



D1.3.1

Promoting forestry careers to girls and young women

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- Forest Trainings Center PICHL (FAST Pichl), Austria
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- Agency for sustainable development of the Carpathian region "FORZA" (FORZA), Ukraine
- Forestry and Environmental Action (FEA), Bosnia and Herzegovina
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- Foresta SG (Foresta SG), Czech Republic
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1 Introduction

Across Europe and the Danube Region, forestry remains a sector shaped by tradition—but driven by the need for innovation, sustainability, and inclusion. As the climate crisis intensifies and forest ecosystems face growing pressures, the demand for skilled, passionate professionals in forestry has never been greater. Yet, in many countries, women—and especially girls and young women—remain underrepresented in forestry education, training, and employment.

The Fem2forests project set out to better understand why this is the case and what can be done to change it. Through interviews with students, educators, practitioners, and institutional actors in Austria, Bavaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Ukraine, the project collected first-hand insights into how professionals, educators and girls perceive forestry, what barriers they face, and what might help them envision a future in the sector.

The findings are both sobering and hopeful. While gender stereotypes, structural limitations, and visibility gaps continue to deter girls from pursuing forestry, there is a growing cohort of young women who are challenging expectations, innovating in their fields, and calling for change.

This report goes beyond simply documenting the current state—it presents a collection of ideas and exploratory directions that can help unlock the full potential of the forestry sector by making it a space where girls and young women are not only welcomed but truly empowered to thrive.

2 Why gender equality matters in forestry

Forests are at the heart of Europe's environmental health and regional identity. They provide essential ecosystem services, livelihoods, and natural climate solutions. But as forests face mounting ecological pressures, the sector itself must evolve—becoming more inclusive, innovative, and reflective of today's societies. Ensuring gender equality is central to this transformation.

Across the Danube Region and beyond, forestry remains deeply male-dominated. Yet, women and girls are increasingly expressing interest in green careers, sustainability, and applied environmental science. The challenge lies not in capacity—but in opportunity.

Forestry as a gender-unequal sector

Forestry has traditionally been associated with strength, endurance, and outdoor fieldwork—traits often culturally coded as masculine. Across the interviews, this legacy continues to shape perceptions and expectations about who belongs in forestry. The effect is visible early, influencing girls' decisions about whether to even consider forestry as a potential career path.

As one interviewee explained, forestry is often viewed as a physically demanding and field-oriented profession, which contributes to the perception that it is better suited for men. Another reflected on personal experience, noting that the physical aspects of training—such as intensive fieldwork and working with chainsaws—can be discouraging factors for some young women when considering forestry as a career.

Such framing affects not only the recruitment of women but also the image of forestry in society at large—often excluding it from the list of careers promoted to girls during school-based orientation.

Gender roles and structural inequalities

Gender-based barriers in forestry go beyond stereotypes. Women often encounter unequal expectations, implicit bias in hiring or promotion, and limited access to leadership roles. In many settings, women are expected to “prove” their suitability for fieldwork or are sidelined to administrative roles even when they possess the same or higher qualifications as their male colleagues.

Societal expectations and traditional views about gender roles continue to influence how forestry is perceived as a career path. The association of forestry with physically

demanding, male-dominated work can discourage young women from entering the field—even when they have a strong interest in nature and environmental sustainability.

There is also a lack of institutional structures to actively support women's inclusion—few formal mentorship programs, limited role models in senior positions, and inflexible working conditions that often fail to accommodate life-phase needs, such as parenting or caregiving.

The value of inclusion

Despite these challenges, gender equality in forestry is not only a matter of justice—it is a strategic advantage. Interviews highlighted that women bring specific strengths to forestry, including academic diligence, communication skills, and a holistic understanding of sustainability challenges.

In the Slovenian context, experts noted that women often perform very well academically and demonstrate strong commitment and diligence in their studies. However, they also highlighted the need to increase the visibility of women in technical and leadership roles within forestry. Without such representation, it can be difficult for young women to see the sector as a space where they can grow and contribute meaningfully.

Inclusion is also about resilience: a diverse forestry workforce is more likely to adapt to ecological, technological, and social change. By breaking with outdated gender roles, forestry institutions can also open up to innovation and intergenerational renewal.

Moving from awareness to action

The solution is not simply to “invite more girls” into forestry—it requires structural and cultural change. Interviewees recommended specific actions such as increasing the visibility of female professionals, reforming internships and educational materials to reflect real diversity in forestry and introducing targeted support measures like scholarships or mentoring.

One professional emphasized the importance of inclusive hiring practices, suggesting that forestry companies should create opportunities for women across all roles—technical, operational, and leadership—to help ensure a more balanced and representative workforce.

Such interventions are not only feasible—they are already being implemented in pockets across the region. Their expansion depends on political will, institutional support, and continued listening to the experiences of those whose stories too often go unheard.

3 Methodology

To develop a clearer and more grounded understanding of how to make forestry careers more appealing and accessible to girls and young women, each country participating in the Fem2forests project conducted a minimum of five guided interviews, with at least one or two involving girls and young women. These could also take the form of group discussions or workshops; when used, one workshop was counted as one interview. The remaining interviews targeted other stakeholder groups, including educators, forestry professionals, and decision-makers.

To ensure a gender-sensitive and inclusive approach, interviews followed a semi-structured format with a defined target group: girls and young women currently enrolled in forestry-related education; educators such as teachers and career counsellors; forestry professionals and industry representatives; and decision-makers, including policymakers and training developers. This provided flexibility while allowing consistency across countries. Interviews were conducted in person or online, depending on local conditions and participant availability.

The primary objectives of the interview and workshop activities were to:

- Identify the barriers preventing girls and young women from pursuing careers in forestry
- Highlight opportunities and incentives for improving access and motivation
- Collect insights from educators and industry experts on inclusive practices
- Generate innovative, grounded ideas to make the sector more attractive and inclusive

All findings were intended to serve as input for subsequent national round tables and the development of practical solutions at both institutional and policy levels.

In countries where a group workshop was held with girls or young women, the activity followed a participatory, design-thinking-based structure. These workshops typically involved 5–10 participants and were designed to gather creative, experience-based input directly from the target group.

Young women were not only included as interview subjects but were given space to generate, evaluate, and present their own ideas during workshops. The participatory structure encouraged them to reflect on their lived experiences, identify key barriers, and propose feasible solutions. Their perspectives were used not as anecdotal input but as evidence to inform the development of further actions under Fem2forests.

4 Solutions for attracting girls into forestry (Introduction to country approaches)

The interviews and workshops conducted across nine countries reveal a shared recognition: attracting more girls and young women into forestry requires intentional action—rooted in context, informed by lived experiences, and driven by those already working and studying in the field. While no single pathway fits all, stakeholders across different educational and institutional systems described practical, often low-threshold ideas for creating more inclusive forestry environments.

These proposed solutions are not abstract or theoretical. They emerge directly from students reflecting on their career choices, teachers working to inspire the next generation, and professionals navigating structural challenges and cultural barriers. What they share is a commitment to expanding the space for women in forestry—not by lowering standards, but by removing unnecessary obstacles and widening access to information, support, and opportunity.

