

Interreg
Danube Region



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Our ways to the forests

Stories of transnational female
ambassadors in forestry

March 2026

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Disclaimer

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About forest ambassadors

The Female Ambassador Program outlines strategies, activities, methods and contents required to engage women as ambassadors in the forestry sector as well as to reach, inform and motivate girls and young women.

Female ambassadors actively approach girls and young women, inform, strengthen and motivate them and act as experts in their respective fields of activity in the forest sector. Female ambassador programs support a framework for young women to exchange and discuss challenges, obstacles and concerns about the role of women in the forestry sector. This leads to making gender-related challenges visible and discussable for being able to find suitable strategies and implement them. The leading goal of this activity is to make the forestry sector accessible and attractive for young women and girls. Ambassadors as role models, pioneers, lobbyists and multipliers are needed to anchor the topic of equality in forestry in the long term.

This booklet presents a collection of stories from transnational female forest ambassadors —inspiring women from diverse backgrounds, nationalities, and educational levels, united by one common thread: forests and forestry. **May it serve as inspiration!**



Austria

AUSTRIA

ALEXANDRA FRAISS

Forester and teacher

For me, meeting other women in forestry is always a very positive, empowering and inspiring experience. There is lively discussion, we have things in common and we draw strength from our conversations. Young women who want to pursue a career in forestry need role models who support, empower and motivate them. Fem2Forest is a gem of the Forest and truly for the Forest!



AUSTRIA

ANDREA PIRKER

Master forest crafts person, farmer, forest owner, board member of Women in Forestry Austria

The international network of women in forestry has shown that there are women all over the world who, like in Austria, are shaping forestry and want to promote this.

It is a living network, and through joint input, women are empowered and confident and full of drive to implement change.

This makes it possible to paint a positive picture of women in agriculture and forestry, to support and accompany young women in forestry, and to raise public awareness.



AUSTRIA

STEFANIE THALER

Forestry graduate and professional, trainer, farmer

The Ambassador Programme demonstrates how strong the international network of women in forestry can be. Experiences are shared, ideas continue to grow, and each person contributes their own strengths. This creates a global network that raises the profile of women in forestry and gives them a boost in their careers.



AUSTRIA

ISABEL BLUMENSCHNEIDER

Forestry worker

Seven years ago, I was supposed to get a chainsaw certificate for a job in Switzerland. There, in the Alps, the task was to cut firewood, turning meter-long logs into 33 cm pieces.

"I'll do it!" I said, signed up for a course at FAST Pichl, and thought I would get a short introduction on how to safely use a chainsaw to cut through a bit of wood. Not at all. We spent two weeks in the forest, in the workshop, and in the training room. By the end, I knew how to fell a tree, maintain the saw, and understood safety regulations. And a new passion was born: working in the forest! Today, I am a trained forestry worker and work for a forestry company in the Waldviertel.



I love being outdoors, doing physical work, and the variety of forest management—from planting young trees to harvesting timber. The best part of all: I have a wonderful colleague. If there are young women who are interested in pursuing a career in forestry but hesitate because the current image of who works in or with the forest is still different, then I can show them that it is possible.

Why should someone do something other than what they truly want, just because their dream is not the norm? Often, all it takes is a small gesture, a small impulse, to strengthen the courage to follow one's own path.

Forestry professions are facing a shortage of skilled workers. We need people who can work together and share a passion. There should be no "men's worlds" and no "women's worlds." We must first understand that people with different strengths, working together in a good team, can achieve common goals more easily.

Only then can we succeed together—preserving and protecting nature, managing resources responsibly, and contributing to a positive, sustainable future.

All we need is openness, understanding, and passion.

"We must understand that people with different strengths can achieve a common goal more easily in a good team".

AUSTRIA

CLAUDIA BERNAU

Forest graduate at the Austrian Service for Torrent and Avalanche Control

Supporting the Female Ambassador Programme is very important to me, as it strengthens the position of women in forestry and encourages young women and girls to take up work in the forest. An international comparison shows the challenges women still face today.

The Ambassador Programme provides a platform for a highly inspiring, practical and awareness-raising exchange for women in forestry.



