O1.3
Toolkit to expand the range of career choices to support innovative approaches

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

- Slovenian Forestry Institute (SFI), Slovenia
- Foundation for Improvement of Employment Possibilities PRIZMA (PRIZMA), Slovenia
- University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty (UL(BF)), Slovenia
- Bavarian State Institute of Forestry (LWF), Germany
- Forest Training Center PICHL (FAST Pichl), Austria
- NOWA Training Counselling Project management (NOWA), Austria
- Agency for sustainable development of the Carpathian region "FORZA" (FORZA), Ukraine
- Forestry and Environmental Action (FEA), Bosnia and Herzegovina
- University of Belgrade-Faculty of Forestry (UNIBG-FOF), Serbia
- University Ştefan cel Mare of Suceava (USV), Romania
- Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CZU), Czech Republic
- Croatian Union of Private Forest Owners Associations (CUPFOA), Croatia
- Croatian Chamber of Forestry and Wood Technology Engineers (HKIŠTD), Croatia
- Foresta SG (Foresta SG), Czech Republic
- Ukrainian National Forestry University (UNFU), Ukraine

Lead partner of the project
Gozdarski inštitut Slovenije/
Slovenian Forestry Institute

GOZDARSKI INŠTITUT SLOVENIJE
SLOVENIAN FORESTRY INSTITUTE

Contact:
Gozdarski inštitut Slovenije
Večna pot 2
1000 Ljubljana
dr. Nike Krajnc
Phone: 00386 1 200 78 17
Email: nike.krajnc@gozdis.si

Project partner responsible for D1.3.1
Foundation for Improvement of
Employment Possibilities PRIZMA,
Slovenia

PRIZMA
Foundation for Improvement of
Employment Possibilities

Contact:
Fundacija PRIZMA
Tkalski prehod 4
2000 Maribor
Tatjana Pavlič
Phone: 00386 2 333 13 30
Email: t.pavlic@fundacija-prizma.si

Authors of the Toolkit to expand the range of career choices to support innovative approaches are:

- Slovenian Forestry Institute (SFI, Slovenia): Nike Krajnc, Darja Stare, Polona Hafner, Katarina Flajšman
- Foundation for Improvement of Employment Possibilities PRIZMA (PRIZMA, Slovenia): Mateja Karničnik, Tatjana Pavlič, Ema Šumenjak, Sabina Majerič
- University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty (UL(BF), Slovenia): Špela Pezdevšek Malovrh, Zala Uhan
- Bavarian State Institute of Forestry (LWF, Germany): Andrea Skiba, Leonie Wagner and Helena Eisele
- Forest Training Center PICHL (FAST Pichl, Austria): Dagmar Karisch-Gierer
- NOWA Training Counselling Project management (NOWA, Austria): Eva Janusch, Heidi Gaube
- Agency for sustainable development of the Carpathian region "FORZA" (FORZA, Ukraine): Lesya Loyko, Natalya Voloshyna
- Forestry and Environmental Action (FEA, Bosnia and Herzegovina): Ajla Dorfer, Lejla Hukić
- University of Belgrade-Faculty of Forestry (UNIBG-FOF, Serbia): Jelena Nedeljković, Marina Nonić, Dragan Nonić
- University Ştefan cel Mare of Suceava (USV, Romania): Ramona Scriban, Cătălina Barbu
- Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CZU, Czech Republic): Petra Palátová, Markéta Kalábová, Ratna C. Purwestri, Marcel Riedl, Vilém Jarský, Roman Dudík
- Croatian Union of Private Forest Owners Associations (CUPFOA, Croatia): Miljenko Županić
- Croatian Chamber of Forestry and Wood Technology Engineers (HKIŠTD, Croatia): Silvija Zec, Maja Merc Kiš
- Foresta SG (Foresta SG, Czech Republic)
- Ukrainian National Forestry University (UNFU, Ukraine): Orest Kiyko, Oksana Peluykh, Andrii Lipentsev

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Content

1 Introduction

The *Fem2forests* Toolkit offers inspirational ideas to support inclusive and gender-sensitive career orientation for girls and young women in forestry. It is intended for educators, career counsellors, youth workers, forestry professionals, and policymakers across the Danube Region and beyond—anyone seeking to expand the range of meaningful, future-oriented career opportunities available to young people.

This toolkit is part of the broader *Fem2forests* initiative, which aims to build more inclusive pathways into forestry by addressing structural and cultural barriers that hinder girls and young women from entering the sector. It builds on the project's earlier phases, when we conducted research to identify the barriers and specific needs girls face in accessing forestry-related education and careers, analysed existing career orientation systems and collected a range of good practices from across partner countries.

The solutions presented here are the result of a participatory design process that brought together sector professionals, educators, and most importantly, girls and young women themselves. These are not yet "proven" or piloted models, but newly developed approaches in national context that reflect the real experiences, ideas, and aspirations of those involved. They are intended as inspirational blueprints that can be tailored, tested, and further developed in diverse educational and forestry settings.

In the next phase of the *Fem2forests* project, these solutions will feed directly into pilot career orientation activities across participating countries. Project partners are encouraged to draw from both the collected good practices and the newly designed solutions in this toolkit—adapting, combining, or building upon them to meet the specific needs of their local context.

The solutions are organized around a three-stage model of engagement—Inspiration, Identification, and Participation—which mirrors how career interest typically develops. From sparking curiosity and breaking stereotypes, to creating meaningful connections and enabling hands-on experience, this structure ensures that girls and young women are not only informed about forestry careers but also supported in imagining themselves in these roles and taking real steps toward them.

By promoting inclusive, participatory, and action-oriented career orientation, the *Fem2forests* Toolkit contributes to a future where forestry is more diverse, dynamic, and representative of all who care for our forests.

2   Methodology for the creation of actionable solutions

The development of actionable solutions followed a participatory, iterative, and multi-stakeholder approach that ensured the active involvement of target groups and key actors in the forestry and education sectors. The process was structured into several interconnected phases to ensure that the solutions were relevant, validated, and ready for piloting.

Initial ideas for actionable solutions were identified during guided interviews and group discussions conducted with a wide range of stakeholders, including girls and young women, educators, forestry professionals, and policymakers. These interviews aimed to uncover perceived barriers, explore career motivations, and generate raw ideas for improving the attractiveness of forestry careers for young women. In parallel, design-thinking-based workshops with girls and young women helped articulate their needs, aspirations, and creative ideas in a supportive setting.

The preliminary ideas collected from interviews and workshops were then presented and discussed in national round tables with stakeholders. These events served as collaborative spaces to evaluate the relevance and feasibility of the proposed ideas, integrate additional stakeholder perspectives, and refine the concepts using creative methods such as brainstorming and convergent-divergent thinking.

A revised set of proposed solutions emerging from the round tables was presented to a different group of girls and young women who had not participated in the initial idea creation. The sessions were conducted in interactive formats such as workshops, or group interviews. Their feedback focused on the appeal, relevance, and perceived impact of the solutions, as well as preferred formats and suggestions for improvement. This validation step ensured that the solutions were meaningful and motivating for the target group.

Based on the feedback from girls and young women, project partners refined the proposals and developed final descriptions of actionable solutions using a standardized template. Each solution includes its objectives, target groups, key activities, timing, stakeholder involvement, and an assessment of adaptability, scalability, feasibility, and expected impact.

The validated and finalized solutions are compiled in this practical toolkit, which serves a dual purpose. It provides project partners with a structured resource for implementing pilot projects in their respective countries and offers stakeholders in education, forestry, and youth work inspiration for adaptation and wider application.

Interreg
Danube Region

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3 Understanding the background

Forestry plays an essential ecological, social, and economic role across the Danube Region. Yet, despite growing attention to issues such as sustainability, biodiversity, and innovation, the sector is still largely dominated by men – especially in technical, field-based, and leadership positions. While women are becoming more visible in academic and administrative roles, their presence in hands-on forestry work and decision-making remains limited.

This imbalance is shaped by deep-rooted structural and cultural barriers. Persistent gender stereotypes, a lack of visible female role models, and traditional views about physical strength, labour, and leadership continue to influence perceptions of who "belongs" in forestry. As a result, many girls and young women are discouraged from pursuing careers in the sector—even when they show strong interest, talent, or a passion for nature and environmental protection.

Career choices begin forming early, and the quality of guidance young people receive during these formative years plays a key role. Inclusive, engaging, and supportive career orientation programs can help girls imagine themselves in forestry-related roles. However, many existing systems fall short. They often:

- Reinforce outdated stereotypes instead of challenging them.
- Emphasize conventional roles while overlooking emerging opportunities in green and digital forestry.
- Lack representation of women in diverse forestry careers.
- Fail to connect with girls on an emotional or experiential level.

To make forestry truly accessible, career orientation must be gender-sensitive, personally relevant, and grounded in real-world experiences. Girls need to see themselves reflected in the sector and be given opportunities to explore it in ways that build both interest and confidence.

The *Fem2forests* project was launched to address this challenge by developing practical, scalable solutions for expanding the career horizons of girls and young women. It began by listening—gathering insights from interviews and participatory workshops with students, educators, and forestry professionals to better understand the barriers and needs.

This process revealed recurring themes, including:

- The lack of relatable female role models.
- Limited exposure to forestry in early education.
- Feelings of exclusion or being "the only one".

- The underrepresentation of women in positions of influence.

In response, project partners examined career orientation practices across their countries and identified promising examples—from awareness campaigns and mentoring networks to interactive workshops and inclusive outreach initiatives. These good practices informed the design of new, participatory solutions, co-created with girls and young women to reflect their lived experiences and ideas.

While the *Fem2forests* Toolkit reflects a shared commitment to gender equality, it also recognizes that regional differences matter. Educational systems, cultural attitudes, and institutional capacities vary across the Danube Region. For this reason:

- Solutions must be adapted to local contexts.
- Flexibility is key to effective implementation.
- Strong partnerships at the national and community level are essential for testing and scaling what works.

This toolkit is not a rigid formula. Instead, it offers a framework for collaborative action—rooted in research, shaped by the voices of young women, and designed to inspire change that is both inclusive and sustainable.

4 Framework for actionable solutions

The solutions described in this chapter are presented according to the three stages—**Inspiration, Identification, and Participation**—that form a progressive and empowering model for guiding girls and young women into sectors where they are traditionally underrepresented, such as forestry. This approach acknowledges that career choices are not made in isolation but develop gradually through a combination of psychological, social, and experiential factors. Many girls face invisible obstacles along the way, including gender stereotypes, limited exposure to role models, and a lack of confidence, which can deter them from exploring careers in male-dominated fields—even when they have the interest or potential.

These stages are not isolated interventions but parts of a developmental pathway. Skipping one may weaken the overall impact. For example:

- If a girl is inspired but never meets someone she identifies with, she might admire from afar but never pursue it.
- If she identifies with someone but never gets a chance to try, she may not feel confident enough to act.
- If she tries an activity without prior inspiration or emotional connection, she may see it as a one-off and not a career possibility.

By structuring outreach and engagement activities around these three stages, we can more effectively support girls in discovering new paths, building confidence, and ultimately acting toward pursuing careers in forestry. Each stage corresponds to a distinct phase of career exploration: from *planting the seed* of curiosity (Inspiration), to *nurturing a personal connection* with relatable role models (Identification), to *growing hands-on experience* and readiness (Participation).

This model mirrors how identity, motivation, and decision-making develop over time. It acknowledges that transformation happens gradually—first through imagination, then through connection, and finally through experience. Importantly, it allows interventions to be age-appropriate, emotionally resonant, and responsive to the lived realities of girls and young women. In the context of forestry, where female participation is still limited and visibility is low, such an approach is essential to creating a more inclusive and future-oriented sector.

4.1   Inspiration phase solutions

From: "Forestry? That's not for girls."
To: "Wow—I didn't know women could do that!"