The following country-based summaries highlight both the challenges identified and the direction of potential solutions. Some focus on improving early outreach and visibility; others emphasize the need for workplace reform, educational support, or targeted mentoring. In all cases, they reflect the voices of those closest to the issue—and provide a foundation for pilot actions, policy learning, and continued dialogue.

By showcasing country-specific insights, this section aims to support the exchange of practical ideas that are adaptable across contexts, scalable within institutions, and grounded in the everyday realities of girls and women entering the forestry sector. It is also the starting point for the design of the actionable solutions presented in the O1.3 Toolkit to expand the range of career choices to support innovative approaches.

4.1 Austria

Introduction

Interviews were held with representatives from the Austrian Federal Forests, experts from the forestry and timber sectors, educators and students from the Forestry School Bruck, Agricultural Training Center Hafendorf and Agricultural and Forestry School Grabnerhof. The findings reveal clear insights into career awareness, gender-related challenges,

educational dynamics, and actionable recommendations, all grounded in first-hand experience from within the sector.

Key findings

Awareness of forestry careers

Interviewees reported that knowledge of forestry career paths varies significantly. Among forestry students, awareness of training options and specific roles is well-developed, with clear interest in roles such as forester, forest educator, and sustainability expert. Teachers and sector experts noted that young people often lack understanding of forestry careers, and that information about the sector is not always presented in an appealing or accessible way.

Forestry continues to suffer from an outdated image—symbolized by the stereotype of the forester with a dog and a hat—and many young people do not associate the field with modern, innovative, or varied career paths. In urban areas, forestry remains largely unknown as a career option. Visibility is better in rural regions, but still incomplete.

Barriers and challenges

Several structural and cultural barriers limit women's entry and progression in forestry. The sector is described as male-dominated, particularly in primary production areas, and women often feel they must prove themselves in order to be accepted. Physical strength is still perceived as a benchmark for competence, and women may face rough language, scepticism, or prejudice, especially in male-heavy teams.

Students noted that innovative aspects of forestry such as forest education and environmental protection are not well known. Interviewees from the professional sphere highlighted that women are still underrepresented in field roles and may face limited visibility, workplace biases, or unequal treatment in some company cultures. Access to networks was also identified as more difficult for women.

Job demands—including long working hours, physical stress, and perceived inflexibility—were cited as major deterrents. Additionally, peer pressure and entrenched gender role expectations continue to influence girls' educational choices.

Opportunities and incentives

Working in nature, doing meaningful work, and the sector's environmental orientation were repeatedly mentioned as attractive elements of forestry. Interviewees emphasized

the importance of improving the sector's image, communicating its modern dimensions, and showing real career trajectories.

Suggestions for increasing girls' interest included:

- Targeted advertising and visibility campaigns
- Role models (especially women in technical and leadership roles)
- Use of social media to share real stories and workplace experiences
- Mentoring programs to build confidence and guidance
- School outreach programs including Girls Day or company trial days
- Financial support through scholarships and subsidies for internships or placements

In the case of the Austrian Federal Forests, internal policies such as part-time positions and the promotion of paternity leave have helped support women's return to work and improve gender balance.

Role of education

Forestry educators stressed the need to present forestry careers earlier in schools, especially in general education institutions. This includes showcasing career paths at job fairs, integrating career role models into presentations, and ensuring female visibility in promotional materials.

Mentoring was seen as a highly valuable tool. Suggestions were made to involve former students in outreach activities and present relatable career paths to young girls. Gender-sensitive teaching practices—such as recognizing individual strengths and ensuring fair task distribution—were also recommended to encourage more balanced participation.

Forestry schools were encouraged to build awareness around career opportunities beyond logging, such as sustainability, nature conservation, and forest pedagogy.

Industry and policy recommendations

To make the forestry sector more inclusive, interviewees recommended several practical measures:

- Promote inclusive corporate cultures that acknowledge gender-specific needs, including flexible hours and part-time contracts
- Clearly communicate that women are welcome and needed in forestry

- Improve working conditions and remove structural barriers for women, especially related to caregiving responsibilities
- Include women in images and stories in public relations materials
- Develop state-supported quotas or targets where feasible in publicly linked institutions
- Strengthen pathways between education and employment, particularly in recruiting and retaining women

Recruitment campaigns should feature inclusive language and appealing visuals, and industry should invest in both long-term image-building and direct contact with young talent.

Conclusion

In Austria, forestry remains perceived as a traditional, male-oriented field, yet the interviews reveal a growing awareness of the sector's potential to attract more women—particularly through targeted education, visible role models, and inclusive work practices. Clear career pathways, early outreach, supportive environments, and strong mentorship are critical for change. If implemented, these stakeholder-driven insights can strengthen Austria's efforts to build a forestry sector that is not only sustainable but also gender-inclusive and future-ready.

4.2 Bosnia and Herzegovina

Introduction

In Bosnia and Herzegovina individual interviews with forestry professionals and educators, and one group interview combined with a participatory workshop involving female secondary school students were conducted. The insights reflect multiple entry points into the forestry sector—policy, education, practice, and student experiences—and outline both persistent gender barriers and ideas for increasing the attractiveness of forestry careers for young women.

Key findings

Awareness of forestry careers

Interviewees noted that awareness of forestry careers is influenced by family background, school exposure, and—more recently—greater access to information. Several

professionals entered the field through informal influence (e.g. a family member in forestry) rather than structured career guidance. Students and workshop participants often chose forestry education for practical reasons (e.g. program duration or geographic proximity), not out of deep personal interest.

While students recognized forestry as connected to nature and environmental work, many lacked clarity about specific career pathways or progression options. The broad scope of forestry—ranging from environmental conservation to silviculture and ecotourism—was more clearly articulated by professionals than students, indicating a disconnect in communication across levels of the system.

Barriers and challenges

Across all interviews, gender stereotypes emerged as a major obstacle. Women are still perceived as less suited for physically demanding fieldwork and are often relegated to support roles such as nursery work or administration. Several professionals recounted direct experiences or observations of workplace discrimination, including inappropriate comments, lack of leadership opportunities, and skepticism toward female competence.

Students expressed concern about job security and the mismatch between theoretical education and practical job demands. Many reported not receiving the promised practical training, leaving them underprepared for the labour market. The belief that forestry is a "man's job" remains widespread, with women often needing to prove themselves more than their male peers.

Additional structural issues such as temporary contracts, political influence in hiring, and weak institutional support further complicate young women's career prospects in forestry.

Opportunities and incentives

Forestry was seen as rewarding due to its connection with nature, ecological responsibility, and community impact. Certain fields—such as nursery cultivation, planning, and forest protection—were highlighted as better aligned with women's strengths and interests. However, physical fieldwork remains a barrier due to both practical demands and gendered assumptions.

Incentives that could improve recruitment and retention include:

- Financial support: scholarships, grants, paid internships.
- Guaranteed employment after studies.

- Clear promotion of successful women in forestry as role models.
- Structured mentorship and career guidance.
- Inclusive work environments and protection against discrimination.

Students and professionals alike pointed out that forestry needs better visibility as a modern and meaningful career path—particularly for girls who may never encounter female professionals in the field.