A close-up photograph of a green leaf with a dark green semi-transparent overlay containing the text 'Bosnia and Herzegovina'. The leaf is detailed with veins and has some small holes. The background is a blurred forest scene with sunlight filtering through the trees.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

AJLA DORFER

Forestry and environmental governance professional

I am working across biodiversity, climate resilience, and sustainable land management in Southeast Europe. Being part of this programme is a privilege — a network of accomplished, confident women whose careers differ, yet whose drive is unmistakably aligned. We stand for the same message: women in forestry have the expertise, the vision, and the leadership strength to move this sector forward.



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

EHLIMANA PAMIĆ

Assistant at the Faculty of Forestry, Department of Forest Utilization

My name is Ehlimana Pamić, and I am from Bosnia and Herzegovina. I am currently working as an Assistant at the Faculty of Forestry, where my focus is the Department of Forest Utilization. In this academic role, I contribute to both research and teaching activities centered on the sustainable and efficient management and harvesting of forest resources. Before joining the Faculty, I gained three years of valuable professional experience as a High School Teacher. This previous role provided me with a strong foundation in educational methods and student engagement, which I now bring to my work at the University.

The recent events dedicated to women in the forestry sector served as a necessary platform for discussing long-standing issues.

The central theme, naturally, was gender equality and addressing the structural barriers still present in the field. The events included several presentations and panel discussions that certainly raised awareness about the need for greater representation and equitable career paths. While the discussions themselves were productive in airing perspectives and highlighting ongoing challenges, the consensus was that the event primarily reiterated familiar talking points. It was a solid, if unsurprising, event that underlined the fact that real, tangible change in forestry workplaces still requires significant, dedicated effort beyond a single day of discussion.

Key Takeaways:

Platform for Dialogue: The event successfully created a space for open discussion on gender equality.

Familiar Ground: Much of the content covered known issues rather than presenting radical new solutions.

Need for Action: The program highlighted that the primary challenge remains translating awareness into concrete workplace policies and cultural shifts.





Croatia

CROATIA

IRINA SUŠA

Project assistant at the Croatian union of private forest owners association

My love for nature and forests began at a very young age, watching my grandma work in her garden and picking mushrooms in the forest with my mom. Even though forestry was not the most obvious career choice as I grew up in the city, it represented something exciting, new, and different to me.

My appreciation for nature only deepened as I learned more and began to understand the complex systems within forests and the important role foresters play in maintaining them. After finishing my studies, I have found my place at the Croatian union of private forest owners association.



Working on the projects Fem4Forest and Fem2Forests and being a part of the ambassador program opened my understanding of the forestry sector and the role of women within it. I have met many inspiring women and gained an even greater appreciation for their work. I hope to act as a multiplier of the lessons I have learned, sparking interest and serving as a mentor for young people who choose a similar path.

CROATIA

JANKA INDIR

Forester

I am Janka, a forester with long-term professional experience in practical forestry and a background in education. After nearly three decades working in state forestry, I now teach forestry subjects in a secondary vocational school, focusing on transferring real-world knowledge to younger generations. I joined the ambassador program to contribute a practitioner's perspective, to support dialogue between forestry and society, and to encourage professional environments that value cooperation, mutual respect, and equal opportunities for both women and men. I believe that sustainable forest management and responsibility are built on expertise, cooperation, and long-term thinking.



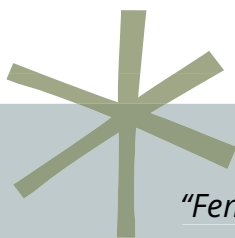
CROATIA

MAJA POPOVIĆ

Research Associate in the field of forestry

I am Maja, a Research Associate in the field of forestry. My primary areas of expertise include forest genetics, conservation, biochemistry, and forest engineering. I worked in several Croatian scientific institutions and gained a lot of experience in forestry sciences.

Fem2Forest Ambassador Program inspires me by creating opportunities for women to actively participate and collaborate, to gain experience and see other examples through female leadership, resulting in an impact that supports a more sustainable and inclusive future.