The Inspiration phase is about opening the door to possibility. At this early stage, many girls may have never considered forestry simply because it has never been presented to them as an option. They may associate the sector with outdated gender roles or physically demanding work, rather than with innovation, ecology, technology, or leadership. In this initial stage, the goal is to spark curiosity, challenge stereotypes, and broaden horizons. Girls are introduced to the idea that forestry is not just for men—and not limited to woodcutting or physical labour. Instead, it is shown as a diverse, dynamic field that offers meaningful, impactful, and creative career opportunities.

Key elements:

- Exposure to inspiring female role models in forestry.
- Visibility of women's achievements in various forestry roles—scientists, foresters, entrepreneurs, policymakers, technicians.
- Reframing of outdated images of forestry, showing how it connects with sustainability, climate action, biodiversity, and innovation.

Characteristics:

- Cognitive level: Awareness-raising
- Emotional tone: Surprise, admiration, curiosity
- Key message: *"Forestry is more than you think—and it's for everyone."*

Actionable solutions for raising awareness, challenging stereotypes and making forestry visible and appealing:

- Her Stories (Austria)
- Media campaign "Women in Forestry" (Slovenia)
- Success Story Campaign (Romania)
- Forestry Badge Campaign (Slovenia)
- Gender-responsive forestry (Czech Republic)
- Visibility of women and networking (Bavaria/Germany)
- Changing the image and promoting forestry as a modern and socially beneficial profession (Serbia)

HER STORIES

(Austria)

Description

Her Stories is a workshop-based initiative that brings female role models from the forestry sector into primary and secondary schools to share their personal career journeys, offer insider knowledge, and highlight diverse job profiles. By showcasing real women in forestry, the solution helps break down stereotypes, reduce fears and barriers, and inspire girls to explore forestry-related paths. Integrated into career guidance programs, project weeks, or regular classes, these authentic and relatable encounters build bridges between young learners and the forestry profession, offering early, low-threshold access to career exploration.

Objectives

- To support girls in their career choices by highlighting areas of activity, job profiles and career paths, using role models.

Main activities

- Workshops with role models for pupils of primary and secondary schools.

Target group

- Women from forestry sector (Ambassadors),
- Female pupils of primary and secondary schools.

Timing

- Activities within the framework of standardized career guidance programs at secondary schools,
- Project weeks at primary and secondary schools,
- Integration into regular curriculum (biology, general knowledge, geography, etc.).

Stakeholders involved

- Forestry organizations promoting female role models Principals and teachers at non-forestry schools,
- Organizations involved in career guidance,
- Possibly parents.

Resources needed

- Room, funds, time, media.

Preferred engagement methods

- Workshops with school in different areas and different age levels.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* Can be implemented within the project framework or within the scope of school resources (open days, career guidance programs, etc.). Effectiveness can be increased by utilizing and integrating existing programs such as Girls' Day, career guidance fairs, etc.
- *Scalability:* Efficient implementation is only possible with the provision of appropriate additional resources (new projects, extended career guidance programs in schools, etc.). With the provision of additional resources, nothing stands in the way of expanding the offer to all non-vocational school types.
- *Adaptability:* The content can be embedded in different school contexts, but can also be accessed individually regarding career orientation.

Expected impact

- This early, authentic, and highly practical approach allows us to reach girls who have largely never been specifically addressed before. Peer support, role models, and strong practical focus ensure low-threshold access. This allows us to build bridges, break down barriers, and arouse interest.

MEDIA CAMPAIGN "WOMEN IN FORESTRY"

(Slovenia)

Description

A year-round multimedia awareness campaign that showcases inspiring women in forestry, challenges gender stereotypes, and promotes forestry as a relevant, inclusive, and future-oriented career option for girls and young women. The campaign will combine digital storytelling, strategic influencer partnerships, and public events to reach youth where they are and inspire interest in forestry careers.

Objectives

- Raise awareness about the diverse and modern career opportunities in forestry,
- Challenge gender stereotypes,
- Provide relatable role models to inspire and motivate girls to explore forestry studies and careers,
- Support informed career decisions,
- Bridge the gap between forestry and youth culture.

Main activities

- Create engaging video content featuring women in forestry,
- Use digital channels and television to reach diverse audiences,
- Involve youth directly as campaign co-creators and ambassadors,
- Collaborate with influencers who resonate with young people and are credible in the domains of sustainability, education, or science,
- Promote real role models, such as nominating a "Female Forester of the Year" or similar initiatives,
- Organize creative and interactive outreach events that bring forestry closer to young people.

Target group

- Primary target group: Girls aged 12–20, especially those nearing educational transitions.
- Secondary audiences: Parents, teachers, counsellors, employers, and the broader public.

Timing

- All year round, with key moments such as forestry fairs, school open days, awareness days.

Stakeholders involved

- Forestry schools, universities, and training institutions,
- Forestry companies and forest services,
- Youth organizations and student groups,
- Media agencies, influencers, and creative professionals,
- National forestry associations and equality bodies.

Resources needed

- Campaign coordinator, video editor, social media manager, communications consultant, youth ambassadors, camera equipment, digital tools, outreach materials, social media platforms, television.

Preferred engagement methods

- Social media content tailored to platforms like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube,
- Continuous presence—not tied only to events or enrolment periods,
- Representation through real, relatable role models,
- Youth-centred events and face-to-face engagement opportunities.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* Highly feasible with support from forestry schools, public institutions, and youth media. Short videos are low-cost and can involve forestry students and professionals as contributors.

- *Scalability:* Easily replicable across regions with localized content and expandable through partnerships with influencers or educational platforms.

- *Adaptability:* Suitable for various educational and forestry contexts, with content tailored to local stereotypes, needs, and priorities.

Expected impact

- Increased visibility of women role models in forestry sector,
- Greater interest and motivation among girls and young women to explore forestry-related studies and careers,
- Shift in public perceptions, reducing gender stereotypes and broadening the understanding of what forestry involves today,
- Improved career decision-making among girls.

Description

A storytelling campaign that highlights the personal journeys of successful women in forestry, showing diverse career paths and resilience against gender bias. A nationwide network connecting students with female forestry professionals for mentoring, networking, and project collaboration.

Objectives

- Inspire girls by showcasing real women succeeding in forestry.

Main activities

- Collect and film 10 success stories across forestry fields,
- Edit into short video episodes and share on social platforms,
- Host monthly livestream Q&As with featured professionals,
- Organize in-person school talks with featured speakers.

Target group

- Girls aged 16–25 in secondary and higher education (urban and semi-urban).

Timing

- Year-round campaign with peak during Women's Month.

Stakeholders involved

- (Young) women forestry professionals,
- Students,
- Career advisors,
- NGOs.

Resources needed

- Video equipment,
- Editing software,
- Speaker fees,
- Marketing materials.

Preferred engagement methods

- Visual storytelling,
- Livestreams,
- In-person events.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility*: Highly feasible using basic media tools and volunteer contributors.
- *Scalability*: Easy to expand across regions and countries.
- *Adaptability*: Fully adaptable to local languages, sectors, and formats.

Expected impact

- Creates visibility, busts stereotypes, and inspires ambition.

FORESTRY BADGE CAMPAIGN

(Slovenia)

Description

The Forestry Badge campaign is an interactive, year-long activity for children aged 4 to 8 that introduces them to the diverse world of forestry through playful, hands-on tasks. Inspired by reading badges, it encourages kids to collect points by completing activities related to forests, the bioeconomy, and the forest-wood value chain—such as drawing machines, collecting forest products, or visiting a sawmill. The campaign concludes with recognition and prizes, helping to build early awareness of forestry careers in an engaging and age-appropriate way.

Objectives

- To spark early interest in forestry careers among young children.
- To foster awareness of the full forest-based value chain, including nature conservation, machinery, bioeconomy, and wood processing.
- To challenge stereotypes by presenting forestry as diverse, inclusive, and open to all.

Main activities

Children collect points throughout the school year by completing age-appropriate tasks, such as:

- Drawing a forestry machine or a wood product.
- Bringing a forest fruit or a wood-based item to school.
- Taking a photo in the forest or near a wood-processing facility.
- Visiting a sawmill or talking to a forest worker (with teacher support).
- Participating in a storytelling activity about "where wood comes from."

At the end of the year, children receive a Forestry Badge and small prizes during a celebratory event.

Target group

- Children aged 4 to 8 years, specifically the last two years of pre-school and 1st and 2nd grade of primary school.

Timing

- Throughout the school year (September to June), integrated into existing classroom or kindergarten activities.

Stakeholders involved

- Pre- and primary schools (teachers, headmasters),
- Forestry services and companies,
- Parents and local communities,
- Bioeconomy/wood-processing companies,
- Municipalities or local education authorities,
- *Optional: Youth organisations or environmental NGOs.*

Resources needed

- Staff: Teachers, forestry outreach professionals, and volunteers.
- Materials: Activity booklets, templates, stickers, drawing paper, prizes.
- Locations: (pre)schools, local forest areas, and small enterprises (optional visits).

Preferred engagement methods

- Creative, hands-on, curiosity-driven activities such as drawing, collecting, storytelling, and visiting.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility*: Highly feasible using low-cost materials and easily integrated into kindergarten or early primary routines, requiring minimal resources or planning. Forestry organizations can support with small recognitions or visits.
- *Scalability*: Can start as a local pilot and expand with a digital toolkit for broader use. Gender-sensitive messaging and female role models can enhance its reach.
- *Adaptability*: Flexible for both forested and urban areas, with tasks tailored to local contexts and suitable for formal or informal education settings.

Expected impact

- The Forestry Badge campaign is expected to bring several positive changes and benefits for girls, like early awareness and interest; expanded career imagination; positive role identification and increased gender inclusiveness in forestry outreach. The campaign aims to plant the seeds of curiosity and confidence in girls from an early age, ultimately supporting greater gender balance and diversity in the future forestry workforce.

Description

This solution focuses on creating and sustaining a targeted communication campaign that presents forestry as a green, inclusive, and diverse profession. Through various communication channels, it seeks to reshape the image of forestry and address the challenge of it being perceived as a non-inclusive field. By showcasing the sector's social relevance and environmental importance, the campaign makes forestry more relatable and accessible to young female audiences. It empowers girls by increasing the visibility of women in forestry and offering them positive, achievable role models. At its core, the campaign links environmental stewardship with social justice, emphasizing values such as fairness, care, and collective impact.

Objectives

- Reposition forestry as a socially relevant and inclusive field (forest does not grow just by itself and there are important ecosystem services with economic, ecological and social functions).

Main activities

- Defining the target audience and setting clear communication objectives.
- Developing tailored messaging that connects forestry with values of care, sustainability, and social impact.
- Producing and sharing content across multiple platforms:
  - *Instagram (instant presence, ideally at least 2 times a week),*
  - *Youtube (ideally monthly),*
  - *University networks (several times per year).*
- Ensuring consistent brand identity and tone, reinforcing messages like:
  - "Forestry needs your voice—diverse perspectives grow stronger forests."
  - "See yourself in the forest: meet women shaping the future of forestry."
  - "Forestry is for everyone."

Target group

- High-school students (aged 17-18), primary school students (last two years of study, aged 15) and forestry schools students (high schools + universities).

Timing

- During the whole year, intesify when school fairs are taking place (October) and when open days are taking place (January, March).

Stakeholders involved

- High schools of forestry,
- Universities in forestry,
- Organizers of study fairs, open days etc.

Resources needed

- The campaign is primarily digital, allowing organizations to leverage existing staff and resources dedicated to social media and online communication. The budget is dependent on each organization.

Preferred engagement methods

- Videos.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* Solution is realistic with current resources, but only with some communication channels. Otherwise extra staff member would need to be hired.
- *Scalability:* It can be expanded to reach more girls and young women, when re-considering the relevant commucation channels.
- *Adaptability:* It can work in different forest or non-forest education contexts, but depends on the target group – the same aged do not need to want to be reached by the same channels.