Role of education

Forestry education was described as under-resourced, overly theoretical, and lacking practical orientation. Students voiced frustration over missed opportunities for fieldwork and insufficient exposure to real workplace settings. The absence of textbooks and overreliance on copied teacher materials were also cited.

Educators emphasized the need to modernize curricula and rename study programs to reflect more appealing professional identities (e.g., "landscape design"). Workshop participants proposed more frequent and structured field training, better integration with forestry companies, and engaging teaching staff who connect the subject to real-life applications.

Mentorship—especially from women already working in forestry—was consistently cited as a powerful motivator that remains largely absent.

Industry and policy recommendations

Professionals recommended systemic measures to make forestry more inclusive:

- Transparent, merit-based hiring to reduce political influence.
- Internal policies for discrimination reporting and workplace safety.
- Proactive hiring and promotion of women to leadership positions.
- Financial incentives for companies employing women.
- Stronger cooperation between education, policy, and employers to ensure practical experience for students.

Students called for regular open-door days, field placements, and a more visible presence of forestry companies in schools. Workshop participants proposed storytelling campaigns, female visibility in media, and dedicated scholarships for girls in green sectors.

Conclusion

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the forestry sector continues to reflect deep-rooted gender biases, uneven educational quality, and labour market challenges that limit the participation of young women. While positive associations with nature and sustainability exist, the pathway to employment is hindered by stereotypes, lack of support, and institutional shortcomings.

Interviewees across sectors emphasize the urgent need for better education-to-career transitions, financial incentives, visible role models, and structural reforms. If addressed, these could not only increase the appeal of forestry for girls and young women—but also strengthen the resilience and diversity of the sector overall.

4.3 Bavaria (Germany)

Introduction

This summary is based on interviews conducted in Bavaria with forestry students, academic staff, and professionals from universities. The interviews provide firsthand insights into how young women experience forestry education and career paths. The perspectives reveal both structural challenges and opportunities for improvement within the Bavarian forestry sector.

Key findings

Awareness of forestry careers

Awareness of forestry as a career option often developed through personal connections, internships, or information shared by faculty or friends already in the sector. Some students entered forestry after volunteering or participating in informational events hosted by institutions such as the University of Applied Sciences Weihenstephan-Triesdorf (HSWT). While platforms like “Forst erklärt” and direct engagement with professionals at fairs or events were helpful, there was a shared concern that not all forestry career paths—especially those outside the state forestry service—are sufficiently visible. Opportunities in nature conservation, consultancy, or national park management were rarely presented to students during their early orientation phases. Many interviewees felt that career information should be introduced earlier in the school system to help girls make informed choices.

Barriers and challenges

Several interviewees pointed to persistent gender stereotypes that portray forestry as a masculine field. In fieldwork and practical training, women were sometimes met with skepticism or subtle pressure to prove themselves—particularly when operating chainsaws or performing physical tasks. The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions was also noted, and the absence of female professors or supervisors was seen as a lost opportunity to provide role models.

Financial constraints were mentioned frequently. Students highlighted the cost of forestry education, including tools, field clothing, and travel to internships. Low salaries during leadership traineeships further discouraged some women from pursuing long-term positions in forest administration. Additionally, work-life balance was identified as a major challenge due to the inflexibility of current forestry roles. Limited access to part-time positions and concerns over job continuity after parental leave created barriers for women planning families.

Opportunities and incentives

Despite the challenges, interviewees recognized several opportunities to improve the inclusion of women in forestry. They emphasized the importance of showcasing real-life examples of women working in forestry—especially in leadership and technical roles—to inspire younger generations. Public relations campaigns, school visits, and early contact with forestry professionals were identified as effective tools to shift perceptions.

Students and educators proposed enhancing early exposure to forestry through hands-on activities such as school forest days, internships during high school, and interactive educational events. Improving work conditions was also highlighted as essential. Flexible schedules, guaranteed re-entry after parental leave, and role-sharing models could make forestry careers more sustainable for women.

Networking among female students and professionals was viewed as highly beneficial. Interviewees supported the idea of establishing women-to-women networks, mentoring programs, and regular exchange formats to foster peer support and build professional confidence.

Role of education

Forestry education in Bavaria was described as generally inclusive, but with room for improvement. Mentoring programs exist but are not widely used, often due to time constraints or the hesitation of students to initiate contact with mentors. Suggestions

included group mentoring formats and introducing mentoring from the first semester onward to encourage earlier engagement.

Students found that guest lectures or talks by women already working in the field were among the most inspiring activities. These events helped provide practical insights and positive identification with the profession. Transparent information about study costs and financial support options was considered important to help more students—especially those without financial backing—enter and complete their studies.

Practical training and internships were seen as essential to bridge the gap between academic theory and professional reality. Some interviewees recommended making internships more structured and integrated into the curriculum to better prepare students for future employment.

Industry and policy recommendations

Interviewees recommended a number of improvements to workplace culture and employment policies in the forestry sector. Employers were encouraged to develop part-time roles, offer location-flexible job models, and improve support for employees returning from parental leave. Inclusive job advertisements and targeted recruitment strategies were seen as important for signaling that women are welcome in all roles.

From a policy perspective, measures such as tax relief for employers supporting parental leave, guaranteed access to childcare, and closing the gender pay gap were suggested. Interviewees also saw value in continued investment in mentoring initiatives like Bayern Mentoring and in publicly funded campaigns that promote women in forestry.

Conclusion

Forestry in Bavaria is undergoing change, with increasing numbers of women entering forestry studies and showing interest in the profession. However, structural and cultural barriers—ranging from financial constraints to rigid job models and a lack of female role models—still limit full inclusion. Interviewees emphasized that visibility, early engagement, mentoring, and flexible working conditions are key levers for attracting and retaining women in the sector. If supported by institutions, education providers, and policymakers, these practical insights could make forestry a more accessible and future-oriented career path for young women in Bavaria.

4.4 Croatia

Introduction

In Croatia interviews were conducted with forestry students, teachers, and professionals with direct experience in education, project management, and practice. The insights reflect the realities of how young women enter and experience forestry, what barriers they face, and which changes could make the sector more attractive and accessible.

Key findings

Awareness of forestry careers

Awareness of forestry careers among young women in Croatia is typically shaped by family influences, school visits, teacher encouragement, or a general appreciation for nature. For some students, the decision to study forestry was pragmatic—based on program availability or location—rather than stemming from a clear vision of a future career. The understanding of what forestry entails tends to develop during studies, not before.

Although a wide range of roles is available—such as technicians, engineers, nature conservationists, and researchers—students and even teachers noted that information about concrete career pathways is often fragmented or vague. Forestry is still not strongly promoted in earlier education levels, especially in ways that would appeal to girls. Professionals in the sector described Croatian forestry as traditional, with modernization only slowly taking shape.

Barriers and challenges

All interviewees emphasized that gender stereotypes remain a significant barrier. Forestry is still perceived by many as a physically demanding, male profession. Female students reported being excluded from certain practical activities during internships, and often sensed they were not taken as seriously as their male peers. Several described a need to work harder to prove themselves, particularly when operating machinery or working in field settings.

Beyond individual experiences, structural challenges were also noted. The labour market is competitive, and employment often depends on personal connections. Mentorship and leadership roles for women are limited, and family expectations continue to shape girls' decisions about suitable careers. A teacher described forestry as a “closed system,” where

informal networks often outweigh transparent recruitment processes. The lack of visible female professionals reinforces a cycle of invisibility and discouragement.