A close-up photograph of a blueberry bush with green leaves and several ripe, dark blue berries. A semi-transparent teal rectangle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text 'Czech Republic' in white.

Czech Republic

CZECH REPUBLIC

VLADIMÍRA NOVÁKOVÁ

Forester, employee at a state forestry enterprise

Vladimíra is a female forester with completed tertiary education. She works for a state forestry enterprise as a head of subsidies department. In Fem4Forest project she was chosen as a Czech role model because of her long-term professional experience. In Fem2forest, she joined the ambassador programme to see the similarities and differences in female occupation in forestry jobs and to get to know other female ambassadors. At the meeting in Zagreb, she shared her career story and experience she has gained during her studies and career



CZECH REPUBLIC

ZUZANA BAŇACKÁ

Employee at the Czech Forestry Institute

Zuzana is a forester working at the Czech Forestry Institute. Her main expertise is economic information in forestry. Zuzana currently combines work with distant studies of forestry in master study program. She joined the ambassador program to broaden her horizons in the gender topic and to enrich her previous foreign experience.





Germany

GERMANY

JOHANNA GIERL

Forester at the Bavarian Forest Administration

Since finishing my degree in forest engineering, I have been working as a forester for the Bavarian Forest Administration. I am a district manager in the Bavarian Forest, where I grew up and still live. My responsibilities include advising forest owners, managing state funding programmes, and ensuring compliance with the Forest Act. For me, the forest is the best workplace in the world, and I am proud to be a female forester. Women may sometimes approach things differently than men, but—just like in the forest—diversity is what makes the difference.



As an ambassador, I simply want to make the profession visible to young people and show how great this job is. Through this Ambassador Programme, I have learned how to be a role model, and I have enjoyed exchanging ideas with many wonderful women from other countries.