Expected impact

- More informed future female students.
- Diversification of the forestry sector/Encourages more young women to enter and stay in forestry-related careers, helping to balance gender representation in a traditionally male-dominated field.
- Strengthened public perception of forestry
    - Reframes forestry as a modern, inclusive, and socially relevant profession—not just about trees, but about people, equity, and climate resilience.
    - Helps the public and policymakers see forestry as a career of the future, aligned with global goals like sustainability, gender equality, and community development.
- Empowerment and leadership development
    - Inspires young women to see themselves as leaders in environmental and natural resource sectors.
    - Builds a generation of professionals who are not only technically skilled but also socially aware and equity-driven.

CHANGING THE IMAGE AND PROMOTING FORESTRY AS A MODERN AND SOCIALLY BENEFICIAL PROFESSION

(Serbia)

Description

The solution aims to reshape public perception of forestry by promoting it as a modern, socially relevant, and inclusive profession. Through collaboration with secondary schools and targeted promotional activities, it raises awareness of forestry's role in sustainability and highlights career paths appealing to women, such as nature conservation, urban forestry, and climate-related work. Key components include establishing new educational branches, developing a university program focused on conservation, and creating a Center for the Promotion of Multiple-Use Forest Functions. The initiative also calls for stronger promotion of private sector opportunities to expand career prospects for girls and young women, addressing low visibility, limited awareness, and a lack of female role models in the sector.

Objectives

- Change the public image of the forestry sector.
- Highlight women working in the forestry sector.
- Promote activities and collaboration with secondary schools, including educating students about the importance of forestry and nature conservation.
- Promote employment opportunities in the private sector.

Main activities

- Development of a promotional strategy.
- Creation of advertising materials and content.
- Establishment of mentorship programs and promotion of women working in forestry (linking female students with women working in the sector, school visits, panel discussions and round tables with women in forestry).
- Presence at events, including participation in education and career fairs.
- Organisation of events, such as workshops for upper grade primary and secondary school students.
- Establishment of a Center for the promotion of multiple-use forest functions.

Target group

- Primary and secondary school students, as well as female forestry students;
- Parents, teachers, and counsellors who influence educational and career choices;
- Broader public to change stereotypes about the forestry sector.

Timing

- Throughout the year, with particularly intensified activities in the beginning of the school year, targeting final grades of primary and secondary schools (critical period for career choice).
- During participation in education fairs, when the target audience is most accessible.

Stakeholders involved

- Educational institutions (primary and secondary schools, Faculty of forestry),
- Directorate responsible for the fields of forest and forestry,
- Chamber of forest engineers,
- Public and private companies in the forestry and nature conservation sector,
- Media and marketing agencies,
- Women already working in the forestry sector (as role models and mentors).

Resources needed

- Human resources: campaign coordinators, designers, marketing experts, women working in the sector, forestry professionals, teachers from forestry secondary schools, , etc.
- Materials: printed promotional materials, promotional kits, video content and social media materials.
- Financial resources: funding for the promotional campaign and the establishment of a Center for the promotion of multiple-use forest functions

Preferred engagement methods

- Social media (e.g. short videos with success stories with visually appealing and modern content),
- Mentorship programs (direct contact with women in the sector who provide advice and support),
- Presentations at fairs (interactive exhibitions that showcase the forest sector as innovative, dynamic and socially beneficial).

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* The solution is feasible with inter-sectoral cooperation and budgetary support for promotion. It is necessary to use existing resources. Significant infrastructure costs are not required as most activities have a low budget (e.g. social media, workshops, promotional materials). However, better coordination within the sector and the involvement of experts in media, communication and branding is needed.
- *Scalability:* The solution has the potential for expanded implementation.

This model is easily scalable: campaigns can be expanded regionally and nationally, involving various secondary schools and local media.

Digital channels allow messages to be disseminated quickly and widely without major investment or logistical barriers. Educational organizations can become information and promotion centres, especially if educators are actively involved in implementing this solution.

- *Adaptability:* The solution is adaptable to other sectors and educational contexts. The promotion concept can also be applied to other sectors such as agriculture, mining, biology, the wood industry and others. In terms of educational levels, it is important to emphasise that the solution is suitable for pre-school, primary and secondary schools as well as at university level.

Expected impact

- First and foremost, this solution raises awareness of forestry as an attractive and socially valuable profession. Promotional campaigns combined with activities in schools bring young people closer to forestry as a sector relevant to current challenges such as climate change, bioeconomy, sustainable development and environmental and nature conservation. In this way, the sector becomes more attractive and competitive compared to other career options, so that even girls who had not previously considered forestry recognise it as a meaningful, creative and socially beneficial vocation.
- Promoting forestry in local communities, preschools, primary and secondary schools also changes the perceptions of parents, families and teachers who often influence girls' career choices. When the environment is supportive, it becomes easier for girls to pursue their interests, even in areas not traditionally chosen by women.
- By showcasing women already working in the sector, young girls are given role models and realise that forestry is not just "reserved" for men. This breaks down stereotypes and reinforces their sense of belonging and the opportunity to build their own careers in the sector.

4.2 Identification phase solutions

From: "That's cool, but I'm not sure I belong there."
To: "If she did it, maybe I can too."

After being inspired, girls need to relate personally to someone in the field. Identification builds self-belief and begins to reduce psychological distance between "them" (the professionals) and "me" (a schoolgirl). In the Identification phase, girls begin to compare themselves to the women they see and ask: *Could I really do that too?* This stage is about bridging the gap between admiration and belonging. Role models are most effective when they feel accessible—not distant icons, but relatable individuals with similar backgrounds, struggles, or dreams.

Key elements:

- Authentic peer connections and trust-building.
- Safe spaces to ask questions, voice concerns, or talk about doubts (e.g., fears of being the only girl, physical demands, family support).
- Concrete guidance on next steps—what to study, what training is needed, what it feels like to work in forestry.

Characteristics:

- Cognitive level: Relational understanding, self-comparison.
- Emotional tone: Recognition, connection, validation.
- Key message: *"There's a place for someone like me in forestry."*

Actionable solutions for creating personal connections, offering relatable role models, mentoring and peer engagement:

- Peer Learning (Austria)
- Meetings and workshops with role models and future colleagues (Croatia)
- Female Role Models for Job Promotion, Female Visibility and Valuing (Ukraine)
- Roots of Change: Forestry Role Model Network (Romania)
- Mentorship Programs (Ukraine)
- Communication training / Gender awareness courses (Bavaria/Germany)
- Inspiration from the Forest: Visibility and Mentorship for a New Generation (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

PEER LEARNING

(Austria)

Description

Girls exploring career or training options relate to peers already enrolled in forestry education programs. Following a peer-to-peer approach, female forestry students—seen as "experts in their own experience"—offer relatable support and guidance to primary and secondary school girls during their career orientation process. To ensure meaningful interaction, the mentoring students receive brief preparatory training, equipping them to share their insights effectively and confidently.

Objectives

- To support girls in their career choices through peers.

Main activities

- Workshops for forestry peers,
- Activities with primary and secondary schools.

Target group

- Female forestry pupils (15 and above),
- Female pupils of primary and secondary schools.

Timing

- Activities within the framework of standardized career guidance programs at secondary schools,
- Project weeks at primary and secondary schools,
- Integration into regular curriculum (biology, general knowledge, geography, etc.).

Stakeholders involved

- Principals and teachers of forestry and non-forestry schools,
- Possibly parents.

Resources needed

- Room, funds, time, media.

Preferred engagement methods

- Workshops with school in different areas and different age levels.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* Individual activities can certainly be implemented within the project framework or within the scope of school resources (open days, career guidance programs, etc.). Effectiveness can be increased by utilizing and integrating existing programs such as Girls' Day, career guidance fairs, etc.
  Furthermore, we believe that efficient implementation is only possible with the provision of appropriate additional resources (new projects, extended career guidance programs in schools, etc.).
- *Scalability:* With the provision of additional resources, nothing stands in the way of expanding the offer to all non-vocational school types.
- *Adaptability:* The content can be embedded in different school contexts but can also be accessed individually about career orientation.

Expected impact

- This early, authentic, and highly practical approach allows us to reach girls who have largely never been specifically addressed before. Peer support, role models, and a strong practical focus ensure low-threshold access. This allows us to build bridges, break down barriers, and arouse interest.

MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS WITH ROLE MODELS AND FUTURE COLLEAGUES

(Croatia)

Description

Young girls are often not aware of their options and do not have many ambitions about their future profession. By regularly organizing social gatherings and workshops with women from the sector who have gone through various levels of employment in the work environment, they would gain the self-confidence they need. They often enroll in forestry school because someone in their family is engaged in this profession, without knowing what actually awaits them. This way they would get a better picture, and perhaps become more ambitious.

This measure addresses the challenge of the absence of visible female role models in the sector, and with it the lack of interest in continuing education in that direction.

Objectives

- To connect forestry experts with high school girls, introduce them to role models so they can get an idea of the profession.
- Reduce gender stereotypes, increase self-confidence among young women.

Main activities

- Socializing with role models from practice, spending time in their work environment, as well as visiting them in schools.

Target group

- Girls from high schools, not necessarily from forestry schools.

Timing

- Throughout the year, depending on the availability of role models and students.

Stakeholders involved

- Forestry schools,
- Faculty of forestry and wood technology,
- Public forestry enterprises,
- Chamber of forestry and wood technology engineers,
- Ministries (responsible for the fields of education, forestry), …

Resources needed

- Staff: Program coordinator, local facilitators.
- Materials: Are not necessarily required.
- Locations: Schools, working environments, online platforms.
- Budget: Without special investments, schools, chambers and public companies could co-finance the program.

Preferred engagement methods

- The teachers and the principal are very interested in cooperating with institutions through which such gatherings could be organized.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* Success depends on the capacity and willingness of educational institutions, forestry agencies and local authorities to coordinate meetings with role models and invest in visibility campaigns. However, by starting with low-cost activities such as online meetings and volunteer initiatives, the model can be implemented within existing frameworks, especially if most institutions support it.
- *Scalability:* The solution is scalable for both the inclusion of girls and for broader applicability, indicating that participants believe in its potential to positively impact large numbers of young women across the country.
- *Adaptability:* The solution is easily adaptable to a range of educational settings. It is applicable not only to forestry-focused institutions, but to all young women still underrepresented or unaware of career paths in natural resource management.

Expected impact

- Participants can gain a clearer understanding of the different roles in forestry through conversation and direct interaction with female professionals in the sector, beyond the traditional image of a field-based profession. By introducing similar female role models, the solution aims to strengthen the confidence, motivation and sense of belonging of girls in a sector where they are still underrepresented. Over time, this can improve retention in forestry studies.

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FEMALE ROLE MODELS FOR JOB PROMOTION, FEMALE VISIBILITY AND VALUING

(Ukraine)

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Description

The solution aims to prepare and engage female role models to promote forestry as an attractive and inclusive career option. By sharing their experiences and demonstrating real forestry work, these role models inspire interest among schoolgirls and provide valuable guidance to female forestry students and emerging professionals. The initiative strengthens career orientation by offering relatable examples, insights into career paths, and opportunities for direct interaction and hands-on learning. At the same time, it supports the forestry sector by increasing the visibility of female professionals, promoting gender equality, and creating a more supportive environment for women entering or advancing in the field.

Objectives

- Demonstration of real examples of work,
- Career orientation and promotion.

Main activities

- Workshops,
- Trainings,
- Online meetings,
- Study visits.

Target group

- Professional level students,
- High school students.

Timing

- End of spring,
- Summer holidays.

Stakeholders involved

- Employers,
- Job seekers,
- Last year school students, making professional choice,
- Employment offices,
- Professional schools.

Resources needed

- Human resources: role models (staff members of the forest management companies, university teachers, administration staff), program coordinators, trainers (for role models, according to their needs).
- Build environment: rooms for meetings, prepared field locations.
- Educational resources: indicative meeting plans.
- Equipment: for demonstration of work of the role model to the audience.

Preferred engagement methods

- Online meetings,
- Face to face meetings,
- Visits to the place of work (field visits).