Opportunities and incentives

Despite these challenges, forestry is seen as meaningful and diverse, offering work connected to nature, community, and sustainability. For many, public-sector stability is a strong incentive. Positive role models, particularly women who have advanced in the profession, were identified as powerful motivators. Students expressed appreciation for teachers who helped them see their potential, and who made the curriculum relevant and engaging.

Financial support—such as scholarships and internships—was seen as essential to reduce drop-out rates and encourage more young women to pursue forestry long-term. At the same time, several respondents warned that promotional campaigns should be authentic, focusing on the real ethical and ecological value of the profession rather than trying to “glamorize” it.

Digitalization and innovation in forestry were also seen as potentially attractive for women, as these developments broaden the skills needed beyond physical labour and highlight areas like data analysis, sustainability planning, and public education.

Role of education

Teachers and students agreed that education is a key entry point for attracting more women to forestry. However, the current system has limitations. Students expressed frustration at the lack of practical field experience, limited access to updated learning materials, and unclear information about further study and career options. They proposed better guidance from schools, more frequent contact with professionals, and stronger collaboration between forestry schools, universities, and companies.

Teachers called for modernization of teaching methods and curricula, the inclusion of digital skills, and stronger international cooperation. Projects involving cross-border learning and knowledge exchange were considered valuable. One teacher suggested renaming certain study programs to sound more contemporary and appealing.

Initiatives like “Forestry Days,” math preparation courses for university admissions, and school visits by professionals were all mentioned as positive examples of outreach and engagement that could be expanded further.

Industry and policy recommendations

Several practical measures were proposed to make forestry more inclusive. Interviewees emphasized the need for more transparent and merit-based hiring, inclusive mentorship structures, and policies that actively support women's advancement in both field and leadership positions. Campaigns showing real women in forestry roles—especially in decision-making or field positions—could challenge persistent stereotypes.

Teachers and professionals encouraged schools to partner more closely with companies and public agencies, creating better field placement opportunities and allowing students to see how theory connects to practice. At the same time, greater flexibility in work arrangements—particularly to accommodate family responsibilities—was seen as a necessary change for making forestry careers sustainable for women.

Conclusion

Forestry in Croatia continues to be defined by tradition and gendered assumptions, which shape how women are perceived and what roles they are expected to take. But there is also a visible readiness for change. Students are enthusiastic, professionals are reflective, and educators are calling for modernization.

To unlock the potential of young women in the forestry sector, more must be done to provide financial and institutional support, improve practical learning, and promote authentic role models. With coordinated efforts from education providers, employers, and policymakers, forestry in Croatia could evolve into a more inclusive and forward-looking profession—one where girls see themselves not only as capable, but as essential.

4.5 Czech Republic

Introduction

This summary is based on structured interviews conducted in the Czech Republic with forestry company employee, two vice-deans and professors at Czech University of Life Sciences - CZU (both with forestry education, current positions in forestry and environment), a current forestry student (bachelor study program), and a representative from the Ministry of Agriculture. Each offered a grounded perspective on women's experiences in forestry education and employment, institutional culture, and the perceived relevance and accessibility of the sector to young women.

Key findings

Awareness of forestry careers

Interviewees reported that forestry careers are still widely perceived as traditional, male-dominated, and often associated with hard physical work. One student noted that forestry is seen as a field “not requiring higher education” and that stereotypes persist about job positions. For another respondent, forestry was described as a “non-prestigious field” compared to more general or marketable disciplines. Generally, the prospective students lack the specific opinions on what they can do after graduation and often students miss the idea what activities are connected to individual study programs, which applies also outside the field of forestry.

However, others emphasized the sector’s growing interdisciplinarity. One academic highlighted the expansion of forestry into policy, environmental economics, and ecotourism, supported by participation in EU-funded projects and evolving educational programs.

Barriers and challenges

Multiple barriers were identified. One student described practical fieldwork as “physically demanding” and highlighted discomfort in male-dominated environments. A professional mentioned persistent stereotype that women are only suitable for administrative roles, and that those in the field must first “earn their position” to be accepted.

Cultural norms were also noted as barriers. Several interviewees spoke of the continuing perception that forestry—and particularly roles like hunting or wood-processing—are not suitable for women. Structural challenges such as limited flexible work options, lack of part-time positions, and difficulty balancing family and professional responsibilities were also emphasized. It has to be noted however, that not all positions allow part-time or flexible working hours options due to their character.

Opportunities and incentives

Attractive aspects of forestry cited included the connection to nature, variation between field and office work, and the societal value of the profession. Some saw forestry as meaningful due to its environmental mission, especially when linked to sustainability, biodiversity, or climate issues.

Several interviewees highlighted the importance of mentoring, early awareness-raising (e.g. at high schools or public events), and clear communication about the breadth of forestry roles. Financial support—especially scholarships and paid internships—was frequently cited as a factor that could increase the appeal of forestry careers to women.

Role of education

Education was seen as both a pathway and a filter. While formal access to education is equal and we can see that the number of women enrolling into the study programs in forestry is stable or even increasing. More attention is needed to make the content more appealing and ensure its connection to novelty practices and trends. . Suggestions included more practical experiences early in studies, exposure to modern forestry roles, and updated communication materials to counter stereotypes.

One academic stated that “non-violent support” and positive role modeling were necessary but warned that perceptions often depend more on individual educators or students than on institutional policies.

Others stressed the need for formal mentoring systems, integration of interdisciplinary content (e.g. ecosystem services, climate topics), and involvement in international projects as effective ways to increase engagement among young women.

Industry and policy recommendations

Policy recommendations included introducing or expanding flexible work arrangements, promoting women to visible positions, and avoiding hard quotas while still supporting gender balance within project teams.

Some suggested enhancing institutional visibility for women in leadership and implementing mentoring and networking programs. The inclusion of gender criteria in public funding and evaluation of forestry projects was also proposed as a mechanism to advance equality.

Conclusion

The interviews conducted in the Czech Republic reveal a sector still shaped by traditional perceptions and gendered expectations, but with growing awareness of the need for inclusion. Forestry education is evolving, and young women are present, but they continue to face physical, structural, and cultural barriers—particularly in field-based or leadership roles.

Interviewees emphasized the importance of visibility, financial support, early outreach, mentoring, and workplace flexibility in making forestry more attractive to girls and young women. They also called for thoughtful updates to curricula, institutional messaging, and employment practices to reflect the breadth and modern relevance of forestry careers.

4.6 Romania

Introduction

This summary is based on structured interviews with forestry professionals and educators in Romania. The interviewees represent a range of experiences in forestry education, public forest management, and applied forestry research. Their accounts offer insight into the gender-specific challenges women face, as well as the pathways through which young women discover and pursue careers in forestry.

Key findings

Awareness of forestry careers

Interest in forestry careers among women in Romania often begins with a personal connection to nature or a family background linked to forestry. Some are introduced to the sector early in life through family influence or direct exposure to forests. Others discover the field through independent research or a general interest in sustainability and environmental protection.