GERMANY

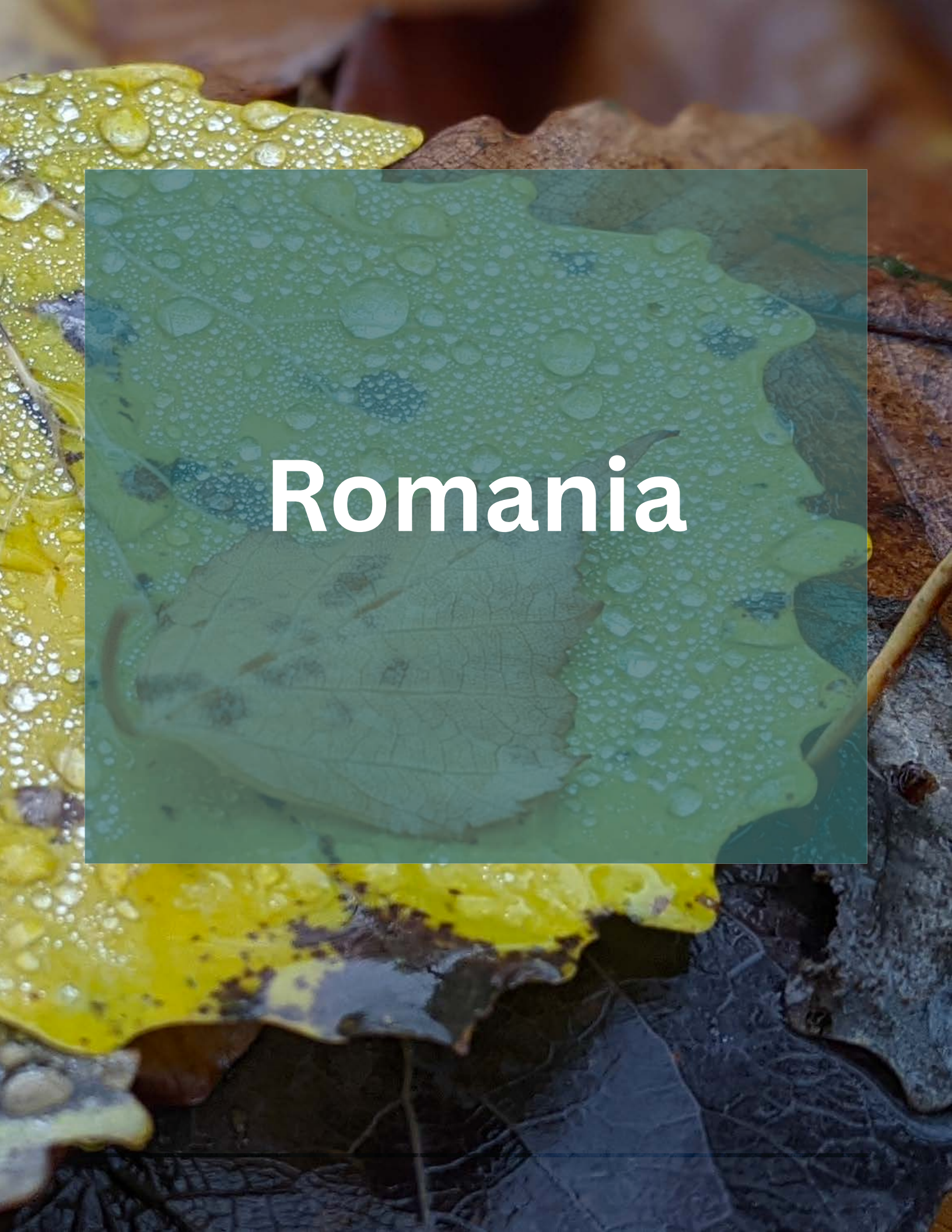
KERSTIN SEITZ

Internal auditor at the Bayerischen Staatsforsten AöR

I made a dual study program at the tax office and realized that a purely office-based job was not suitable for me. Therefore, I changed and began studying forestry. Now, I am working as an internal auditor at the Bayerischen Staatsforsten AöR and I am very happy.



The best thing about the fem2forests program is the chance to develop further, empower young women through my own journey and the (international) exchange.



Romania

ROMANIA

ALINA ELENA CUCIUREAN

Director of the Forestry Highschool Silvic Bucovina, forestry engineer

Alina Cuciurean is the director of the Forestry Highschool Silvic Bucovina and a forestry engineer with strong experience in educational management. She is recognized for her entrepreneurial leadership and for modernizing the school by introducing new study programs and attracting investments and projects. Under her guidance, the institution has developed innovative initiatives, strengthened its reputation, and adapted its curriculum to meet current labor market demands.



Within the Fem2forests project she said it was one of the most beautiful projects, with a maximum impact on the young generation of female foresters. The professional growth of our young girls is visible, the exceptional results, the confidence and courage to approach the world of forestry is different now, after these years of the project. Personally, I met exceptional people from whom I learned a lot. I would like this project to continue indefinitely.