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility*: The solution is realistic only in case of support from the institutions (industry) and willingness of the role models itself.
- *Scalability*: The solution can be expanded by adding role models to the community.
- *Adaptability*: The solution can work in different contexts.

Expected impact

- Female role models can significantly increase confidence and quality of performance of female professionals, since it provides existing example, motivation and knowledge sharing which has practical effect.

ROOTS OF CHANGE: FORESTRY ROLE MODEL NETWORK

(Romania)

Description

The solution connects girls with inspiring female professionals in forestry to make women's presence in the sector more visible and relatable. Responding to students' desire for more real-life role models, the initiative brings young women working or studying in forestry into schools and faculties to share their personal career stories, challenges, and achievements. Through these direct encounters, girls can see what is possible, challenge stereotypes, and gain motivation to explore forestry as a career path.

Objectives

- Inspire and support young girls who have chosen to pursue a career in forestry by connecting them with relatable role models, fostering confidence, and helping them navigate challenges in the sector.

Main activities

- Develop and launch an online platform that connects high school and early university girls with female forestry professionals who serve as role models,
- Organize an annual 'Roots of Change Role Model Day' featuring panels, storytelling, and small group mentoring,
- Facilitate regular school outreach visits by women in forestry to share their journeys and offer guidance,
- Create a buddy program that pairs younger students with older forestry students or young professionals for ongoing informal support.

Target group

- Girls in secondary school who have shown interest in forestry, and young women in their early university years.

Timing

- Role model outreach: during academic year, especially before and during university admission seasons.

Stakeholders involved

- Forestry universities,
- Secondary schools,
- Female forestry professionals,
- Alumni networks,

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- NGOs focused on education and gender equality.

Resources needed

- Staff coordinator, travel stipends for role models, online platform hosting, event venue and logistics, communication and outreach materials.

Preferred engagement methods

- In-person storytelling, inspirational talks, small group mentoring, and ongoing informal peer support.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility*: The program is realistic with minimal investment, leveraging existing networks of women professionals and educational institutions. Volunteer mentors and alumni can be a key resource.
- *Scalability*: Easily replicable in other regions and scalable nationwide by collaborating with schools and forestry education programs
- *Adaptability*: The approach can be tailored to various cultural contexts and adapted for other STEM sectors or rural communities where forestry is relevant.

Expected impact

This role-model-driven solution is expected to:
- Strengthen the resolve and enthusiasm of girls who are considering or have chosen forestry,
- Make forestry careers feel more relatable and achievable by showcasing real-life success stories,
- Foster a supportive, inclusive environment that helps young women stay engaged in their chosen field.

Description

This solution focuses on supporting emerging female professionals as they begin their careers in the forestry sector. Currently, mentorship is neither required nor systematically offered, and no formal programs exist at the national or organizational level. However, interviews with women already working in forestry and discussions with students highlight the crucial role mentorship plays when starting a new position. It helps build confidence, eases the transition into the workplace, and strengthens motivation to remain in the sector. The proposed solution is the establishment of a structured Mentorship Program, ensuring that every newcomer is paired with a mentor for a minimum period. This guidance would offer a smoother, more motivating, and effective entry into the profession. The program responds to the needs of emerging professionals for respectful, supportive working conditions, on-the-job learning, and skill development. At the same time, it addresses the needs of the forestry sector to onboard motivated, well-prepared employees who quickly become effective and committed team members.

Objectives

- Support to career development,
- Stereotype changing,
- Improvement of professional skills.

Main activities

- Selection of participants,
- Matching pairs Mentor-Mentee,
- Kick-off meeting (introduction),
- Visits to the forest management enterprises,
- Educational activities,
- Desktop work and field work,
- Psychological support.

Target group

- High school students; professional students; young professionals,
- Master students – bachelor students,
- Alumni professionals – bachelor and master students.

Timing

- Fall, Spring.

Stakeholders involved

- Forest offices,
- Forest districts,
- Universities,
- Schools.

Resources needed

- Human resources: mentors from the industry or university (in case of Master students to Bachelor student's mentorship); selection committee.
- Build environment: rooms for meetings, prepared field locations.
- Educational resources: mentors' guide.
- Equipment: laptop, special equipment.

Preferred engagement methods

- Individual meetings,
- Group meetings face to face and online,
- Practical works.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility*: The solution is realistic only in case of support from the institutions (industry) and willingness of the role models itself.
- *Scalability*: The solution can work at various scale, e.g. the mentorship program can work at the level of forest district/institution; at the level of region or country.
- *Adaptability*: The solution can work in different contexts.

Expected impact

- Mentorship ensures smooth entering the forest sector, practical skills and knowledge gaining without stress and improvement of overall comfort, and thus image and attractiveness of the professional environment.

COMMUNICATION TRAINING / GENDER AWARENESS COURSES
(Bavaria/Germany)

Description

This solution introduces targeted training to improve communication skills, assertiveness, and gender awareness in the forestry sector. Offered as elective or mandatory university modules, workshops, or informal gatherings, it empowers women, fosters networking, and promotes inclusive work environments. Aimed at both women and men—especially during studies before internships—the program involves universities, training centres, forest companies, and equality experts. With modest resources, it is feasible and adaptable to different age groups and career stages. The expected impact includes stronger motivation, better conflict management, and increased awareness of gender issues across the sector.

Objectives

- In the form of elective courses or mandatory modules, lecture series, or workshops at the university for both genders, or as a regulars' table for women in forestry.

Main activities

- Creation of (elective) modules and lecture series by universities and educational institutions.

Target group

- Men and women in the forestry sector.

Timing

- During the studies, especially before internships or training.

Stakeholders involved

- Universities,
- Training centres and forest businesses/companies,
- Speakers,
- Equality officers,
- Coaches and experts.

Resources needed

- Rooms, staff (stakeholders), catering, funds, advertising, and newsletters.

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Preferred engagement methods

- Define guidelines and objectives and implement solutions.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* With the current resources, it is certainly feasible. However, implementation depends on the respective stakeholders, as problems could arise due to a lack of funds or coaches. With the support of the universities, the concept is certainly feasible.
- *Scalability:* Is conceivable, especially by adapting it to the respective age groups of girls and women, as well as boys and men, it has a very wide reach.
- *Adaptability:* Adaptations can be implemented through age group-specific topics. Also conceivable for occupational groups within the forestry sector.

Expected impact

- Strengthening one's own motivation and assertiveness, learning and networking through experience reports and improvement of conflict management.
- Raise awareness among male colleagues and highlight the importance and urgency of the topic.

INSPIRATION FROM THE FOREST: VISIBILITY AND MENTORSHIP FOR A NEW GENERATION

(Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Description

This measure proposes a combined approach that merges a targeted public narrative about forestry as a modern and inclusive profession with concrete mentorship mechanisms connecting women already working in the sector with young girls considering a career in forestry. The solution consists of two interlinked directions of action: (i) The first involves the design and implementation of a public campaign aimed at changing the perception of the forestry sector, particularly among high school and university girls. The campaign would utilize social media, local media outlets, school visits, and success stories of women in forestry, while also promoting green careers and the relevance of the profession in the context of climate change and environmental protection. (ii) The second direction focuses on establishing a structured mentorship network that links young girls with experienced female professionals from various forestry-related fields—including forest management, nature conservation, inspection services, GIS technologies, and the academic sector. Mentorship would involve both online and in-person interactions, career guidance, support in career decision-making, and participation in local and entity-level events.

Objectives

- Increase the visibility of forestry as a modern and inclusive career choice for girls,
- Connect girls with female forestry professionals through structured mentorship,
- Reduce gender stereotypes and boost awareness, motivation, and confidence among young women.

Main activities

- Public campaign featuring video stories of women in forestry,
- Development and piloting of a mentorship network,
- School-based workshops and events,
- Evaluation and scale-up planning.

Target group

- Girls (ages 16–24) from forestry secondary schools and university programs,
- Female professionals from the forestry sector serving as mentors.

Timing

- February–May: workshops and campaign preparation,

- June–August: public campaign and mentorship pilot,
- September–October: onboarding new participants and expanding the model.

Stakeholders involved

- Forestry schools and faculties,
- Public forestry enterprises and inspection services,
- Ministries (education, forestry),
- Women's organizations and NGOs,
- Media and communication professionals.

Resources needed

- Staff: Program coordinator, local facilitators, communications expert,
- Materials: Video content, educational kits, digital tools,
- Locations: Schools, community venues, online platforms,
- Budget: Approx. 30,000–40,000 EUR for pilot phase.

Preferred engagement methods

- Instagram, TikTok, YouTube short-form content; In-person school workshops and presentations; One-on-one and small group mentorship; Flexible online sessions.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility*: The idea is promising but may face resource and institutional challenges in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, it could be realistically piloted through low-cost activities like online mentorship and volunteer storytelling, especially with external support.
- *Scalability*: The solution is seen as broadly applicable. Its modular design allows for easy replication across regions through digital platforms, peer exchange, and partnerships.
- *Adaptability*: The combination of online and in-person formats makes it suitable for various educational contexts, including forestry, agriculture, and technical schools where girls are often underrepresented.

Expected impact

- Through storytelling campaigns and direct interaction with female professionals, this solution could help girls explore diverse forestry roles beyond traditional fieldwork. Targeted at students in late secondary and early university education, it boosts confidence, motivation, and a sense of belonging through mentorship and relatable role models. Over time, it can increase female participation in forestry studies and careers, contributing to more inclusive and gender-responsive forest governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

4.3 Participation phase solutions

From: "I think I could do this."
To: "I know I can. I've done it—and I want more."

This final phase moves from thought to action. This stage invites girls to actively experience the forestry world—to use their hands, their skills, and their curiosity. It is no longer about imagining, but trying, testing, and experiencing what a career in forestry feels like. Participation helps girls test their fit and interests in a supportive, low-pressure setting.

Girls gain concrete skills, develop confidence in their abilities, and experience the field as something real and attainable. The Participation phase is essential in transforming interest into intention, and intention into choice.

Key elements:

- Hands-on learning that's age-appropriate and diverse: from tree planting and drone flying to GIS mapping and forest art.
- Real-world environments, not just classroom theory.
- Engagement of all senses—seeing, touching, measuring, navigating.

Characteristics:

- Cognitive level: Experiential learning and self-efficacy.
- Emotional tone: Empowerment, excitement, readiness.
- Key message: *"I can do this—I've seen it, felt it, and now I want to pursue it."*

Actionable solutions for hands-on engagement, experiential learning, and active exploration of forestry careers:

- Forestry Walks (Austria)
- Escape Room (Slovenia)
- Girls in Forestry Discovery Days (Romania)
- Forestry Pop-Up Labs (Slovenia)
- Summer Forestry School with Practical Training (Czech Republic)
- New solutions through forest pedagogy and nature protection (Croatia)
- Internships and apprenticeships (Bavaria/Germany)
- Internship and Job Shadowing (Ukraine)

FORESTRY WALKS

(Austria)

Description

Forestry walks are excursions that offer girls a unique chance to experience the forestry profession first-hand through engaging, real-life activities in the forest. By stepping out of the classroom and into nature, participants can try out practical tasks, observe forestry work in action, and interact with professionals, especially women working in the field. Through guided forestry walks and hands-on exploration, the girls gain valuable insights into the diversity of roles in forestry, building awareness, confidence, and interest in a sector they may not have previously considered. This early exposure helps them better understand career options and supports more informed decision-making for their future.

Objectives

- To support girls in their career choices by giving them the possibility to gain own experience, try things out and get to know the actual professional field in real life.

Main activities

- Activities that enable pupils of primary and secondary schools to gain practical insights and experiences (for example, on a forest trail) and generate knowledge about forestry in an unconventional and innovative way.

Target group

- Female pupils of primary and secondary schools,
- Forestry stakeholder organisations.