While forestry is recognized as a field with varied specializations—such as research, forest administration, conservation, and IT-related work—many students report having little structured information about these career options during secondary education. The decision to pursue forestry is often made with limited guidance, and awareness campaigns in schools are rare. Those without family ties to the field typically have to find their own way into the profession.

Barriers and challenges

Gender-based challenges persist, especially in production roles and hierarchical structures. Women in forestry often encounter doubts about their physical abilities and leadership potential. In some environments, there is pressure to adopt a more “masculine” approach in order to be accepted, particularly when working in field

conditions. There are cases where women are overlooked or given routine administrative tasks, despite having equivalent or higher qualifications than their male colleagues.

In contrast, some interviewees stated they had not experienced discrimination and believed that professionalism and competence are sufficient for success. However, there was broad recognition that implicit biases and stereotypical expectations continue to influence recruitment, task distribution, and advancement opportunities.

Beyond gender-related issues, broader structural problems were also identified. These include gaps in practical training, limited job openings in some regions, and mismatches between educational content and the actual needs of the labour market.

Opportunities and incentives

Forestry offers several appealing qualities that continue to draw young women: meaningful work in natural environments, professional autonomy, and a chance to contribute to sustainability and environmental protection. Interviewees highlighted that visibility and representation are essential motivators—seeing women already working in forestry makes it easier for others to imagine themselves in similar roles.

Mentorship, internships, and early exposure to real forestry environments were frequently mentioned as key supports. Short-term placements in forestry institutions help build both interest and confidence. Informal support networks and encouragement from senior staff also play a positive role.

Although financial incentives were acknowledged as helpful, many considered access to guidance, visibility of women in the profession, and fair treatment as more decisive factors. There is a need for relatable role models, especially for girls from rural areas or communities with limited professional opportunities.

Role of education

Education is considered a cornerstone of professional development, but current forestry programs in Romania face several limitations. While technical preparation is generally strong, students often lack opportunities for hands-on training and practical problem-solving. Many graduates feel unprepared for the realities of forestry work after finishing their studies.

Interviewees noted that mentorship is limited and that outreach to students in earlier education phases is almost non-existent. Improving cooperation between secondary

schools, universities, and forestry organizations was recommended to give students better orientation and smoother transitions into the workforce.

Other suggestions included updating curricula to reflect technological changes in forestry, hosting talks by professionals, and investing in more practice-based modules. Educational promotion via digital platforms and social media could also help reach a wider and younger audience.

Industry and policy recommendations

To create a more inclusive environment for women in forestry, interviewees proposed a combination of internal institutional reforms and national-level policy support. Employers should adopt clear, merit-based criteria for task distribution and promotions, ensure respectful workplace cultures, and actively promote women into technical and leadership roles.

Mentoring programs, increased visibility of successful female professionals, and gender-sensitive HR practices were seen as effective ways to challenge stereotypes and build confidence among young women entering the field. Work-life balance measures and job flexibility were also highlighted as necessary improvements, particularly for those with caregiving responsibilities.

Interviewees further emphasized the importance of addressing salary disparities, supporting parental leave policies, and ensuring that forestry companies and educational institutions reflect equality principles not only in statements but in practice.

Conclusion

The forestry sector in Romania continues to present challenges for women, shaped by a combination of cultural norms, institutional gaps, and uneven access to support. At the same time, the sector offers meaningful work and strong professional appeal for those motivated by environmental responsibility and a connection to nature.

To enable more young women to pursue and remain in forestry careers, greater effort is needed to ensure visibility, mentorship, practical training, and structural inclusion. By addressing these areas, forestry in Romania can move toward a more equal, modern, and resilient future.

4.7 Serbia

Introduction

In Serbia interviews were conducted, including senior government officials, professors, early-career professionals, and students in forestry. Their experiences reflect a wide range of perspectives from education, public forest management, private forestry companies, and academic institutions. The interviews offer valuable insight into how gender roles and structural factors shape access to forestry careers for young women in Serbia.

Key findings

Awareness of forestry careers

Interviewees reported a solid understanding of forestry career paths, which include forest management, research, nature conservation, and the wood industry. For students and young professionals, family influence played a major role in their decision to pursue forestry—particularly when parents or relatives already worked in the sector. Professors and classroom experiences also shaped awareness, as did field trips, lectures, and practical experiences during studies.

While forestry was often presented as a male-dominated domain, some interviewees noted that they were inspired by their personal love for nature and sustainability, not just professional guidance. Access to internships, conferences, and practical training helped deepen their understanding of the sector and its various branches, though opportunities were not equally accessible for everyone.

Barriers and challenges

All five interviewees noted that gender biases persist in Serbian forestry, especially in practical and leadership contexts. Stereotypes suggesting that forestry is “a man’s job” remain strong, particularly regarding fieldwork and physically demanding tasks. One student described being questioned about her ability to work in forestry simply because she was a woman. Others noticed that in both academia and the workplace, women’s capabilities were often underestimated, and they had to work harder to gain respect.

In education, female students were sometimes held to lower standards, under the assumption that they wouldn’t pursue demanding technical roles. Professors reportedly expected less from women and assigned them less responsibility. In the workplace, even when women are present, they are often delegated to administrative or secondary roles. One young woman working in a family forestry business reported that her authority was

frequently questioned, and she often had to present decisions as coming from a male relative to gain legitimacy.

Leadership positions remain largely male-dominated. A lack of mentorship, combined with inflexible work structures and the absence of family-friendly policies, were cited as major obstacles for women aiming to build long-term careers in the sector.

Opportunities and incentives

Despite these challenges, interviewees identified several features that make forestry appealing to young women. Many emphasized the emotional and professional satisfaction that comes from working in nature, especially in areas like silviculture, nursery production, forest ecology, and conservation. These were seen as more “welcoming” branches of forestry than forest exploitation or harvesting.

Mentorship and visibility were considered crucial. Role models—especially female practitioners—were described as powerful motivators. Several interviewees called for more outreach efforts to present real, relatable stories of successful women in forestry. Dedicated promotional campaigns, field visits, and student-faculty engagement events were seen as valuable ways to introduce forestry careers to girls in secondary education.

Financial support through scholarships, access to internships, and clearer employment pathways after graduation were frequently mentioned as key incentives. Flexibility in work schedules, proximity to home, and support for women with caregiving responsibilities were considered especially important for long-term retention in the profession.

Role of education

The role of education was viewed as critical in both enabling and limiting young women's access to forestry. Several interviewees pointed out the importance of maintaining high academic standards and encouraging women to take on challenging coursework. Educational institutions were encouraged to actively promote forestry among female students, particularly those studying landscape architecture or biology, who may not have considered forestry as a viable option.

Many interviewees emphasized the need for early outreach. Visits to primary and secondary schools, faculty open days, and more practical exposure were seen as essential tools for changing perceptions. Strengthening connections between faculties and vocational schools was also recommended.

Mentorship within the educational setting was another consistent theme. Interviewees suggested involving students in curriculum development, offering personalized academic guidance, and hosting guest lectures from experienced women in the field. Such efforts could help reduce dropout rates and build professional confidence.

Industry and policy recommendations

Interviewees offered several practical suggestions for making the forestry sector in Serbia more inclusive. Companies were encouraged to implement formal gender equality policies and create transparent promotion structures. Hiring the best students regardless of gender and ensuring that women have access to leadership tracks were seen as crucial.