ROMANIA

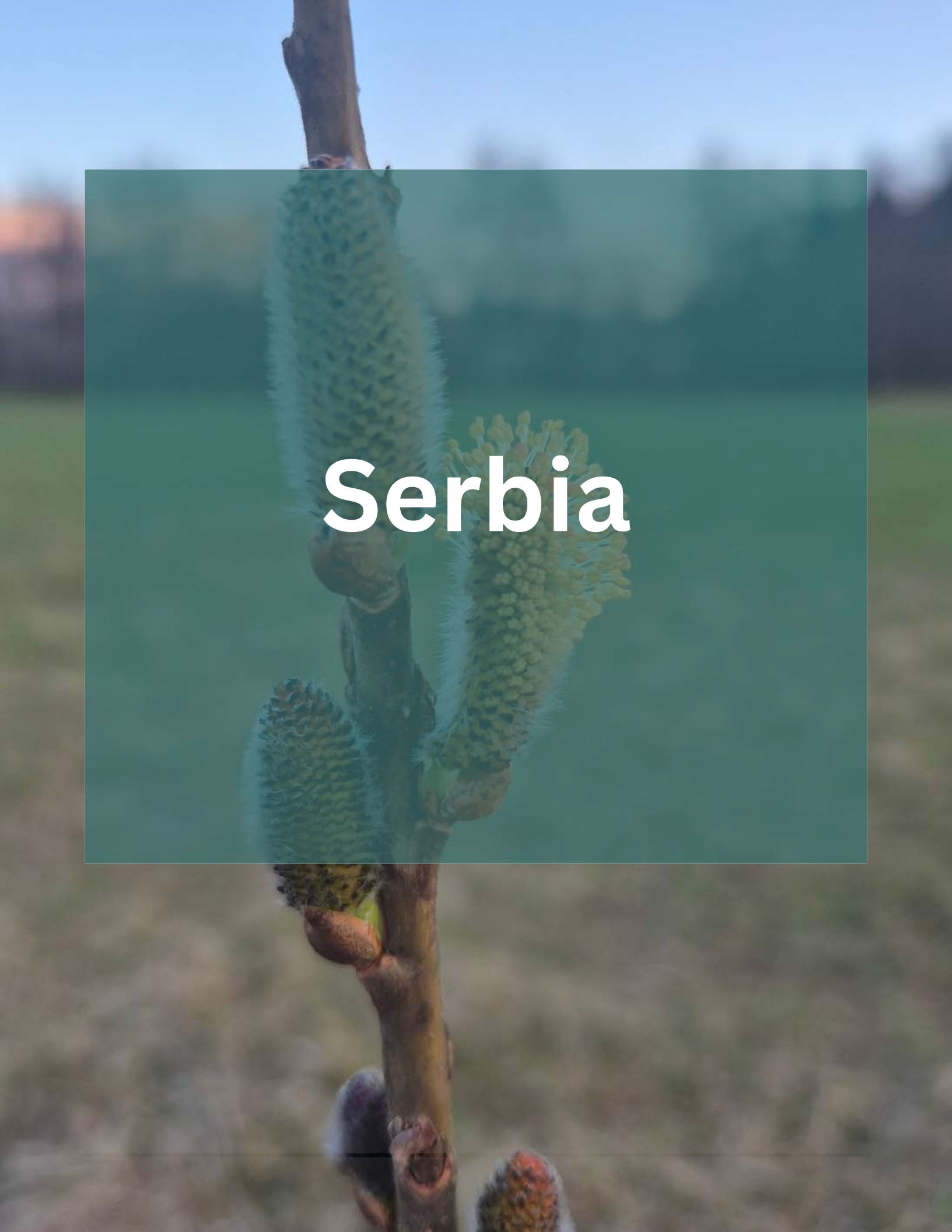
GEORGIANA ARSENE

Forestry Engineer, EcoAssist Association

Georgiana Arsenie is an environmental project coordinator associated with EcoAssist and the national initiative Plantăm fapte bune în România. She is involved in organizing and leading community-based tree planting and environmental education activities, coordinating volunteers and local projects aimed at reforestation and improving degraded land. Her work contributes to mobilizing communities and promoting sustainable environmental practices across Romania.



Taking part in the Female Ambassador Programme was an opportunity I had long hoped for a chance to meet so many wonderful women in forestry. This experience helped me realize how important connection is for personal and professional growth. I'm really proud that I learned communication skills that will help me share my experience with girls who want to become foresters, and that I can support them on their journey".

A close-up photograph of a willow branch with catkins. The branch is dark brown and textured. Several catkins are visible, some in sharp focus and others blurred. The catkins are covered in fine, light-colored hairs and small, yellowish-green flowers. A semi-transparent teal rectangle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the word "Serbia" in white, bold, sans-serif font.

Serbia

SERBIA

JELENA NEDELJKOVIĆ

Associate Professor at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Forestry

Being a Forestry Ambassador means more than promoting forests; it is about nurturing people who will care for them in the future. It is both a great honor and a responsibility to represent forestry and inspire future generations. As a university professor, I see my role as a bridge between knowledge, practice, and inspiration. I teach, mentor, and guide students as they take their first professional steps, helping them discover not only what forestry is, but why it matters. Through lectures, research, and fieldwork, I show that forestry is not just a profession – it is a way to connect with nature, people, and purpose.



