

June, 2026

NEWSLETTER

WOFO´s 4th International Conference "**Growing Together: Women, Forests, and a Sustainable Future**"

22-23 April 2026

Graz / Austria



Interreg
Danube Region



Co-funded by
the European Union

Fem2forests



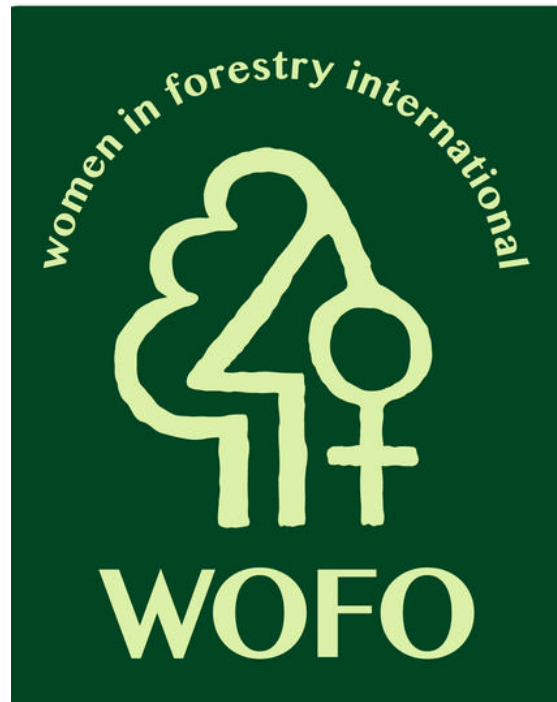
Forstfrauen
das netzwerk

Cooperation is the key - in any respect

The conference was organised by the [Fem2Forests](#) project team, co-funded by the Interreg Danube Region Programme, and held in collaboration with [Forstfrauen](#) and [IUFRO - International Union of Forest Research Organizations](#).

Two days of dialogue, strategy and insights

In terms of content, the conference covered a wide range of topics, from international trends in forest policy to project outcomes, initiatives and examples of best practice, right through to practical applications.



**International perspectives,
strong voices and fresh impetus
for the future of forestry**

On 22 and 23 April, the international conference “Women in Forestry: Connecting Across Borders and Generations” in Graz brought together over 130 participants from 17 countries across Europe, Africa and Asia. The aim was to exchange knowledge, strengthen networks and develop shared perspectives – thereby empowering women in forestry and raising their profile.



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These are the key messages of our inspiring speakers...

Daniela Kleinschmit, Leonie Wagner, Nico Martin, Cesira Urzi-Brancati, Karin Weber, Anna-Sophie Pirtscher, Franziska Steiner, Khishigjargal Mookhor, Izabela Pigan, Nike Krajnc, Christian Schnedl, Marina Kain, Vanessa Pierer, Stefanie Wolfsberger, Viktoria Knizia, Mathias FraiB and Heidi Gaube



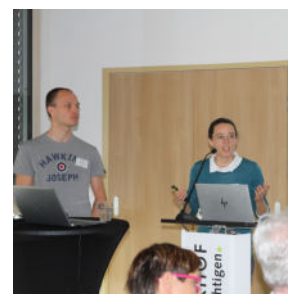
Daniela Kleinschmit, President of IUFRO, University of Freiburg, Germany: International Forest Governance Trends: Competences for Future Forests

- Forest competences are expanding and diversifying: There is a shift from traditional forestry to interdisciplinary, international, and more inclusive knowledge systems.
- Forest governance is becoming more fragmented and multi-layered: Multiple agendas (climate, biodiversity, trade) create overlapping processes and increasing complexity.
- Global policy trends favour simplified targets over complex realities: The rise of “target-driven” approaches risks oversimplifying forests as complex social-ecological systems.
- Private and market-based actors are gaining influence: Governance is shifting beyond governments toward markets, finance, and corporate mechanisms.
- Future competences must embrace complexity and critical perspectives: This includes integrating diverse knowledge, balancing multiple objectives, and maintaining commitments to equity and inclusion.