Promoting forestry as a modern, diverse profession was also emphasized. This includes developing campaigns to show forestry as gender-neutral, highlighting roles that go beyond manual labour, and ensuring that public understanding of the sector reflects its true complexity.

In terms of policies, flexible working conditions—such as part-time options or adjusted schedules for parents—were recommended. Several interviewees highlighted the need for national support in the form of scholarships, mentorship programs, and structured career development opportunities. Early empowerment and education about modern forestry should also target parents and communities, as outdated attitudes at home often deter girls from considering forestry as a career.

Conclusion

In Serbia, forestry continues to be perceived through a traditional, male-dominated lens. Women face barriers in both education and employment, including gender bias, limited visibility, and structural rigidity. Yet, the sector holds meaningful and inspiring career opportunities—particularly in areas connected to nature, conservation, and sustainability.

Through increased mentorship, flexible working policies, targeted outreach, and financial support, Serbia has the potential to create a more inclusive forestry sector. The insights shared in these interviews point to both the persistence of inequality and the possibilities for real change—if visibility, education, and institutional support are aligned to open the forest to all.

4.8 Slovenia

Introduction

In Slovenia individual interviews with forestry professionals and a participatory workshop with female secondary school students were implemented. The interviews included perspectives from two career counsellors, a senior expert from the Slovenian state-owned forestry company, and an associate director at the Slovenia Forest Service. These are complemented by insights gathered from a workshop held with girls from different year levels of forestry secondary school. Together, these perspectives offer a focused view on gender-specific challenges, opportunities, and potential entry points for young women in Slovenia's forestry sector.

Key findings

Awareness of forestry careers

Across interviews and the workshop, participants highlighted that awareness of forestry careers is highly context dependent. Many girls in the workshop grew up close to nature and forests, often influenced by family traditions in farming, hunting, or wood processing. This proximity helped shape their decision to pursue a forestry education. Interviewees from the professional sector, however, observed that information about forestry as a career path is still limited in primary and secondary education and often influenced by outdated stereotypes.

One expert noted that forestry continues to be associated with fieldwork, chainsaws, and rugged masculinity, which overshadows the sector's more diverse opportunities in ecology, planning, administration, technology, and conservation. Girls are rarely exposed to this range early enough in their education. In some cases, guidance counsellors even discourage high-achieving girls from enrolling in forestry, assuming it is unsuitable due to physical demands or low prestige.

Barriers and challenges

Participants described several persistent barriers for girls and young women in forestry. The physically demanding nature of the training and early education was cited as a critical hurdle. One professional recalled that using chainsaws and performing intensive fieldwork discouraged many girls from pursuing forestry at all. While those who continued often outperformed their male peers academically, they still encountered more pressure to prove themselves.

Gender stereotypes remain common in professional contexts. In more conservative environments—such as field districts with older male landowners—women need to make a greater effort to be accepted and to gain credibility. Female students also reported a lack of visible women in leadership positions, which reinforces the perception that forestry is not a place for women. This lack of role models was consistently cited as one of the most demotivating factors.

Additionally, bureaucratic workload, low starting salaries, and limited flexibility in job arrangements make the sector less attractive to young women—especially those planning for family life. Employment pathways are also seen as rigid, with entry-level roles often requiring extensive commitment without clear incentives or adaptability.

Opportunities and incentives

Despite the challenges, both students and professionals identified aspects of forestry that are highly appealing. These include meaningful work in natural settings, the sustainability mission of the field, and its interdisciplinary character. Many young women are drawn to the idea of contributing to environmental protection and land stewardship. The dynamic and non-monotonous nature of forestry work also holds appeal.

Interviewees emphasized that greater visibility of successful women in forestry can have a powerful motivational effect. Stories of female leaders, public media campaigns, and social media profiles of women working in the field were repeatedly mentioned as strategies that could attract more girls. The workshop participants proposed short videos featuring women in forestry, school visits from female professionals, and immersive nature camps as ways to inspire younger students.

Mentorship was highlighted in several interviews as an especially effective support mechanism. Participants recalled the personal impact of having a female mentor during internships or early employment. Career days at university departments, industry outreach events, and structured partnerships between schools and employers were also named as promising practices that could be scaled up.

Financial support is another important incentive. Scholarships and grants were seen as essential for attracting and retaining women in forestry education, particularly those without family ties to the sector. For many, financial support can bridge the gap between interest and feasibility.

Role of education

The interviewees highlighted the need for a more integrated and proactive role for education. Promotional events, career presentations in schools, and outreach to families and counsellors were all recommended to help dismantle misconceptions about the field. Workshop participants emphasized that many girls simply do not know what forestry entails beyond the traditional image of the forester with an axe. Educational materials often fail to show diversity—both in people and professions.

They also stressed that forestry should be presented as a broad, interdisciplinary field encompassing engineering, ecology, economics, digitalization, and conservation. Updating curricula, aligning thesis topics with real industry challenges, and offering practical field experiences early on were all suggested as ways to make the educational pathway more relevant and engaging for women.

Ensuring gender-sensitive communication and inclusive school materials was also identified as a crucial step in shifting cultural expectations and improving access.

Industry and policy recommendations

Professionals and students alike called for closer collaboration between educational institutions and forestry companies to support student placements, internships, and real-world exposure. One expert supported the idea of gender quotas, arguing that they could help ensure balanced representation and signal a sector-wide commitment to inclusion.

Efforts to modernize employment practices—such as offering more flexible project-based roles, promoting visibility of women in leadership, and ensuring transparent hiring practices—were all seen as important steps. While forestry is still constrained by some public-sector rigidity, changes in mentorship, mobility between units, and structured entry programs are underway and were viewed positively.

Ultimately, all participants agreed that raising the profile of forestry as a green, modern, future-facing, and gender-inclusive sector requires coordinated action from educators, industry leaders, and policymakers.

Conclusion

In Slovenia, the perception of forestry is slowly shifting, but gendered barriers remain firmly embedded in both the education system and workplace culture. Girls and young women still face stereotypes, a lack of visible role models, and limited career guidance.

However, forestry offers substantial appeal in terms of values, variety, and meaningful work.

Through mentorship, inclusive outreach, financial support, and structural cooperation between schools and employers, the sector can become more accessible and attractive to a new generation of women. Real change will require both cultural and institutional transformation—but the motivation, both from within the sector and among young women, is clearly present.

4.9 Ukraine

Introduction

This summary is based on interviews conducted in Ukraine with academic staff from forestry faculties, a forestry student, and a long-serving professional working in the public forest enterprise. These individuals represent a range of perspectives from education, research, and forest operations, offering valuable insights into gender-specific experiences and conditions shaping women's access to forestry careers in Ukraine.

Key findings

Awareness of forestry careers

Awareness of forestry careers in Ukraine is shaped by a mix of family traditions, education, and personal interest. Some participants, particularly those from families with forestry backgrounds, were introduced to the sector early on and developed a comprehensive understanding of forestry professions. Others, including students, discovered the field through a personal passion for environmental protection.