Timing

- Activities within the framework of standardized career guidance programs at secondary schools,
- Project weeks at primary and secondary schools,
- Integration into regular curriculum (biology, general knowledge, geography, etc.).

Stakeholders involved

- Forestry organizations promoting their field of work Principals and teachers at non-forestry schools,
- Possibly parents.

Resources needed

- Forest and wood enterprises, catering, funds, time, media.

Preferred engagement methods

- Forestry Walks with school in different areas and different age levels.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* Individual activities can certainly be implemented within the project framework or within the scope of school resources (open days, career guidance programs, etc.). Effectiveness can be increased by utilizing and integrating existing programs such as Girls' Day, career guidance fairs, etc.
  Furthermore, we believe that efficient implementation is only possible with the provision of appropriate additional resources (new projects, extended career guidance programs in schools, etc.).
- *Scalability:* With the provision of additional resources, nothing stands in the way of expanding the offer to all non-vocational school types.
- *Adaptability:* The content can be embedded in different school contexts but can also be accessed individually regarding career orientation.

Expected impact

- This early, authentic, and highly practical approach allows us to reach girls who have largely never been specifically addressed before. Peer support, role models, and a strong practical focus ensure low-threshold access. This allows us to build bridges, break down barriers, and arouse interest.

ESCAPE ROOM/FOREST "YOU UNLOCK A PROFESSION; YOU DISCOVER A FOREST"

(Slovenia)

Description

It is a forestry-themed escape room that introduces girls and young people to the diversity of forestry careers through interactive, puzzle-based challenges. It explores real-life tasks like identifying animal tracks, connecting ecological concepts, and discovering roles such as forest rangers, researchers, and educators—highlighting the contribution of women in these fields. The experience also integrates topics like the bioeconomy and forest-wood value chain to reflect the full scope of modern forestry. Designed for schools, events, and outdoor settings, it offers a fun and engaging way to raise awareness and break down stereotypes.

Objectives

- Introduce girls and young people to the diversity of forestry-related professions.
- Break down gender stereotypes and showcase women in forestry roles.
- Raise awareness about the broader forestry sector, including the bioeconomy and forest-wood value chain.
- Provide a fun, hands-on learning experience that links forest knowledge with career exploration.

Main activities

- Design thematic challenges that reflect real forestry tasks,
- Create a physical or mobile escape room kit using natural and reusable materials,
- Include role cards and profiles of women in forestry professions,
- Pilot the escape room in classrooms, gyms, forests, or event spaces,
- Adapt for different formats: indoor, outdoor trail version, or mobile escape box.

Target group

- School pupils (ages 11 – 15),
- Girls in particular, but inclusive of all genders,
- Also useful for teachers, career counsellors, youth workers, and parents as a guidance tool.

Timing

- During school career weeks or science/technical days.
- As part of summer camps, nature days, or holiday workshops.
- At career fairs, open days, or environmental festivals.

- Flexible for use year-round, both indoors and outdoors.

Stakeholders involved

- Schools and teachers (particularly science, technical, and guidance staff).
- Forestry services, forest education centres, or national parks.
- Youth organisations, NGOs, or scout groups.
- Career guidance centres and employment services.
- Event organisers (e.g. local fairs, festivals).

Resources needed

- Staff: 1–2 facilitators per session (educator, forest expert, or youth worker).
- Materials: Puzzle kits, printed role cards, natural props (e.g. wood slices, leaves), lockable boxes, clues.
- Location: School classroom, gym, forest trail, library, or mobile booth.
- Development time: 3–4 weeks for concept design and pilot testing.

Preferred engagement methods

- Hands-on, playful learning through puzzles and team collaboration.
- Immersive storytelling and mystery-solving format.
- Role play and discovery of real-life tasks in forestry.
- Use of symbolic or natural materials for authenticity.
- Reflection time and optional take-home resources.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* The escape room uses low-cost materials and requires minimal training, making it easy to run within existing school activities by educators or forestry professionals, without complex infrastructure.
- *Scalability:* Its mobile format (e.g. escape box or suitcase) allows easy sharing across schools or regions. Once developed, it can be replicated at low cost and included in broader forestry education efforts.
- *Adaptability:* The concept works in indoor, outdoor, or public event settings and can be tailored to different age groups, themes, and local contexts, fitting both forest-specific and general education environments.

Expected impact

The solution aims to spark curiosity, boost confidence, and broaden career horizons for girls by presenting forestry as a modern, inclusive, and sustainable field. Through hands-on experiences and visible female role models, it challenges gender stereotypes and encourages more girls to pursue forestry careers, contributing to greater gender balance and innovation in the sector.

GIRLS IN FORESTRY' DISCOVERY DAYS

(Romania)

Description

Girls in Forestry Discovery Days are one-day immersive experiences organized by forestry faculties or forest districts to introduce rural high school girls (ages 15–18) to real forestry environments and professions. Held during the school year and aligned with career weeks, these events include hands-on activities like tree measurement, drone use, and wildlife monitoring, as well as shadowing female forestry professionals. The initiative responds to students' enthusiasm for experiencing the "real vibe" of forestry and aims to break gender stereotypes, inspire early interest, and increase girls' confidence and motivation to pursue forestry careers. It is feasible with existing resources, scalable across regions, and adaptable to various educational contexts.

Objectives

- One-day immersive experiences hosted by forestry colleges or forest districts to introduce girls to real forestry environments and operations.

Main activities

- Coordinate with forest districts to host girls for a day,
- Organize station-based demos (tree measurement, drones, wildlife cameras),
- Pair participants with female forestry staff for shadowing,
- Include orientation and debrief components.

Target group

- Rural high school girls, ages 15–18.

Timing

- School year, aligned with career weeks.

Stakeholders involved

- Education boards,
- Forestry faculty,
- Career advisors,
- District forestry units.

Resources needed

- Speakers, printed materials, transport, AV equipment.

Preferred engagement methods

- Interactive outdoor learning, female staff-led demos.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility*: Feasible using existing forest sites and staff.
- *Scalability*: Highly scalable across education regions.
- *Adaptability*: Can be adapted for various field contexts.

Expected impact

- Breaks down stereotypes and encourages early interest in forestry careers.
- Promotes confidence, awareness, and gender inclusion by offering girls a chance to visualize themselves in forestry roles.
- Contributes to a broader effort to increase female participation in forestry careers.

FORESTRY POP-UP LABS

(Slovenia)

Description

Forestry Pop-Up Labs are mobile, one-day learning installations that bring forestry career exploration directly into schools, town squares, and community events. Designed as flexible, interactive and inclusive career orientation tools, these Labs combine creative role-play, tactile learning, and storytelling formats to engage girls and young women with the forest sector—without relying on digital tools or traditional camp setups.

Objectives

- The solution aims to increase awareness and interest in forestry careers among girls and young women by providing inclusive, engaging, and accessible career orientation experiences. It seeks to challenge stereotypes, showcase diverse forestry roles, and connect youth with real-world forest challenges.

Main activities

- Develop a Pop-Up Lab kit with modular activity stations, materials, and a facilitator guide.
- Coordinate with schools and local events to host Labs.
- Set up hands-on stations (e.g. forest challenge cards, mini-construction tasks, biodiversity mapping).
- Invite young forestry professionals to join as guest mentors.
- Facilitate short role-play and team tasks tied to forestry professions.
- Wrap up with reflection cards or a mini forest-career quiz.

Target group

- Primary: Girls and young women aged 11–18,
- Secondary: Teachers, educators, school counsellors, and parents.

Timing

- Can be implemented during career orientation weeks, science days, open days, or community events. Ideal in the last year of primary school or first years of secondary school, but adaptable year-round.

Stakeholders involved

- Schools and career counsellors,
- Forestry services and forest enterprises,
- Youth organizations and local authorities,

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- Female forestry professionals and mentors,
- NGOs focused on gender equality or environmental education.

Resources needed

- Staff: 2–3 facilitators per event,
- Materials: Activity cards, props, basic forestry tools, display banners, transportable kits (~500–800 EUR per kit),
- Locations: School gym, community center, outdoor area, or classroom.

Preferred engagement methods

- Hands-on activities and tactile learning,
- Realistic, informal mentor interactions,
- Group work and storytelling,
- Problem-solving games rather than passive lectures or digital tools.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* The *Forestry Pop-Up Labs* are highly feasible with current resources, as they require minimal equipment, can be run by a small team, and use existing school or community spaces.
- *Scalability:* Their low-cost, modular format makes them scalable across regions and schools, especially when supported by forestry institutions or NGOs.
- *Adaptability:* The concept is also highly adaptable—it can be implemented in urban or rural settings, during school hours or public events, and tailored to different age groups or educational priorities, making it a versatile tool for inclusive forestry career orientation.

Expected impact

- The Forestry Pop-Up Labs are expected to increase awareness, confidence, and interest among girls and young women in pursuing forestry-related education and careers. By offering inclusive, hands-on experiences and exposure to diverse role models, the solution helps dismantle gender stereotypes, broadens perceptions of forestry beyond traditional roles, and empowers young participants to see themselves as capable contributors to the green transition and forest stewardship.

SUMMER FORESTRY SCHOOL WITH PRACTICAL TRAINING
(Czech Republic)

Description

The concept of summer schools is quite developed for university students. It is a short-term program dedicated to certain topic(s), usually taking place at university with participating students (international) and domestic and international lecturers. It combines different study methods (lectures, presentations, individual and group work etc.).

There are also so-called »BIP« programs, that could be understood as a variant of summer school. BIP can be more tightly oriented on one topic including gender and is targeted only to one small group of students. It is pretty intensive and can be better targeted to students' activities and exchange of information/knowledge. The program takes place in the campus and is meant up to 10 students from 2 or 3 schools (different countries) participate.

Usually the summer schools (or BIPs) are having majority of the time in the lecture rooms with some outside experience. Although it can be very much stimulating for individual or group work, it usually does not address the »practical« work in the field. That would be the added value of the proposed solution.

Objectives

- Empower young women through education on gender equality, leadership, and career development in a supportive and inclusive environment.
- Bridge the gap between education and the labour market by connecting students with companies that value diversity and inclusion.
- Foster long-term collaboration between academia, industry, and civil society to promote gender-sensitive practices and inspire systemic change.

Main activities

- Define the vision and objectives including involvement of companies in the form of practice,
- Develop a detailed program including its structure – division between theory and practice,
- Identify and approach partner companies including description of benefits for them (potential employees, visibility, PR, CSR impacts x how they will contribute – supervision, funding, materials),
- Secure funding and resources,
- Logistics and administration,
- Marketing and outreach,

- Execution and engagement,
- Follow-Up and impact assessment.

Target group

- Female students from 2nd years of bachelor studies and students of master engineering.

Timing

- During semester break ((June) July to September).

Stakeholders involved

- Faculty of Forestry and Wood Sciences – teachers responsible for practice, study department,
- Forestry companies.

Resources needed

- It always would need contact person at the faculty and contact person at each company. The budget can vary depending on the contribution of the students (»participation« fee, if any) and the sponsorship from the university and company, if any.

Preferred engagement methods

- Info mails and information shared on the faculty social media.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* Solution is realistic with current resources but only to limited number of participants.
- *Scalability:* It can be expanded to reach more girls and young women after evaluation of those who already participated and with sponsorship.
- *Adaptability:* It can very well in different forest or non-forest education contexts and is in line with the European strategies for youth inclusion.

Expected impact

- More confident and skilled women with clear vision of their future careers before they finish the studies. Later, storytelling and oral recommendation can lead to better integration into these activities for more girls in future.

NEW SOLUTIONS THROUGH FORESTRY PEDAGOGY AND NATURE PROTECTION

(Croatia)

Description

Forest pedagogy is a new alternative concept in Croatian forestry sector, which is only at the beginning of its development and introduction to people with it and its principles of upbringing and education, usually developed at local level, as local initiative. It offers children complete freedom in their research. It encourages independence, self-confidence, responsibility, solidarity, cooperation, creativity, innovation, activity, accountability, curiosity and similar qualities. It is certainly worth emphasizing the value that children receive in a forest kindergarten, which is care and ways of dealing with nature. Children improve their motor, emotional, cognitive and creative abilities in nature. By not making distinctions between children, girls would become more interested in the forestry sector, and this form of informal education could help engagement of women in sector.