Leonie Wagner & Nico Martin, LFW Germany: Understanding Women’s Pathways in the Forest Sector

- An appropriate payment and environmental aspects are the most frequently mentioned issues that would heighten the attractiveness of the forestry sector for young women; topics like environmental protection and forest ecology contribute also to student’s choice for forestry education.
- Potential solutions to make forestry more appealing to young women may be: diverse and visible role models; fostering a sense of belonging; building confidence and self-efficacy.
- Main challenges to pursue for career advancement with regard to gender differences seem to be: a lack of part-time work and a male-dominated environment; after finishing forestry education the biggest obstacles relate to work-life balance challenges and a lack of female role models.
- Potential solutions to create better conditions for women may be: more transparency regarding job positions; more recognition for women; Improved work model.



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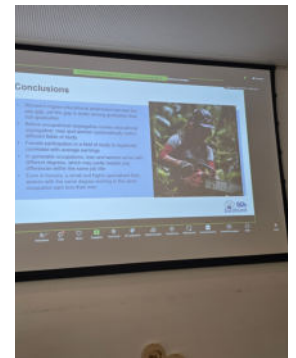
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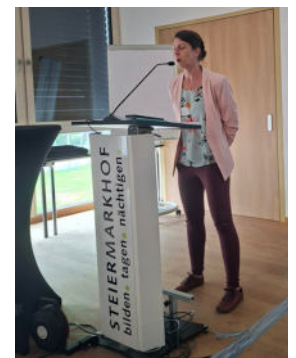
Cesira Urzi-Brancati, Eurofound, Ireland: Degrees of Specialisation: How Study Choices Influence Women's Career Paths

- Higher education narrows the pay gap overall, but the gap is wider among graduates than non-graduates.
- Educational segregation precedes occupational segregation — men and women choose different fields of study.
- Fields with more women tend to pay less on average .
- In generalist occupations, men and women enter with different degrees, partly explaining within-job pay gaps.
- Even in forestry, a niche, specialised field, women earn less than men with the same degree in the same role.



Karin Weber, BOKU University, Anna-Sophie Pirtscher, FAST Ossiach, Franziska Steiner, BOKU University, Austria Women's Mentoring in Forestry – a Successfully Implemented Model

- The mentoring program empowers women in Austria's forestry and timber sector by combining tailored one-on-one mentoring with gender-sensitive trainings for mentors.
- It creates rich learning and networking opportunities that support women in pursuing self-directed career paths and gaining insights into the professional world.
- Participants' voices underscore both the program's success and a growing enthusiasm for the sector, demonstrating how mentoring can make a significant, sustained contribution.
- Voice of a mentor: "The mentoring is a great opportunity to get to know the next generation of forest women and to learn from each other. It is satisfying, to help one mentee navigate through a year with specific goals in mind."