While educational institutions such as the Ukrainian National Forestry University and Uzhhorod National University play a central role in informing students about forestry careers, several interviewees noted that students—especially women—still have only moderate awareness of the variety of available roles. Areas such as research, policy, and business remain less known. Educators are seen as key influencers in shaping students' perceptions, but there is room to improve outreach, especially in secondary schools.

Barriers and challenges

Across interviews, gender-based barriers were acknowledged, although the extent of their impact varied. Several respondents noted that gender stereotypes still exist, particularly in physically demanding or leadership roles. Field-based positions—such as forest rangers or engineers of forest guarding and protection—were described as less accessible to women due to concerns about physical load, unregulated schedules, and exposure to risks like poachers or illegal loggers.

While some educators and students felt that competence can overcome bias, others reported instances where women were passed over for jobs or discouraged from taking on specific roles. A recurring challenge is the so-called “glass ceiling,” where women with qualifications and experience find themselves blocked from advancement without clear justification. Structural gaps in employer support, lack of flexible working conditions, and minimal visibility of female role models were also noted.

Several interviewees pointed to low self-confidence among female students, and the absence of visible pathways into leadership, as barriers that could be addressed with targeted support.

Opportunities and incentives

Forestry careers offer certain intrinsic and structural incentives that appeal to women. These include a strong connection to nature, ecological values, and the opportunity to work in meaningful, diverse roles such as forest cultivation, silviculture, education, and conservation. Internships, practical training, and mentorship during studies or early career stages were repeatedly mentioned as motivating factors.

Economic incentives such as scholarships, social benefits, and stable employment conditions were also valued. For some, clear and predictable career progression was seen as essential, especially given the ongoing reforms in the Ukrainian forestry sector. Transparent job descriptions, detailed information on responsibilities, and a better understanding of required competencies were seen as tools that could support informed decision-making among women considering the field.

Informal mentorship—particularly from more experienced female colleagues—was highlighted as impactful in helping women persist in the profession.

Role of education

Education was seen as a pivotal arena for promoting gender inclusion, but also one that requires strengthening. While universities were generally regarded as supportive and technically competent, gaps remain in practical exposure, real-world case studies, and gender-sensitive content. Several educators emphasized the importance of integrating gender equality themes in teaching and using career counselling platforms to support students.

Students and professionals agreed on the need for increased visibility of female role models in both academic and workplace contexts. Some respondents pointed to the value of informal alumni mentorship structures and expressed a desire for more systematic support.

At the primary and secondary education level, interviewees called for earlier introduction to forestry concepts—through storytelling, games, visits to forested areas, and direct engagement with professionals. This kind of early exposure could counteract stereotypes before they become barriers to career choice.

Industry and policy recommendations

Recommendations from interviewees focused on practical, education-linked, and institutional reforms. Forestry enterprises were encouraged to improve physical work conditions for women—such as proper facilities, uniforms, and flexible work arrangements. Cultural changes within companies, including support for teamwork, rest, and inclusive communication, were also proposed.

Visibility and clarity were recurring themes: organizations were urged to publicly identify personnel responsible for gender equality, communicate available support measures, and create inclusive working environments. National policy recommendations included introducing grants or scholarships specifically for women in forestry, promoting women through media and public events, and developing institutional structures that support career advancement.

Educators also called for stronger cooperation between universities and employers, to ensure a smoother transition from education to employment and to align training with real-world needs. Some respondents advocated for the creation of women's networks within forestry institutions to offer ongoing support and knowledge exchange.

Conclusion

In Ukraine, young women enter forestry through diverse routes—family influence, education, or personal motivation—but still face systemic and cultural obstacles. These include limited visibility of women in leadership, stereotypes about fieldwork, and a lack of tailored support.

Nonetheless, the sector holds promise for inclusive growth. Interviewees stressed that improvements in mentorship, access to practical learning, early outreach, and institutional commitment to gender equality could all contribute to making forestry more attractive and viable for women. Education, policy, and practice must work together to transform existing opportunities into lasting professional paths.

5 Toward solutions: Making forestry a viable and attractive career for girls

Reframing forestry's image and narrative

The perception of forestry as a physically demanding, male-dominated field is a major deterrent for young women. Across countries, both experts and students underscored the importance of transforming public narratives. Forestry should be portrayed not as rugged outdoor labour, but as an innovative, sustainable, and diverse sector—ranging from ecology and technology to education, policy, and conservation.

Actions:

- Develop youth-friendly, inclusive PR campaigns showcasing women in forestry.
- Highlight the sector's role in climate action, sustainability, and digital innovation.
- Share personal stories from young female foresters through social media, videos, and school visits.
- Organize Girls' Days, career fairs, and forest exploration events with strong female representation.

Start early: strengthen career orientation and role modelling

The decision to pursue forestry is often made late and without sufficient information. Early and repeated exposure to forestry—particularly to its non-traditional roles—is crucial. Teachers, parents, and local role models play a key role in shaping girls' perceptions and confidence.

Actions:

- Introduce forestry themes in primary and lower secondary education.
- Invite female forestry professionals to speak at schools and career days.
- Create mentorship programs linking female students with professionals or peers already in forestry.
- Build networks of young women in forestry to provide peer support and advocacy.

Ensure practical, meaningful exposure and mentorship

Many girls reported feeling disconnected from the real-world practice of forestry. For example, internships were promised but not delivered. Across contexts, there was a strong demand for more hands-on, mentored experience.

Actions:

- Guarantee quality internships and job-shadowing opportunities through school-industry partnerships.
- Embed practical training into curricula and support regular field visits.
- Create structured mentoring (individual or group-based), with emphasis on female leadership.
- Develop mentoring platforms that connect students with foresters across regions and roles.

Modernize education and make it inclusive

Curricula across countries were often described as outdated, overly theoretical, and unengaging. Women frequently face unequal task assignments in classrooms or internships, reinforcing stereotypes and limiting skill development.

Actions:

- Revise forestry curricula to reflect current industry needs (GIS, drones, sustainability).
- Integrate gender-sensitive pedagogy, including balanced task assignments and inclusive materials.
- Recruit more female educators and guest speakers, especially in technical and field subjects.
- Create learning environments where girls' competencies are recognized, not questioned.

Create inclusive and visible workplace cultures

Even when women enter the forestry workforce, they often feel marginalized excluded from informal networks, limited to administrative roles, or pushed out after maternity leave. Without inclusive structures, retention remains low.

Actions:

- Use inclusive language and visuals in job advertisements.
- Offer part-time, hybrid, or localized work models for young women and parents.
- Promote women to leadership roles and highlight them in company communications.
- Train HR and management in gender sensitivity and inclusive leadership.

Policy support and institutional collaboration

Real change requires cross-sector coordination between education, industry, and government. Many barriers identified—such as lack of childcare, informal hiring, or limited access to career guidance—require systemic response.

Actions:

- Design national strategies to attract girls to green careers, including forestry.
- Incentivize companies to adopt gender-equity policies through tax benefits or recognition programs.
- Fund forestry promotion in rural and underrepresented regions.
- Ensure collaboration between schools, ministries, universities, and forestry employers.

6 Conclusion

The testimonies collected across the Fem2forests partner countries reveal that girls and women are not inherently uninterested in forestry—they are often simply not invited in. Where they do enter the field, they contribute not only academic excellence and motivation but also a desire to work in ways that align with the sector's evolving goals: sustainability, biodiversity, community, and climate resilience.