Currently, I am an Associate Professor at the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Forestry (Chair of Bioeconomy, Policy, and Governance in Forestry and Nature Conservation). This position allows me to connect academic research with real-world challenges, work in the field, and explore topics I deeply care about. In a way, I am living my childhood dream. I always wanted to be a teacher, and now I have combined that with my family roots in economics and the forest-based industry. Academia allows me to bring these worlds together: to educate, to explore, and to empower.

That is what being a Forestry Ambassador truly means to me: planting seeds of curiosity and confidence in every student I meet.

A photograph of a forest floor with fallen leaves in shades of orange, brown, and grey. A semi-transparent teal rectangular overlay is centered on the image, featuring the word 'Slovenia' in white, bold, sans-serif font. The background shows a dense layer of leaves and some tree trunks in the distance.

Slovenia

SLOVENIA

MARIJA JAKOPIN

Manager of a large forest estate

I have been friends with the forest for as long as I can remember. My parents were speleologists, so we spent a lot of time in the karst forests. While they were exploring caves, I was exploring the forest inhabitants, hiding behind fallen beech trees and watching the life around me.

When I grew up, my path led me into the world of IT, and I lived without the green joy of the forest until my late thirties, when I found my way back to it – this time as the manager of a larger forest estate.



I soon realised that the forest deserves people who are properly educated, so I became a forestry and wildlife management engineer and joined the wider green community. I do not see the forest as something we simply manage, but as a magnificent realm where a great family of living and non-living beings finds its happiness. Being allowed to be even a small part of this kingdom feels like an unexpected gift, and at the same time an obligation to do everything in my power for its long-term well-being. Since the forest itself has no way to speak or stand up for its existence, there must be at least a few of us who try to understand it and fight for it in this time of a growing human population and its needs.

If there is a place to look for like-minded allies and fellow fighters, it is among the younger generations. Not only are they full of energy, but almost their entire career still lies ahead of them. That is why I started getting involved in the education system. I visit schools and try to inspire pupils and students to choose one of the many interesting and diverse professions in forestry. During the summer, I lead children from holiday camps on walks through the forest, where they learn about how the forest is used and cared for, the pressures climate change puts on its inhabitants, and the wonders of trees, shrubs, wildlife and large carnivores. On a smaller scale, I teach dendrology at the local upper-secondary forestry school. In all my contact with young people, I try to bring in everything that makes me hope and wish that future women and men in forestry will look at the green soul of our planet as broadly and empathetically as possible. This also includes conversations about recognising their own strengths and limitations, and about differences related to gender. How to combine the roles brought to us by biology with our wishes and our profession is not an easy question. But we quickly agree that strength lies in respect, understanding, good relationships, and, not least, in the sense of ease and release that the forest gives us.

It is an honour and a source of pride for me to serve as an ambassador in forestry.

"In all my contact with young people, I try to bring in everything that makes me hope and wish that future women and men in forestry will look at the green soul of our planet as broadly and empathetically as possible".

SLOVENIA

DARJA STARE

Researcher at the Slovenian Forestry Institute

I have always been happiest outdoors, in nature, among the trees, in the colourful forest, or helping my father with the chores that are never lacking in the countryside. This love led me to study forestry, where I discovered that it is more than a profession – it is a way of life. After completing my master's degree in forestry, I got a position at the Slovenian Forestry Institute and became a researcher. Both my work and doctoral studies have ensured that I remain curious, persistent, and always eager for new answers. Today, I divide my working time between the laboratory, where I test various wood fuels, and the computer, which I use to research private forest owners and other areas of forest technology and economics.



Through my work, I hope to make at least a small impression on young people, girls and women, and others who may not be familiar with the forestry sector. That is why I became part of the Female Forestry Ambassadors programme, which has helped strengthen my personal competencies in addressing and motivating others, and in imparting knowledge about the importance of equality and diversity in forestry.

"I discovered that forestry is more than a profession – it is a way of life".

SLOVENIA

KATARINA FLAJŠMAN

Researcher at the Slovenian Forestry Institute

Nature has always fascinated me, and I was never bored in the forest. I come from the city, but every weekend my family and I would return to the countryside, where I spent entire days in the forest. Muddy hands up to my elbows and legs scratched by blackberries were part of my daily routine.

