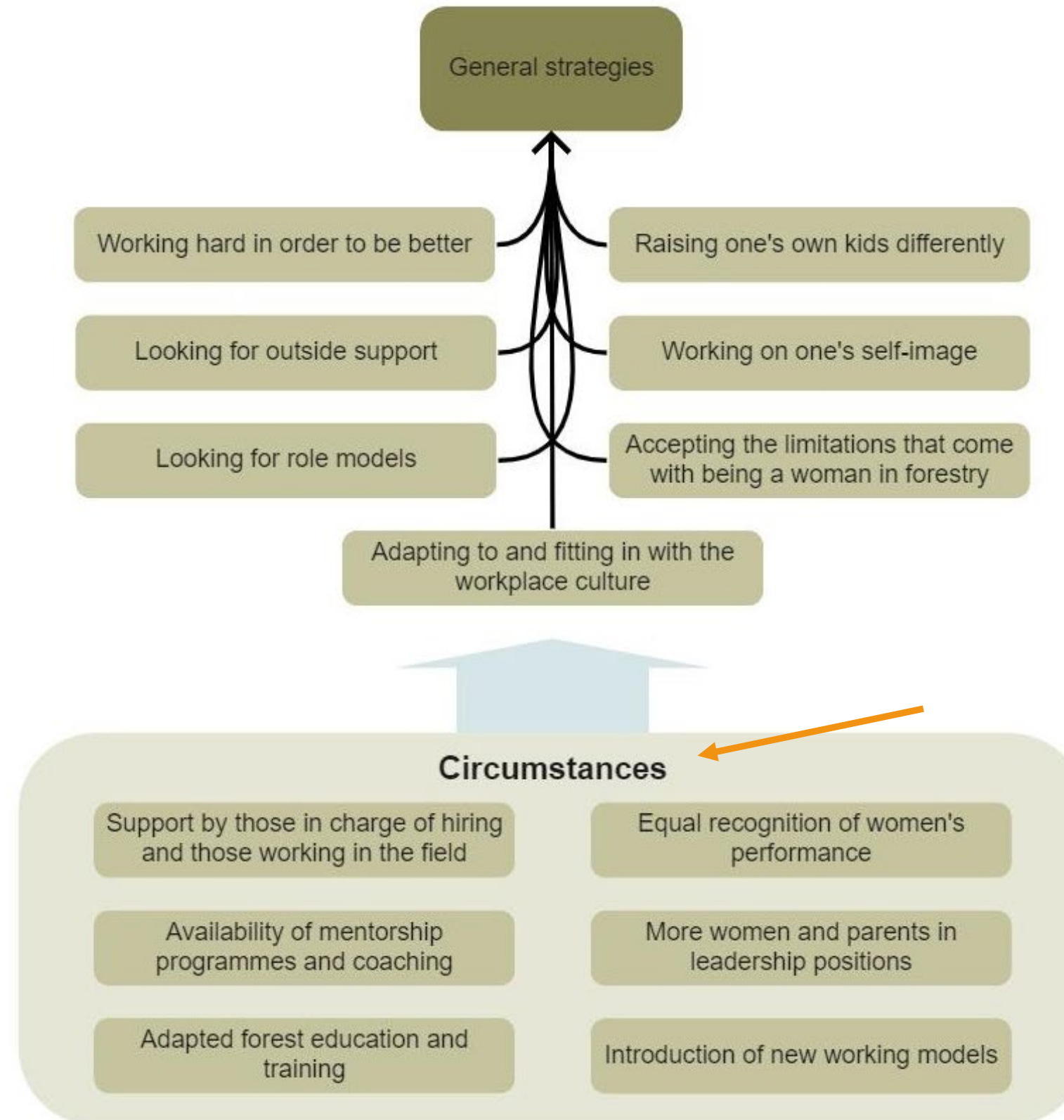
Öllerer, 2022; quotes clockwise from top left: INT 1, p. 4; INT 8, p. 10; INT 3, p. 4

Strategies



Öllerer, 2022

Strategies

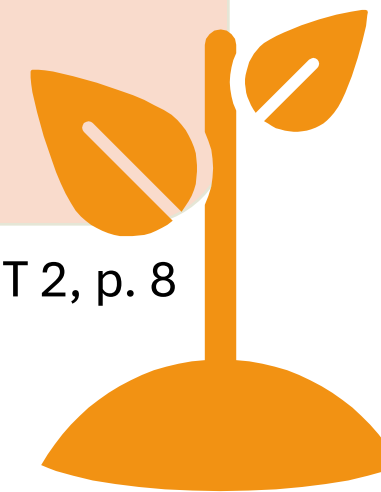


Öllerer, 2022

Support by those already working in the field and those in charge of hiring

“[...] if you really want women, you have to look harder. And you have to approach women three times and not give up the first time. [...] And then the third time, she says yes. [...] you have to approach them differently”

Source: Öllerer, 2022; quote: INT 2, p. 8



→ **“widespread social support, including significant support from men and boys”**
(Connell, 2005, p. 1802) **necessary to reduce gender inequality**

Conclusions

and ways forward

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Conclusions and ways forward

- **Sector dominated by men with existing gender-specific barriers**
 - Critical mass too small
- **Not a niche or women's problem**
 - Affects the entire sector
- **Awareness of those in power**
 - Funding of data collection and research
 - Gender awareness trainings
 - Other measures: Affirmative actions, mentoring programmes, support of professional networks, gender budgeting, etc.



Thank you

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Barbara Öllerer

Junior Researcher & PhD Candidate

Institute of Forest, Environmental, and Natural Resource Policy

barbara.oellerer@boku.ac.at

BOKU University

Feistmantelstraße 4, 1180 Vienna, Austria

boku.ac.at

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