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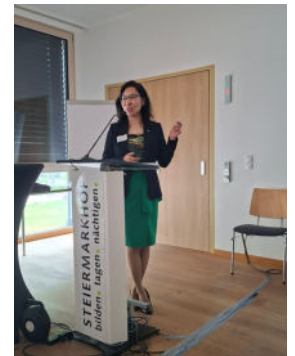
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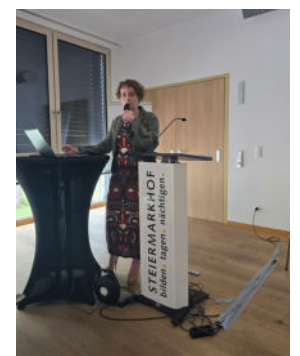
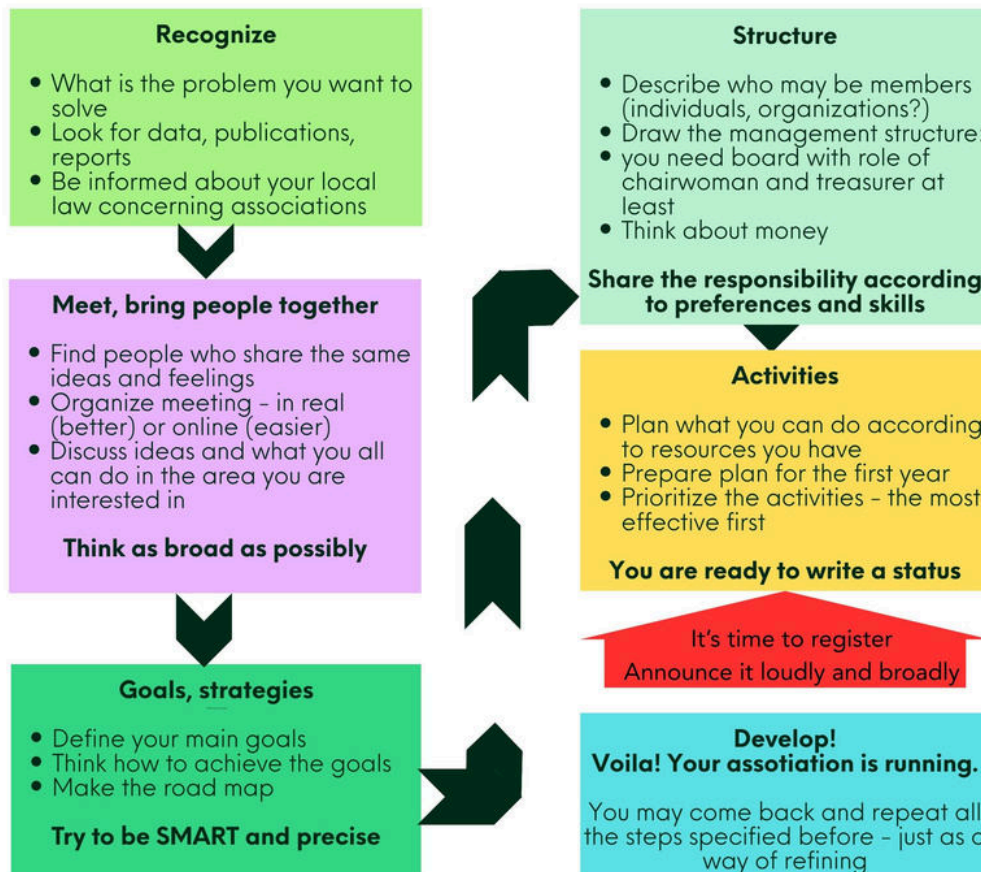
Khishigjargal Mookhor, "Forest sustainability and women" society, Mongolia: Beyond the Trees: Impact and Challenges of Women Foresters

We cultivate inclusive partnerships that bridge social classes and ecological needs, emphasizing forestry. Our key message is to co-create resilient forest networks by centering women's leadership—ensuring that sustainability is rooted in compassion, shared responsibility, and true equality for all stakeholders.



Izabela Pigan, Chairwoman of Stowarzyszenie Kobiet Lasu, Poland: From Roots into the Sky – How to Grow Your Association

Using this simple guide you may plan and organize your activity towards establishing a formal association:



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Nike Krajnc, Slovenian Forestry Institute, representatives of women´s associations From Impact to Transformation: What the Years of Cooperation Reveal

The Fem2Forests project highlights a crucial transition: from short term project impact to long term transformation. Early initiatives focused on making women visible in forestry, piloting mentoring and ambassador schemes and sharing good practices across countries. While these efforts created momentum, they also revealed clear limits when support ended with project funding.

A key lesson is the role of networks and associations as core infrastructure. Women in forestry face similar challenges across countries, making transnational cooperation essential. Permanent networks enable continuity, mentoring, visibility, and policy dialogue – while informal or project based networks often dissolve once funding stops.

Associations such as WOFO represent a turning point: they transform temporary results into lasting change by providing a collective voice, building confidence, and creating stable platforms for cooperation across generations, institutions and sectors. Moving from impact to transformation means building structures that remain – where women are not only supported to enter forestry but empowered to shape its future together.



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Christian Schnedl, Marina Kain, Vanessa Pierer, Stefanie Wolfsberger, Papierholz Austria:

Empowering the Future Workforce - How to Inspire Young Women in Forestry and how Forestry Companies Can Benefit From This

Papierholz Austria's keynote emphasises that women are a key part of the future forestry workforce and that attracting more young women to the sector is both a social and a business opportunity. Based on three authentic career journeys from within the company, the presentation demonstrates that the challenge is often not a lack of interest, but a lack of visibility, role models, and tangible career pathways.