Objectives

- Promote early and equal engagement of girls in forestry through inclusive, nature-based learning that builds curiosity, confidence, and connection to the forest environment.
- Foster key personal and social competences—such as responsibility, cooperation, and creativity—through experiential forest pedagogy that supports holistic child development.
- Strengthen motivation for forestry education by shifting the focus from extractive practices to nature protection and sustainability, aligning with values important to young learners.

Main activities

- Carefree, playful, creative learning through exploration, raising awareness of sustainable development and activities related to the protection of nature and the environment.

Target group

- Girls in forestry secondary schools, female forestry students (1st and 2nd year).

Timing

- The whole year.

Stakeholders involved

- Forestry schools,
- Faculty of forestry and wood technology,
- Public forestry enterprises,
- Chamber of forestry and wood technology,
- Engineers,
- Ministries (education, forestry), ...

Resources needed

- Staff: Program coordinator, local facilitators, educators,
- Materials: Promotional materials, brochures, social networks,
- Locations: Schools, working environments, online platforms,
- Budget: Without special investments, we believe that schools, chambers and public companies could co-finance the program.

Preferred engagement methods

- Organization of events in nature with an emphasis on forestry pedagogy, examples of good practice related to nature protection, sustainable development and conservation of existing resources.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* Students view the solution as realistic and workable within existing systems. Since practical training already exists in many forestry schools, it mainly requires better coordination and local partnerships, making it feasible with current resources.
- *Scalability:* The solution can be gradually expanded to more schools and communities, supported by forestry faculties, local authorities, and national education bodies.
- *Adaptability:* It fits various educational settings and can engage young women beyond forestry schools, especially those unfamiliar with natural resource career paths.

Expected impact

Forest pedagogy helps children develop independence, responsibility, and a deeper connection with nature through free play and exploration. In contrast to screen time, it offers hands-on experiences often restricted by overprotective attitudes—especially toward girls—which can reinforce gender inequality. By engaging in these activities, young women expand their sense of belonging in the sector. Women professionals have also shown strong interest in forest pedagogy, particularly in nature protection, viewing it as a meaningful way to contribute beyond routine tasks.

INTERNSHIPS AND APPRENTICESHIPS
(Bavaria/Germany)

Description

This solution focuses on expanding internship opportunities for girls and young women and integrating them as a permanent part of school and university curricula. By offering structured, hands-on experiences in forestry, it helps broaden career horizons for those who may not have otherwise considered the sector and reduces uncertainties about whether women belong in this traditionally male-dominated field. Internships guided by female role models and gender-sensitive mentors provide a supportive environment for exploration and learning.

Implemented during school hours and studies, the program involves collaboration between schools, universities, forestry companies, educators, and female foresters. With existing resources and motivated stakeholders, the approach is feasible and can be scaled across institutions. It is also adaptable to various forestry roles and settings. In the long term, the initiative is expected to raise awareness, build confidence, and increase the number of women entering and staying in the forestry sector.

Objectives

- Broadening horizons and removing uncertainties as to whether women belong in this area.

Main activities

- Offer more internships for pupils and students and implement them permanently in the curriculum.

Target group

- Young girls and women in school and universities.

Timing

- During school hours and studies.

Stakeholders involved

- Schools,
- Universities,
- Forestry companies and authorities,
- Female foresters,
- Forest educators.

Resources needed

- Female role models in the forestry sector,
- Informational materials about forestry careers,
- Trainers who are gender-sensitive

Preferred engagement methods

- Define guidelines and objectives and implement solutions.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* With the current resources, it is certainly feasible. However, implementation depends on the respective stakeholders, as problems could arise due to a lack of funds or space. However, the participants see fewer problems in this respect.
- *Scalability:* Scalability is possible. Every occupational group and the employees within it within the forestry sector are potentially able to take on a trainee. Difficulties could arise with apprentices, as they cost money compared to interns.
- *Adaptability:* Adjustments can be made by contributors.

Expected impact

- Raise awareness for the forestry sector and eliminate uncertainties in advance through a trusted person, a guide, and partnerships to thereby promote a higher percentage of women in the forestry sector.

INTERNSHIP AND JOB SHADOWING
(Ukraine)

Description

Internship and job shadowing programs are essential for bridging the gap between theoretical education and the practical skills required in the forestry sector. Both professionals and enterprises frequently highlight this disconnect, noting that graduates often lack hands-on experience with the tasks expected by employers. These programs provide an opportunity to close that gap by allowing students to gain real-world insight into different forestry roles, build practical competence, and make more informed career choices. For female forestry students in particular, access to practical experience is key to building confidence and securing their place in the professional landscape. While implementing internships and shadowing may require additional time and resources from employers, the long-term benefit lies in developing a pool of well-prepared, motivated professionals—potentially enriching teams with capable and committed new talent.

Objectives

- Learning practical side of the forest management companies' work.

Main activities

- Excursions to the forest management companies and other companies, where foresters work.
- Practical trainings:
    - Y1: Botany and Soils,
    - Y2: Dendrology and Geodetics,
    - Y3: Forest mensuration and forest cultures,
    - Y4: Forest production technologies,
    - MS: Technologies of forest production.

Target group

- Students of forestry studies,
- Employers.

Timing

- Late spring and summer,
- Winter holidays.

Stakeholders involved

- University,
- Employers.

Resources needed

- Human resources: Internship leader (staff members of the forest management companies), program coordinators (at national, regional or forest management unit level).
- Curricula of the internship.
- Build environment: Place for intern to work.
- Equipment: Laptop/tablet, special equipment for intern to work.

Preferred engagement methods

- Practical work at the enterprises.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility*: The solution can be implemented with existing resources in case of readiness of the industry.
- *Scalability*: The solution can work at different scales; however it will always consist of separate internship units, e.g. the internship program can work at the level of Forest District/institution; at the level of region or country.
- *Adaptability*: The solution can work in different contexts.

Expected impact

- Internship and Job Shadowing provides practical hands-on knowledge and skill building of the intern, which forms professionalism of female forestry practitioners.

4.4 Systemic enablers: Creating supportive conditions for gender-inclusive forestry

From: "We have a great idea."
To: "We have the systems to make it work—for everyone."

While hands-on activities engage girls directly, systemic enablers focus on the structures around them—in education, employment, and policy. These are the conditions that either support or limit the success of inclusive career orientation. Without modern curricula, flexible work models, and institutional backing, good ideas often remain isolated.

This category addresses the long-term foundations needed to make gender-inclusive forestry careers a reality. It includes educational reforms, stronger links between schools and the forestry sector, and workplace improvements that create real opportunities for women.

Key elements:

- Modernized, future-oriented forestry education,
- Stronger school–industry cooperation,
- Inclusive, flexible work environments,
- Supportive policies, regulations, and funding schemes.

Characteristics:

- Cognitive level: Structural innovation and institutional design.
- Emotional tone: Strategic, enabling, forward-looking.
- Key message: "Change becomes possible when systems evolve to support it."

Actionable solutions for creating supportive conditions for gender-inclusive forestry:

- Scholarship program for equal opportunities in forestry (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- Grants and Scholarships for forestry girls (Ukraine)
- Modernization of education and improvement of cooperation with the industry (Serbia)
- Smart Education for Smart Forest Management (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- Regulatory, institutional and financial mechanisms for a more attractive career in forestry (Serbia)
- Improvement of work models (Bavaria/Germany)

Systemic enablers ensure that inspiration, identification, and participation don't happen in isolation—but are supported by a structure that allows them to grow and thrive.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN FORESTRY

(Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Description

The proposed solution introduces a targeted scholarship and financial support program aimed at making forestry education more accessible to girls and young women, particularly those from rural, economically disadvantaged, or underrepresented communities.

Objectives

- Reduce financial barriers for girls and young women who wish to pursue forestry education.
- Increase enrolment and retention of girls in the forestry sector.
- Provide access to additional support: practice-based learning, mentorship, educational camps.

Main activities

- Public launch and promotion of the scholarship call (in schools and online),
- Application via a simple form,
- Candidate evaluation based on clear criteria (motivation, financial need, academic performance),
- Awarding 20 scholarships of e.g. 500 EUR each (disbursed in two instalments),
- Involving scholarship recipients in a mentorship program and promotional activities (e.g., school visits, summer school).

Target group

- Girls in forestry secondary schools intending to enrol in university,
- Female forestry students (1st and 2nd year),
- Special focus on girls from rural, underdeveloped, and underrepresented areas.

Timing

- March–April: call promotion and application period,
- May: selection and award of scholarships.

Stakeholders involved

- Forestry secondary schools and faculties,
- Forestry companies and nurseries (as mentors and field partners),
- Ministries of education and forestry,

- Donors (international organizations, private sector),
- NGOs working in education and gender equality.

Resources needed

- Personnel: Selection committee, mentors, scholarship coordinator,
- Materials: Promotional kits, application forms, certificates,
- Budget*:*
  - 20 scholarships x 500 EUR = 10,000 EUR,
  - Administration, coordination, visibility: 1,500 EUR,
  - Total estimated pilot program budget: approx. 11,500 EUR.

Preferred engagement methods

- Transparent, school-supported application process,
- Link between scholarships and mentoring/practical activities,
- Involvement of recipients in promoting the program to younger girls,
- Use of social media and school networks for promotion.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* The scholarship program is highly feasible, especially as a pilot, requiring modest funding and using existing school networks for implementation. Coordination by local education authorities or NGOs, along with support from forestry enterprises and faculties, can keep additional costs low.

- *Scalability:* The program can easily expand to more regions and recipients. Its modular design allows different partners to support specific components, making it well-suited for broader rollout.

- *Adaptability:* Though focused on forestry, the model can be applied to other fields like agriculture or environmental sciences. Its core elements—financial support, mentorship, and visibility—are relevant wherever young women face barriers to professional development.

Expected impact

- The scholarship program enables girls attending forestry secondary schools or studying forestry at university level to cover specific costs that often prevent them from continuing their education—such as transportation to field training, purchasing technical literature, fieldwork equipment, or participating in additional educational activities. This ensures equal access to education for girls from remote or economically disadvantaged areas, where such support is not available through existing scholarship systems.

GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS FOR FORESTRY GIRLS

(Ukraine)

Description

The solutions are about establishing a specific program in Ukraine, to support girls and young women studying forestry in their studies (scholarship) and/or research (grants). This would motivate girls and young women to improve their educational results as well as would recognize their educational/research excellence. Besides, the Grant part of the program would assist in practical-oriented research questions, which would make additional value to the industry as well would increase competitiveness of female professionals at the market.

The solution addresses need in achievement recognition; support to female students and emerging professionals in building their knowledge and competitiveness; motivation to work in the forest sector.

Objectives

- Career development support,
- Gender equity and equality,
- Gaining practical experience,
- Innovations and research development,
- Partnership in the sector.

Main activities

- Educational camps (participation grants),
- Scholarships for students,
- Motivation meetings (NGOs, women, alumni).

Target group

- Last year high school students,
- Professional school and university students,
- Young professionals.

Timing

- Summer, fall.

Stakeholders involved

- Universities,
- Female students and professionals,
- Forest industry,

- State agencies,
- Research institutions.

Resources needed

- Human resources: program coordinators, selection committee, supervisors for scholars/grantees,
- Monitoring of the effectiveness,
- Financial: grants and scholarships.

Preferred engagement methods

- Competition; online application forms; webinars.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility*: The solution depends on financial resources, however with the existing programs, refocused or expanded to female forestry students it is realistic.
- *Scalability*: Normal scalability depends on existing resources and needs.
- *Adaptability*: The solution can work in different contexts.

Expected impact

- Grants and Scholarship provide opportunity for research development as well as professional development of the best female students.