However, for this potential to be realized, changes are needed at multiple levels. Education systems must become more inclusive and inspiring. Forestry companies must revise outdated work cultures. Policymakers must support access, visibility, and protection from discrimination. And across all levels, the stories and strengths of women in forestry must be made visible—both to inspire others and to reshape the perception of the sector itself.

What emerges most clearly is that inclusion is not a passive outcome. It must be intentionally designed—through mentoring, support, communication, and reform. The voices gathered in this research provide not just critique but direction. If listened to, they can guide a forestry sector that is more diverse, resilient, and rooted in the talents of all who wish to shape its future.

7 Annexes

Annex 1: Guidelines to conduct guided interview with key stakeholders

To foster familiarity, awareness, and the attractiveness of forestry careers among girls and young women, it is essential to implement a participatory approach. This approach will involve guided interviews with key stakeholders to gather diverse insights, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of challenges and opportunities. The objective is to make the forestry sector more appealing and inclusive by integrating perspectives from **girls, young women, educators, industry experts, and decision-makers.**

Objectives of the guided interviews

- Identify barriers preventing girls and young women from pursuing careers in forestry.
- Highlight opportunities and incentives within the forest(ry) sector.
- Collect insights from educators and industry experts on how to make forestry more inclusive.
- Generate innovative ideas to enhance the sector's attractiveness and accessibility.

Target groups

Guided interviews will be conducted with:

- Girls and young women (attending forest(ry) related schools) to understand their perceptions and interest in forestry careers (at least 1 interview, even better if 1 group).
- Educators (teachers, career counselors) from forestry/forest related education to assess the role of education in promoting forestry.
- Industry experts from forest(ry) sector (foresters, employers, HR professionals) to determine career pathways and workplace experiences.
- Decision-makers (policy-makers, training program developers) to explore systemic changes and initiatives.

Methodology

- Conduct at least five guided interviews per participating country (cover all target groups, especially girls and young women are important).
- Use a semi-structured interview or workshop format to allow flexibility while maintaining consistency.
- Ensure gender-sensitive and inclusive language and approach.

- Use in-person or online interviews to accommodate different participants.

Interview Guide

This document serves as a guide, allowing PP to modify and adapt questions as needed during interviews with different stakeholders.

The following key topics and sample questions should be addressed:

A. Interest and awareness of forestry careers

- What do you know about career opportunities in forestry?
- What sources of information and/or experiences/relationships have influenced your perception of forestry careers?

B. Barriers and challenges

- Have you come across any gender-related perceptions in forestry?
- What challenges do you think girls and young women face in entering forestry careers?

C. Opportunities and incentives

- What aspects of forestry careers do you find appealing or unappealing?
- What incentives or support structures do you think would encourage more girls and young women to pursue studies/career forestry?
- What role do you think do mentorship programs and role models play in inspiring young women to join the forestry sector?
- What kind of outreach activities or promotional campaigns do you think would be effective in attracting young women to forestry careers?
- How do in your opinion financial incentives, scholarships, and grants impact career decisions in forestry?
- What kind of workplace culture or policies do you think would make forestry careers more attractive to women?
- What role do in your opinion family, peers, and societal expectations play in influencing career choices in forestry? (according to their personal experience)

D. Role of education and training

- How can schools and training institutions better promote forestry careers among young women? What do you think is missing and what is already working?

- What improvements can be made in forestry education and mentorship programs?

E. Industry and policy recommendations

- What actions can forestry companies take to make the sector more welcoming for women? What do you think is missing and what is already working?
- How can policies support gender inclusivity in forestry professions?

Workshop for girls and young women in secondary school (forestry or forest related)

To further explore how forestry can be made more attractive to girls and young women, a **workshop** can be organized with this target group (small group of cca. 5 - 10 participants). This interactive session will help generate new ideas, address barriers, and identify incentives for participation in the sector. Bellow are some suggestions how the workshop can be conducted following the design thinking method.

Workshop Structure:

a) Empathize:

- Icebreaker activity: "What comes to your mind when you hear the word forestry?"
- Story-sharing session: Participants share their perceptions and experiences regarding forestry.
- Group discussion on challenges and misconceptions.

b) Define:

- Identify key challenges faced by young women in considering forestry careers.
- Create personas representing different types of young women and their career aspirations (*for the methodology on personas see Methodology for participatory approach under the gender perspective, F2F O1.1*).

c) Ideate (generate ideas):

- Brainstorming session: "What would make forestry careers more exciting and appealing?" (*To get as many as possible ideas, use the minimum number that each person has to contribute (e.g. 10-15 ideas). This usually results in more innovative ideas – divergent thinking.*)

- Mind-mapping activity to explore incentives (e.g., role models, scholarships, workplace culture).

d) Prototype:

- Develop ideas into tangible solutions: campaign concepts, mentorship programs, school activities, etc. *(at this stage evaluate ideas and select only few to work on – convergent thinking)*.
- Presentations on proposed solutions.

e) Test:

- Discuss feasibility and potential impact of proposed ideas.
- Gather feedback from peers and facilitators.
- Identify next steps for implementation.

Annex 2: Template for presenting interview results

Interviewee name:	
Date of interview:	
Location/mode of Interview:	<i>(in-person/online)</i>
Interviewee profile:	<i>(e.g., student at..., educator at..., industry expert from...)</i>

1. Introduction

Provide brief context of the interview and the interviewee's background in relation to forestry.

2. Key findings

A. Awareness of forestry careers

Summarize the interviewee's knowledge about forestry careers and the key influences on their perceptions.

B. Barriers & challenges

Summarize key obstacles, including gender biases or other barriers to young women entering forestry.

C. Opportunities & incentives

Summarize the aspects of forestry careers that are appealing to young women, and identify the support or incentives that would encourage them to pursue it.

D. Role of education

Summarize suggestions for enhancing forestry education and mentorship to attract more young women.

E. Industry & policy recommendations

Highlight the interviewee's recommendations for forestry companies and policies to make the sector more inclusive for women.

3. Conclusion

Recap the key points discussed in the interview, emphasizing main findings and recommendations.

Annex 3: Template for presenting interview results

Workshop title:	
Date:	
Location:	
Facilitator(s):	
Target group:	
Number of participants:	

1. Introduction <i>Provide brief agenda and the creative process of the workshop, as well as the context of the target group.</i>
2. Key findings A. Participants background <i>Summarize target groups' perception of forestry and/or reasons that influenced decision for career in forestry.</i>
B. Barriers & challenges <i>Summarize the barriers and challenges identified by the target group that are preventing girls and young women from pursuing careers in forestry.</i>
C. Ideas & solutions <i>Summarize the ideas and solutions proposed by the target group to make forestry careers more exciting and appealing. Highlight the solutions that were deemed the most attractive.</i>
D. Role of education <i>Summarize suggestions for enhancing forestry education to attract more young women.</i>
3. Conclusion <i>Recap the key points discussed in the workshop, emphasizing main findings and recommendations.</i>
Annexes <i>List and attach attendance list, photos, posters, drawings and maps created during the workshop.</i>