The keynote argues that companies benefit when they actively make forestry careers visible, create supportive workplace cultures, and provide real opportunities for professional growth.

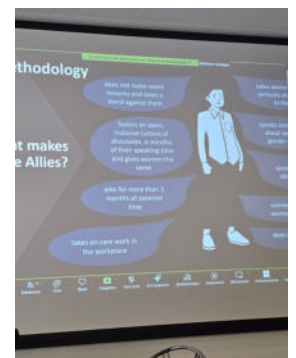
In doing so, they strengthen innovation, teamwork, communication, and long-term talent development.



Viktoria Knizia, University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Göttingen, Germany:

Seeing Forestry Through a Gender Lens - Male Allies

- Male allyship exists, but remains limited and often superficial.
- Gender inequality is not only reproduced through individual behaviour, but deeply embedded in organisational structures and cultural norms.
- The forestry sector must actively engage men as agents of change – especially in management positions.
- Equality does not happen by intention – it happens through action.



Heidi Gaube, nowa, and Mathias FraiB, FAST Pichl, Austria:

Changing the Narrative: Promoting Women and Attracting Young Talents to Forestry

The presentation shows that the forestry sector is still shaped by outdated stereotypes, which are particularly off-putting to young women. That is why the sector needs new narratives: forestry should be seen as a modern, forward-looking sector for climate protection, sustainability and a wide range of careers.

The campaign takes a participatory approach, in which young women themselves develop content to inspire others to pursue training and career paths in forestry.



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Insights into the Styrian forestry and timber industry

The second day introduced participants to the Styrian forestry and timber industry and impressively demonstrated the roles women play there – as skilled workers, forest owners, managers and leaders.

The focus was on:

- sustainable forest management and forestry in the context of climate change
- innovative wood processing
- nature conservation and biodiversity
- the role of female forest owners and managers

Field trip 1:

- **ehp - European Hardwood Production:** Purchasing and processing of hardwood into lumber, lamellas and sawing by-products
- **Forest holding Liechtenstein:** Beech stands management and nature reserve



WOFO INTERNATIONAL

Insights into the Styrian forestry and timber industry



Field trip 2:

- **Hasslacher Preding Wood Industry:** Production of constructive and surfaced timber, GLT® Girder Longitudinally Tensiletested
- **Forest Property of the Seggau Episcopal Estate Administration:** Climate-friendly forest management in church-owned forests



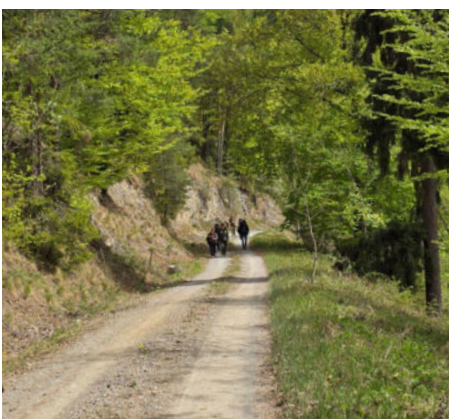
WOFO INTERNATIONAL

Insights into the Styrian forestry and timber industry



Field trip 3:

- **Sappi Gratkorn Mill:** Production of quality paper for premium magazines, books, and high-end advertising
- **Almhof Forestry Estate:** Close-to-nature forestry by a female forest owner



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Key message of the conference



The future of forestry is inclusive and collaborative. The challenges of our time can only be overcome through diversity, cooperation and shared knowledge.

Projects such as Fem2Forests provide important impetus for sustainable change. Women play a crucial role – as professionals, leaders, researchers, forest owners and role models.

A heartfelt thank you to all speakers, participants and partners for their valuable contributions and inspiring discussions

from the WOFO board members

(from left to right)

Maren Ammer, Nike Krajnc, Izabela Pigan, Dagmar Karisch-Gierer, Lesya Loyko and Ragnhildur Freysteinsdóttir (who was too busy for the group photo) 🙄