MODERNIZATION OF EDUCATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF COOPERATION WITH THE INDUSTRY

(Serbia)

Description

The proposed solution aims to modernize forestry education and strengthen ties between academia and industry to make the sector more attractive to girls and young women. It includes updating study programs with skills like GIS, programming, and forestry pedagogy, while also introducing extracurricular activities and closer collaboration with public enterprises. The initiative promotes early career orientation, practical training through internships, and lifelong learning opportunities for professionals, especially women. By addressing outdated curricula and limited hands-on experience, the solution enhances both educational quality and female participation in forestry.

Objectives

- Modernize study programs through innovative approaches (GIS, programming, project management in forestry, etc.), provide extracurricular activities, and enhance cooperation with public enterprises in the forestry sector.
- Organize internships for students in public enterprises where future forestry engineers may find employment.
- Provide additional education for employees in public enterprises or financial support for those wishing to further develop their expertise.

Main activities

- Conduct a survey of public attitudes (targeting current and potential future students, and representatives of the forestry industry) regarding existing study programs and the need for their improvement,
- Prepare new syllabi for courses, incorporating modern methods and techniques,
- Provide up-to-date software, teaching materials, instruments, and equipment,
- Enable additional education for engineers from various fields within the forestry sector.

Target group

- Female students at the faculty of forestry (all years of study),
- Employees of public enterprises.

Timing

- Throughout the entire academic year, with additional focus on organizing internships during the summer months.

- For employees - on a permanent basis through professional development programs and postgraduate studies.

Stakeholders involved

- Faculty of forestry,
- Public enterprises for forest management and, managing national parks,
- Companies within the forestry sector,
- The chamber of forestry engineers,
- The private sector, and non-governmental organizations.

Resources needed

- Financial resources for modern teaching tools, innovative instruments, and up-to-date software; for practical activities with students; and for additional training of employees in public enterprises,
- Human resources (staff at the faculty of forestry, in public enterprises within the forestry sector and the chamber of forestry engineers).

Preferred engagement methods

- Field activities and practical work: Involvement in concrete projects and fieldwork,
- Guest lectures and workshops: Visits of industry professionals.
- Mentorship and cooperation with the chamber of forestry engineers,
- Combination of theory and practice: practical lessons within the curriculum.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* The solution is feasible, if forestry sector enterprises, secondary schools and faculties educating future forestry engineers, as well as the chamber of forestry engineers, are actively engaged.
- *Scalability:* The solution has the potential for expanded implementation and can include a larger number of girls and young women.
- *Adaptability:* The solution can extend beyond undergraduate programs to modernize master's and doctoral studies and be applied across various forestry-related organizations, including national parks and private sector companies.

Expected impact

- This solution could attract more girls to forestry by offering modernized study programs and increased opportunities for practical learning through internships. By better integrating education with real-world experience, it supports young women at the start of their careers and strengthens the overall relevance of forestry education.

SMART EDUCATION FOR SMART FOREST MANAGEMENT

(Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Description

This solution aims to improve the implementation of existing forestry education by enhancing practical training and enriching curriculum content with applied topics. Instead of curriculum reform, the focus is on strengthening existing elements through better collaboration with forestry sector actors, more consistent field experiences, and added content like digital tools, climate adaptation, and gender inclusion. The goal is to ensure education meaningfully prepares students—especially girls—for real careers in forestry.

Objectives

- Increase the practical application of forestry education through real-world collaboration with forestry institutions.
- Provide students with direct exposure to the sector.
- Motivate more girls to pursue forestry-related studies and feel a sense of belonging in the profession.

Main activities

- Organizing frequently visits to forestry companies and nurseries,
- Launching "practice days" with mentoring by technicians and female students,
- Guest lectures by professionals and faculty,
- Motivational workshops for primary school students,
- Use of practice logbooks and simple mobile tools to track learning.

Target group

- Students from secondary forestry schools (especially final year),
- 9th grade primary school students,
- University students in forestry (acting as mentors and peer connectors).

Timing

- February–May: focus on final-year secondary students and their career decisions,
- May–June: activities with 9th graders,
- September–October: onboarding new students, strengthening model sustainability.

Stakeholders involved

- Secondary and primary schools,
- Forestry faculties,

- Forestry enterprises, nurseries, inspection bodies,
- School directors, principals and teachers,
- Ministries of education and forestry,
- Local communities and NGOs.

Resources needed

- People: Teachers, forestry professionals, student mentors,
- Materials: Transportation, basic safety equipment, handouts, practice logbooks,
- Locations: Schools, field sites, community centres,
- Funding estimate for 6-month pilot (1 region): Transportation and logistics: €3,500; facilitation and coordination (part-time): €2,500; materials (print, kits, safety vests, logbooks): €1,500; guest speakers' honoraria and student stipends: €2,000; communication, outreach, and reporting: €1,500; total estimated cost: €11,000–12,000.

Preferred engagement methods

- Hands-on field experiences, observation and participation,
- Small thematic workshops and personal stories from professionals,
- Visits from university students and professors,
- Use of simple apps or logbooks to reflect on learning and involvement.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* The solution is realistic and achievable within current institutional frameworks, requiring only better coordination, local partnerships, and modest logistical support. It is especially feasible as a pilot with existing resources.
- *Scalability:* With strong potential for gradual expansion, the model can be scaled through underused mechanisms like mentorship and practice days, supported by local and national stakeholders.
- *Adaptability:* Applicable in both forestry and related fields, the model suits diverse settings—urban, rural, or remote—thanks to its flexible use of mentorship, storytelling, and digital tools.

Expected impact

- This solution has the potential to significantly improve the position of girls and young women in the forestry sector by introducing concrete changes in how education and career orientation are approached. It enables earlier and more meaningful exposure to real working environments, helping them make informed and confident decisions about pursuing further education & careers in forestry. Practical activities, and direct engagement with female professionals in the field contribute to breaking down the stereotype that forestry is a "male-only" profession.

REGULATORY, INSTITUTIONAL, AND FINANCIAL MECHANISMS FOR A MORE ATTRACTIVE CAREER IN FORESTRY

(Serbia)

Description

The proposed solution calls for strategic, systemic measures to make forestry more attractive and accessible to girls and young women. Central to this is developing a Forestry Development Strategy that highlights the sector's role in sustainability and creates new career opportunities for women. It emphasizes legal reforms to ensure gender equality in hiring and promote fair inclusion across the sector. To address structural barriers such as underrepresentation and limited financial access, the solution also proposes scholarships and subsidies for young women and female entrepreneurs, supporting their entry into education, employment, and business in forestry.

Objectives

- Develop and implement a Forestry Development Strategy that emphasises the importance of the sector and the many opportunities for growth.
- Provide scholarships to encourage training and retention in local communities.
- Support women's entrepreneurship in forestry through subsidies (e.g. in nursery production, activities related to non-wood forest products such as collection, processing, marketing and branding).

Main activities

- Development and implementation of the Forestry Development Strategy,
- Scholarships to promote education and retention in local communities,
- Introduction of a subsidy programme for women's entrepreneurship in the forestry sector.

Target group

- Female students in primary and secondary schools who are considering forestry as a career choice,
- Female forestry university students,
- Young women forestry graduates, as potential entrepreneurs interested in starting their own businesses within the forestry sector.

Timing

The solution is designed for the medium to long term, but it is important to emphasise that implementation will take place in phases:

- Development and initial implementation of the strategy: 3 to 5 years; the strategy is designed for a period of 10 years,
- Scholarships: up to 1 year to start implementation, with promotion and information of scholarship opportunities to female students starting at the beginning of the school year and targeting the last grades of primary and secondary schools,
- Subsidies for entrepreneurship: up to 1 year for the start of implementation, followed by ongoing, permanent support.

Stakeholders involved

- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management – Forest Directorate: Lead institution responsible for developing the Strategy,
- Schools and Faculty of Forestry: Identification of scholarship candidates and promotion of the sector,
- Local self-governments: Identification of local needs and financial support,
- Employment and development agencies: Support in financing and mentoring female entrepreneurs,
- NGOs: Informing target groups.

Resources needed

- Human resources: Forest directorate staff, career counsellors, local government staff who provide administrative support in processing grant and subsidy applications,
- Materials: Promotional materials, digital platforms for scholarship information and the submission of applications,
- Financial resources: Funds for strategy development, scholarships and grants for entrepreneurship.

Preferred engagement methods

- Measures that provide concrete and direct assistance, such as scholarships tied to staying and working in local communities, and grants for launching women-led businesses.
- Initiatives should be transparent, easily accessible and practical to implement on the ground — not just declaratory.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* The solution is partially feasible, as it depends on political support and requires financial resources. There are competent forestry institutions and organisations that have the capacity to initiate and develop the strategy. However, the allocation of scholarships and subsidies requires additional budgetary resources or partnerships with international donors and local governments, which

in turn requires political will and the prioritisation of the forestry sector over other areas.

- *Scalability:* The solution has the potential for expanded implementation. As an umbrella sectoral document, the strategy defines a framework for nationwide application and is not limited to the local government level. The scholarship models can be scaled up to district or provincial level depending on the number of applicants and available resources. Support for women's entrepreneurship is flexible and can be adapted to the budgetary capacities of local self-governments.
- *Adaptability:* The solution is adaptable to other sectors and educational contexts. The scholarship models can easily be tailored to sectors such as agriculture, nature conservation, landscape architecture and others. Supporting women's entrepreneurship through small grants and mentors is applicable in different sectors facing similar challenges (e.g. souvenir production, homemade products such as juices, jams, etc.).

Expected impact

- This is not an immediate solution but rather lays the foundation for systemic and long-term change in the sector. The adoption of a modern strategic document and action plans to implement it will not only benefit today's female students, but also future generations.
- Scholarships can help make it easier for girls to enrol in and graduate from forestry schools and faculties. This is especially important for girls from smaller communities who want to stay in their hometowns and for whom financial support can be crucial. This measure, together with subsidies that support women's entrepreneurship, can be very important for local development and rural revitalisation, as young women can make a significant contribution to economic activities.
- Subsidies for self-employment, i.e. support for women's entrepreneurship, contribute to economic empowerment. The subsidies enable women to start their own businesses, e.g. in tree nursery production, processing of medicinal herbs, mushrooms and other non-wood forest products. This provides them with a direct source of income, greater financial independence and reduces their dependence on employment in public enterprises. Examples of successful women entrepreneurs help to promote the presence of women in forestry and thus change the public perception of the profession.

IMPROVEMENT OF WORK MODELS

(Bavaria/Germany)

Description

Appointment as a forestry instructor also for people working in part -time positions, hence also potentially opening these positions for more women. Now only full time employees can become forestry instructors in Bavaria. Job shares of more than 50% that are typical for foresters in Bavaria are not feasible for every family. Therefore, employers should create better part-time working models and childcare should be guaranteed.

Objectives

- Greater security, even in the event of potential part-time work or parental leave later.
- Improved work-life balance.
- Increased attractiveness and flexibility of training paths.

Main activities

- Job exchange platform for job swaps,
- Calculate hunting hours as part of working time and not as free time,
- Actively promote and enable part-time work,
- Make working models more flexible.

Target group

- Men and women in the forestry sector.

Timing

- Throughout and in all areas, i.e. offering flexible working models during training and studies, but also in the world of work.

Stakeholders involved

- Universities,
- Training centres,
- Forest businesses/companies,
- Forest administration and state forest companies.

Resources needed

- More information and support.

Preferred engagement methods

- Four-day week, inspiration from other professional fields in terms of working models.

Feasibility, scalability, and adaptability

- *Feasibility:* With the current resources, it is certainly feasible. However, implementation depends on employers. As part-time models already exist but are often prevented or made difficult to implement by company managers, the potential is already there, but it can be expanded and improved. However, a portal would first have to be created for the job exchange. However, the resources for this are provided by the Internet.
- *Scalability:* Expandability is possible by setting up websites and through the involvement of all stakeholders.
- *Adaptability:* Adjustments can be made by contributors.