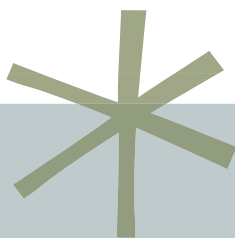
Although I was interested in other fields as well, I made a sudden decision to study forestry because it attracted me the most.



One day, as a good student, I shared my decision with a school career counselor, who bluntly replied: "What will you do as a forester in the middle of the city?" I think that comment only motivated me further to become a forester, because even then I knew that foresters have plenty of work in the city too—forestry isn't just "cutting down trees," as she probably thought. Before finishing my studies, I saw a notice on the faculty bulletin board (yes, back then the internet wasn't what it is today...) for a student job and thesis opportunity at the Slovenian Forestry Institute. I applied that very second. Later, I got a job at the institute as a young researcher and completed a PhD, during which I discovered another field—hunting—which opened the door to a fascinating world of wildlife. I work in this world, conduct research, and live it even in my free time as a hunter.

And what does my work look like? Although I spend a lot of time in the office as a forester, behind a computer in the middle of the city, out in the field the blackberries still scratch my legs, and my hands are still muddy—and sometimes even a little bloody.

I never questioned whether forestry was right for me because of who I am or where I come from. I simply wanted to gain as much knowledge as possible, because that's what matters and what gives us strength. My work continues to inspire me, and I'm thrilled to share my enthusiasm as an ambassador, especially with young people who are just discovering this world. Nature truly is fascinating, and the forest is never boring!

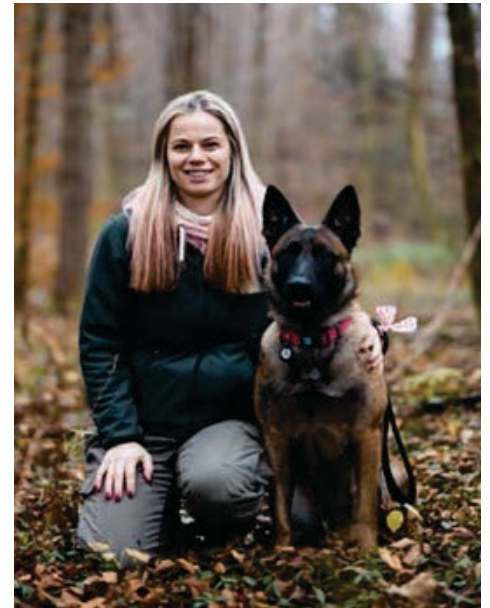


SLOVENIA

KRISTINA SEVER

Slovenia Forest Service

From a young age, I spent most of my time outdoors – in the forest, in the fields, and by the stream, where we children played, built things, explored, and observed nature. I also spent a lot of time at my grandparents' farm. My grandfather would often take me with him into the forest when he went to prepare and collect firewood. While he was working, I would wander around, exploring the woods on my own. Later on, I often asked myself what I wanted to do when I grew up, but somehow I couldn't find an answer. Probably because I wasn't listening to myself, but to others. After finishing secondary school in economics – a field that didn't truly interest me – I decided to study forestry. It was likely the first time I made an important decision entirely on my own, without the influence of others. At the time, I had no idea where this decision would lead me.



Today, I'm grateful that I chose that path, as I now do work that truly brings me joy. After my studies, I went to Germany for an Erasmus traineeship at the European Forest Institute, where I gained my first professional experience in forestry. I then worked at the Slovenian Forestry Institute, and I am currently employed at the Slovenia Forest Service, where I manage projects related to forest silviculture and forest adaptation to climate change. My work is very dynamic and diverse, ranging from field surveys and writing professional content to organizing events. Working on European projects also allows me to learn about forests and forestry practices abroad. In addition, I lead the association Pro Silva Slovenia, which focuses on close-to-nature forest management, and I collaborate with the association Preplet, where through forest pedagogy I pass on my knowledge and love for the forest to children.

I am surrounded by a great team of exceptional people who have a positive influence on my work and support me when things don't go according to plan.

