

# Innovative pathways for efficient involvement of girls and young women in the forestry sector

## D.1.1.1 Joint Report: *Barriers and needs for inclusion of girls and young women*

### Key country findings: **SERBIA**

#### OBJECTIVE

Joint report identifies the barriers and needs for increased inclusion of girls and young women in the forestry sector. Using inputs from questionnaires and round tables, report presents targeted activities and solutions for increasing involvement of girls and young women in the countries of the Danube Region.

#### METHODOLOGY

**Questionnaires:** Insights were collected through a series of questionnaires administered to female students in both forestry and other disciplines. This process aimed to capture their experiences, motivations, and needs regarding careers in forestry. A total of 57 questionnaires is collected from the forestry female students, and 48 from non-forestry students.

**Round Tables:** To further enrich the findings, we organized round tables involving key stakeholders, including educators, forestry professionals, and decision-makers. A total of 2 round tables were held. These discussions facilitated an open exchange of ideas, enabling stakeholders to explore the challenges faced by girls and young women in forestry.

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## KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES

The results of the survey show a wide range of motivations and interests among forestry students in Serbia, but also highlight the need for better promotion of career opportunities and the elimination of gender stereotypes.

The research results show clear differences in the way forestry and non-forestry students gather **information about forestry as a profession**.

A majority (56%) of forestry students cited parents or relatives as their main source of information, suggesting that family background plays a crucial role in directing students toward forestry. Friends already studying forestry were also influential (42%), indicating the importance of peer networks in sharing relevant information and experiences. The internet/social media was mentioned by 39% of respondents, highlighting its importance in disseminating information. Most non-forestry students named television (31%) and the internet/social media (29%) as the most important sources of information.

The **reasons for choosing an education in forestry** are diverse and reflect a broad spectrum of interests. Environmental protection (58%) and forest ecology (39%) are of most interest to students wishing to study forestry. A significant number of respondents are also driven by practical aspects such as forest management (21%) and timber harvesting (21%).

The results of the survey show that several **main barriers** prevent girls from pursuing a degree and career in forestry.

- ◆ A significant number of respondents (32% from the forestry and 50% from non-forestry group) feel that there is a lack of information about forestry careers. This suggests that many girls are not aware of the wide range of opportunities in this field.
- ◆ Gender stereotypes and stigmatization are a major obstacles, since 47% of forestry and 56% of non-forestry respondents mentioned this problem.
- ◆ Another important obstacle is concerns about workplace safety and physical demands (cited by 19% of forestry and 42% of non-forestry respondents).
- ◆ Cultural and social norms that discourage women from pursuing forestry careers are cited by 42% of forestry respondents and 40% of others.
- ◆ The lack of visible female role models in forestry is seen as a barrier by 40% of forestry respondents and 42% of other respondents.
- ◆ A significant barrier cited by 49% of forestry respondents and 25% of others is the underestimation of the skills and contributions of women in forestry.

**Raising awareness** of the different aspects of forestry, **improving public perception** and providing **more opportunities for hands-on learning** are crucial steps to attract more young women to the sector.

## KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE ROUNDTABLES

Insufficient information about career opportunities in forestry can significantly influence the low interest of girls in this field. To increase interest, the **promotion of forestry** must be directed not only to children, but also to parents and primary school teachers. They can and should promote forestry. Early education and the reduction of prejudices through activities in elementary school can increase interest in forestry. For the promotion to be successful, it must be well organized and carried out by professional staff.

**Many barriers** prevent young girls from choosing a career in forestry, including stereotypes, perceptions of the profession and employment opportunities. Forestry is often perceived as a profession associated with hard physical labor, which is not true, but young people and their parents are not sufficiently informed about the different opportunities that forestry offers. Gender stereotypes play an important role, as forestry is still perceived as a male profession. Forestry companies need to recognize the different roles that women with a forestry education can take on. Work placements and dual training courses that combine theory and practice are also important.

The **lack of female role models** further reduces the motivation of girls to choose this profession. Promoting successful women in forestry is key to motivating young girls and promoting forestry as an attractive profession that contributes to sustainable development. In addition, girls are concerned about employment opportunities after graduating from the Faculty of Forestry, as they believe that it is difficult to find a job in this profession if you are not involved in forest management or utilization.

**Innovative approaches in education and industry** are needed to increase interest in forestry. A systematic approach is needed in promoting forestry, including cooperation between secondary forestry schools and the Faculty of Forestry, modernizing the education system through interactive, practical and digitalized methods, and providing international experience through programs such as Erasmus+.

Advertising through media activities, high-quality promotional material and events such as forums and science festivals can significantly increase the visibility and attractiveness of forestry. Raising awareness of **opportunities for women in forestry** through workshops and mentoring programs can help break down gender stereotypes and motivate young women to pursue this career.

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

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## Read full report "Barriers and needs for inclusion of girls and young women" at:

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