Expected impact

- Greater security, even in the event of potential part-time work or parental leave later, improved work-life balance and increased attractiveness and flexibility of training paths. In addition, more motivation and increased performance at work.

5 Connecting career exploration with confidence and resilience

The actionable solutions presented in this toolkit—structured around the three stages of Inspiration, Identification, and Participation—are designed not only to expand girls' awareness of forestry careers, but also to lay the groundwork for developing the confidence and resilience needed to pursue and thrive in these careers, particularly in male-dominated environments.

Forestry continues to be widely perceived as physically demanding and traditionally male. Girls and young women entering this field often encounter both visible and invisible barriers—including a lack of female role models, gendered expectations, and doubts about whether they belong or can succeed. These barriers can contribute to lower participation, reduced ambition, and even dropout at various stages of education or early career.

Confidence and resilience are two critical, learnable capacities that can counteract these effects. Confidence enables girls to envision themselves in forestry roles, speak up, and take initiative, while resilience allows them to navigate setbacks, overcome bias, and remain engaged in the face of challenge or uncertainty.

The three-stage model adopted in this toolkit offers a holistic, developmentally grounded way to embed these psychological strengths into the career orientation process:

- In the Inspiration stage, girls are exposed to diverse and visible role models, helping to break stereotypes and make the forestry sector more approachable. These first encounters help spark curiosity and widen the scope of what girls imagine as possible.

- In the Identification stage, personal connection is established through peer mentoring, relatable stories, and supportive role models, which foster a sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation or "being the only one."

- In the Participation stage, hands-on experiences such as field visits, interactive workshops, and real-world tasks build not only technical familiarity, but also self-efficacy—the belief that "I can do this."

By following this model, career orientation becomes more than an informative process—it becomes a transformative experience, helping girls recognize their strengths, develop leadership skills, and build the inner resources to succeed in forestry and beyond.

While this framework is applicable across countries, it is essential to acknowledge that contexts vary across the Danube Region. Differences in education systems, cultural norms, policy support, and the visibility of women in forestry mean that adaptation to national and local realities is key. The toolkit therefore offers flexible, co-designed

solutions that partners can tailor to their own needs while working toward a shared goal: a forestry sector where girls and young women feel confident, capable, and welcome.

5.1 Why confidence and resilience matter

Forestry is still widely perceived as a physically demanding and male-dominated field.[1][2][3] Girls and young women entering this sector often find themselves facing not only a lack of representation but also internal and external doubts about their abilities and legitimacy.[4][5] Confidence and resilience are two crucial skills for overcoming these barriers—not only to navigate and grow within the sector, but to lead, innovate, and inspire transformation.

This chapter provides a roadmap for supporting girls and young women through the development of confidence and resilience, from early career orientation to workplace integration and leadership.

5.2 Understanding the landscape: Challenges for women in forestry

Structural and cultural barriers

In many forestry institutions, the absence of visible female leaders, educators, or field professionals creates a gap in aspiration and mentorship. Young women entering forestry often do so without seeing examples of success that reflect their gender identity, which can hinder their belief in what's possible.

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[1] Johansson, M., and Ringblom, L. (2017) The Business Case of Gender Equality in Swedish Forestry and Mining - Restricting or Enabling Organizational Change. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 24: 628–642. doi: 10.1111/gwao.12187.

[2] Hanne K. Sjølie, Deniz Akin, and Tonje Lauritzen. 2024. Gender differences in job experiences and satisfaction in the forest sector. *Canadian Journal of Forest Research*. **54**(2): 224-237. https://doi.org/10.1139/cjfr-2023-0036.

[3] FAO - https://www.fao.org/sustainable-forest-management/toolbox/modules/gender-in-forestry/tools/en/?type=111

[4] Report „Collected needs of women and wider gender perspecives in forestry". Project deliverable D.T1.1.2, DTP3-500-1.2 Fem4Forest (https://dtp.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_output/0001/50/39d51c91a08255c9e4960e588f7e238b6349d8ca.pdf

[5] Facts and Figures regarding women in forestry in Danube region: https://dtp.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_output/0001/49/df4d1ca4ff70a0531527b68b9e9ae78c15617c01.pdf

Traditional gender stereotypes continue to influence perceptions of who is 'fit' for forestry—an industry often associated with physical labour, toughness, and leadership styles considered 'masculine.' This affects recruitment, retention, and advancement of women.

Implicit biases—such as assuming women are less capable in the field, less committed, or better suited for support roles—can subtly undermine confidence and inclusion. Even institutional language, visual materials, or the lack of gender-diverse examples can signal who belongs and who doesn't.

Psychosocial impact

The effects of being 'the only one' or one of a few in male-dominated environments often lead to feelings of isolation. Many women report experiences of 'imposter syndrome'— the persistent doubt that they don't truly belong or are not competent enough, despite evidence of success.

In educational settings, this may manifest in lower engagement in practical or leadership tasks, as girls hesitate to stand out or risk judgment. Additionally, the pressure to constantly prove themselves—especially in physically or technically demanding tasks— can be mentally and emotionally exhausting.

5.3   Building confidence: Strategies and activities

Early exposure and role models

To build ambition early, it's vital to provide girls with access to relatable role models and real-world exposure. Organizing Forestry career days that include women scientists, district foresters, nature conservation officers, educators, or policymakers can spark interest and challenge internalized stereotypes.

A video library of interviews with diverse women, describing their responsibilities in forestry/daily work etc., can serve as an accessible resource for schools. Including these stories in classroom materials, guidance sessions, and online platforms helps normalize women's presence and success in the sector.

Strength-based orientation

Instead of focusing solely on what student's lack, strength-based orientation emphasizes what they already bring. Tools like Talent check allow students to explore their interests and strengths in relation to career paths.

Activities like mapping their abilities to specific forestry roles, and participating in realistic simulations, help reinforce confidence and connect their personal qualities to meaningful contributions in the field.

Encouragement through participation

Confidence grows through action. Creating structured opportunities for girls to lead projects, contribute to decision-making, and speak in public increases their sense of agency.

Workshops on communication, leadership, or science storytelling provide practical skills while reinforcing the message that their voices and contributions are valuable.

Creating safe and supportive spaces

Psychological safety is essential for growth. Peer groups, clubs, or informal mentoring sessions can give girls a supportive environment to ask questions, express uncertainty, and celebrate success.

Educators and male allies should be trained in gender-sensitive facilitation, actively ensuring inclusive group dynamics and counteracting bias or exclusion.

5.4   Fostering resilience: Tools and frameworks

Normalizing setbacks

Resilience isn't about avoiding failure—it's about how one responds. Sharing real stories of setbacks, rejections, or mistakes from successful women helps demystify the idea of 'perfection.'

Teaching participants how to reframe negative feedback, distinguish between criticism and personal worth, and view challenges as growth opportunities is central to building long-term resilience.

Mindfulness and self-regulation

Simple mindfulness techniques, such as breathing exercises or guided reflection, can support emotional regulation and mental clarity. These tools are especially effective in high-stress situations like fieldwork or assessments.

Using natural settings for grounding exercises (e.g., mindful walks in forests) reinforces both a sense of connection to the environment and personal calm.

Assertive communication training

Many girls are socialized to avoid conflict or minimize their opinions. Assertiveness training helps participants communicate boundaries, express disagreement respectfully, and advocate for themselves.

Using role-play and real-world scenarios from forestry settings helps build fluency and confidence in speaking up—whether during teamwork, meetings, or feedback sessions.

Peer support and mentorship

Mentorship is one of the most effective resilience-building tools. Pairing students with experienced women in forestry provides perspective, encouragement, and real-world advice.

Creating community through peer support groups or regular 'resilience circles' encourages mutual learning, accountability, and emotional solidarity.

5.5   Institutional and community-level support

Gender-sensitive career guidance

Career counsellors play a critical role in influencing educational and occupational choices. They should be equipped with tools to address gender-specific concerns, challenge stereotypes, and guide students toward a wide range of options—including forestry.

Student evaluations and feedback tools should include questions about confidence, inclusion, and perceptions of gender bias to identify areas for support.

Forestry institutions as change agents

Forestry education and workspaces must actively foster inclusivity. Gender audits and dedicated focal points can assess progress and champion equity initiatives.

Institutions should revise job postings, marketing materials, and internal policies to reflect diverse language and practices, and implement measures such as anti-harassment protocols, flexible schedules, and equitable promotion structures.

Campaigns and visibility

Storytelling can change perceptions. Awareness campaigns that highlight real women working in forestry—as researchers, technicians, managers, or advocates—can inspire future generations and normalize their presence.

Collaborations with influencers, local media, or student ambassadors can help spread positive messages and foster inclusive culture across educational and professional settings.

6   Conclusion

The *Fem2forests Toolkit* brings together the voices, ideas, and experiences of girls, educators, and forestry professionals from across the Danube Region to address a shared challenge: how to make the forestry sector more accessible, inclusive, and inspiring for girls and young women. The toolkit provides a flexible and adaptable framework for designing career orientation activities that not only inform but empower.

The solutions presented here are the result of collaborative, participatory processes within each partner country. While they are not yet widely implemented or evaluated, they represent a forward-looking vision: one where forestry is seen not as a male-dominated field, but as a space of opportunity, innovation, and relevance for all. By integrating confidence-building, real-world experience, and the visibility of female role models, these approaches aim to remove invisible barriers and support the development of agency, aspiration, and belonging among young women.

Crucially, this toolkit acknowledges that contexts vary across the region. Education systems, societal expectations, and access to role models differ between countries. That is why the toolkit does not offer one-size-fits-all solutions, but rather modular ideas that can be tailored and tested through local pilots, partnerships, and community engagement.

Moving forward, it will be essential to monitor, refine, and share the outcomes of these efforts—not only to increase the presence of women in forestry, but to ensure they are welcomed, supported, and valued once they enter. True inclusion is not a result of passive progress but of intentional, sustained effort—from schools to employers, from youth programs to national strategies.

By investing in gender-sensitive career orientation today, we are planting the seeds for a more resilient, diverse, and sustainable forestry sector tomorrow.

7   References

Johansson, M., and Ringblom, L. (2017) The Business Case of Gender Equality in Swedish Forestry and Mining - Restricting or Enabling Organizational Change. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 24: 628–642. doi: 10.1111/gwao.12187.

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8   Annexes

Annex 1: Template for reporting round table outcomes

Round table title:	
Date:	
Location:	*(venue/online platform)*
Facilitator(s):	
Target group:	
Number of participants:	

1. Introduction   *Provide brief purpose, agenda and creative process of the round table, as well as the relevance of the participants.*
2. Key findings
A. Participants background   *Summarize target groups' perception of forestry and/or reasons that influenced decision for career in forestry.*
B. Challenges & opportunities   *List key challenges and untapped opportunities that could make forestry more appealing, including the emerging trends.*
C. Ideas & solutions   *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 and feasible.*
D. Suggestions & recommendations   *Summarize suggestions for educators, industry and policy makers to attract more young women into forest(ry) sector.*
3. Conclusion   *Recap the key points discussed in the round table, emphasizing main findings and recommendations.*
Annexes   *List and attach attendance list, photos, posters, drawings and maps created during the round table.*

Annex 2: Template for reporting on workshop results

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

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1. Introduction
Provide brief agenda and the creative process of the workshop, as well as the context of the target group.

2. Key findings

A. Participants background
Summarize target groups' perception of forestry and/or reasons that influenced decision for career in forestry.

B. Barriers & challenges
Summarize the barriers and challenges identified by the target group that are preventing girls and young women from pursuing careers in forestry.

C. Ideas & solutions
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.

D. Role of education
Summarize suggestions for enhancing forestry education to attract more young women.

3. Conclusion
Recap the key points discussed in the workshop, emphasizing main findings and recommendations.

Annexes
List and attach attendance list, photos, posters, drawings and maps created during the workshop.