

EXPERT GROUP GREEN JOBS POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



Promoting Green Forest Jobs is a prerequisite for the creation of resilient forests, provision of ecosystem services, innovation and sustainable development of the forest sector and thus for a climate neutral circular bioeconomy. However, employment in the forest sector is declining: the workforce is ageing and youth have limited interest to pursue a career in the forest sector. Gender imbalance and gender pay gap discourage women and working conditions are often unfavourable. Therefore, the FOREST EUROPE Expert Group on Green Jobs calls for policy action and recommends:

1. Rethink forest education and training to meet changing skills requirements

- a. **Develop new curricula for forest education in preschool, elementary, and secondary education.** With increasing urbanisation the number of children that have regular access to forests is decreasing. To raise the awareness to protect our forests and to use them in a sustainable way, it is important to gather more knowledge, connection and appreciation for the forests from an early age on. Children need to be exposed to the forest and learn about the many different services forests provide to all of us, such as clean air and water, mitigation of climate change, wellbeing, income and employment. To strengthen this knowledge, build a connection and promote appreciation, it is important to develop rigorous, modular curricula for all levels of education. Professionals, authorities, scientists and parents are called upon to initiate the development of curricula to facilitate their implementation.
- b. **Make vocational training fit for the future.** Increasing

digitalisation, automation and advanced wood processing technologies require a highly skilled workforce. Well-designed training programmes are a prerequisite for this. Existing vocational training programmes should therefore be revised and, if necessary, adapted or redesigned. To make vocational training fit for the future, representatives of employers, employees and authorities are called upon to engage in the process for the renewal of vocational training programmes and their implementation.

c. **Adapt university curricula to future needs.**

The diverse future challenges such as adapting our forests to climate change or converting our fossil-based economy to a circular bioeconomy require innovative academics with multidisciplinary skills. However, feedback from students aspiring to a career in the forest sector shows that many do not feel adequately prepared for their future roles. Consequently, the universities, in cooperation with representatives of students, business and administration are requested to analyse current curricula, identify deficits and adapt them or develop new curricula to meet future needs.

2. Joint action between governments, private sector and unions must be taken to halt and reverse the decline of the forest sector workforce:

- a. **Retrain and reskill the current forest sector workforce:** The current forest sector workforce is getting older and older, and young people are currently not very interested in working in the forest sector. It is therefore essential for the forest sector to retain its current workforce. To achieve this, workers must be retrained and/or reskilled to master the latest technical developments



and working procedures. Consequently, a joint effort must be made to develop and implement training programmes that are adapted to the needs of older workers.

- b. Close the gender pay gap, improve job quality and working conditions to specifically attract women.** The workforce in the European forest sector is not only heavily male-dominated, but there is also a significant gender pay gap. On average, women earn 15 % less than men. Working conditions in the forest sector are often unfavourable due to noise, vibrations, physical strain, climatic conditions and difficult terrain. All this makes the forestry sector unattractive for women. The forest sector therefore has a great opportunity to increase the female workforce and thus the total workforce by eliminating the pay gap and improving working conditions through the use of the latest technologies and working methods.
- c. Offer seasonal migrant workers a long-term perspective.** In Europe, timber harvesting and the collection of non-timber forest products are already often dependent on seasonal migrant workers. In view of the challenge of adapting our forests to climate change, the demand for labour will increase even further. It is questionable whether it would make sense to cover this additional demand with an even larger number of seasonal migrant workers. Therefore, the forest sector should consider offering seasonal migrant workers a longer-term perspective in order to meet the additional demand for labour and build a stable and reliable workforce.

3. Promote Green Forest Jobs

- a. Raise awareness for Novel Green Forest Jobs beyond the traditional forest sector.** Employment in the forest sector goes far beyond the rather well-known traditional job profiles in forestry and forest industries. Novel Green Forest Jobs combine forests, their products and multifunctional services with the fields of e.g. education,



health, tourism, recreation, sport, nature conservation, biotechnology, biochemistry, design and social work. However, these jobs are little known among young people. But as many young people are looking for meaningful employment, it is particularly worthwhile drawing attention to these Novel Green Forest Jobs and promoting them. Representatives of the forest sector are called upon to provide information on the profiles and meaningfulness of new Green Forest Jobs for further communication and to initiate cooperation to the linked fields.

- b. Develop communication strategies:** A key element in promoting Novel Green Forest Jobs is targeted and effective communication. However, in view of the large number of communication channels, the development and application of a targeted communication strategy to promote Green Forest Jobs is absolutely essential. To be effective, suitable formats should be developed for each communication channel and each target group. The forest sector should work with communication specialists to develop and implement a communication strategy for the promotion of Novel Green Forest Jobs.
- c. Engage in cross-sectoral cooperation.** Many Novel Green Forest Jobs are not located in the classic forest sector but in healthcare, tourism, biotechnology, construction, climate change and other areas. Normally, these sectors have little in common and compete for labour. Green jobs are a unifying element as they contribute significantly to a just transition to the bioeconomy and thus to a more sustainable future. It is evident that cross-sectoral cooperation would create synergies for the promotion of Novel Green Forest Jobs. This leads to better visibility of the sectors in the public eye, enables more efficient use of resources and consequently attracts more people for Novel Green Forest Jobs. Therefore, the forest sector is called upon to actively seek opportunities for cooperation with other sectors in order to promote Novel Green Forest Jobs