I joined the Fem2forests mentoring program because I want to inspire young people with my story to make their own decisions and follow their intuition. At the same time, I want to show through my example that a career in forestry can be inspiring, meaningful, and exciting.

SLOVENIA

MATEJA KIŠEK VOVK

Principal of the Secondary School of Wood Processing and Forestry Maribor

I was born on a remote farm, where I spent my childhood embraced by nature and animals. I grew up under the crown of the largest tree in Slovenia – Gašper's chestnut. Looking back now, I realise that this tree was my first teacher, my first true mentor and whisperer, the one that decided trees would play a vital role in shaping the path of my life.

When the time came to decide on the direction of my life, my youthful restlessness pulled me in many directions, but I realised just in time that I wanted to spend my life in nature, in the forest and among trees. I chose to study forestry, where I completed both my bachelor's and master's degrees.



During my studies, I was a scholarship recipient of the Pahernik Foundation, which supports successful students on their career paths. I enrolled in a doctoral programme in Biosciences and deepened my knowledge in the fields of dendrology and forest genetics. I defended my doctoral thesis with distinction in 2021.

My professional journey had actually begun even before that. I took a job as a teacher at the Secondary School of Wood Processing and Forestry Maribor, where I taught a number of specialised forestry subjects. I realised that my search to understand the forest, trees, their past and their strength was not only my passion – it had grown into a calling. I still teach with heart and dedication. I want to awaken in my students the same sense of wonder at nature and open their eyes to the miracles unfolding all around us. I continue this mission in my role as principal of the Secondary School of Wood Processing and Forestry Maribor – one of only two forestry schools in Slovenia. I want to bring the forest and forestry closer to people.

Alongside all my work, I have never given up my passion for writing, which I brought with me into this world and which has been with me since childhood. I publish many popular science articles in which I explain scientific and professional topics in a way that is simple, readable and understandable to every reader, no matter how little they may know at the start. In March 2025, I published a book entitled *Trees of Slovenia and Everything You Have Never Heard About Them*. This book is my tribute to nature, to forests, to trees. And this very book is ranked among the ten best books in Slovenia and has been nominated for the Grand Prize of the Slovenian Book Fair 2025.

When I heard this, I smiled. Not for myself, but for that splendid tree at my home, my first teacher and first mentor. I know it will rustle its leaves with particular satisfaction when it finds out as well.

SLOVENIA

ŠPELA PEZDEVŠEK MALOVRH

Professor at University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty, Department of Forestry and Renewable Forest Resources

Nature and the forest have always been my neighbours. I grew up in an environment that offered genuine opportunities for contact with nature. As a child, I was curious - I loved exploring nature, reading various science books, and conducting all sorts of »silly« experiments. Some of my favourite childhood memories related to nature include building hideouts in the forest, picking mushrooms, exploring the animal world in the Štajerska region with my grandpa, and sleeping in a hayloft. Looking back today, I realise that this environment and my exploration of it had a significant impact on the path of my life.

In my youthful enthusiasm and love for everything except sitting at a desk and learning what I considered high school nonsense, I began studying forestry by happy coincidence.

Studying forestry was love at first sight, as my first contact with the study and the professor of dendrology at the information day sealed my fate. During my studies, my youthful desire to explore and spend my life in nature led me to a point where I had to decide. Should I wait several years for my first job as a district forester, or, as I had done several times before, make the most irrational decision? In my still youthful enthusiasm, I knocked on the door of my professor, who later became my mentor. That day was decisive that I become a young researcher at the Biotechnical Faculty, Department of Forestry and Renewable Forest Resources, Chair of Forest Technology and Economics. Both my doctoral studies and my forestry colleagues ensured that my paper was not empty and that my persistence, curiosity, and optimism opened new chapters.

Today, as a professor at the University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty, Department of Forestry and Renewable Forest Resources, I share my story and passion for teaching and research with the younger generation. Being a role model and support to young, motivated person who has high expectations of their studies and mentor, is one of the most valuable things. It enriches both sides not only with new ideas, knowledge, and experiences, but also with interpersonal (friendly) relationships. That is why I am proud to become part of the forestry ambassador programme, as I want to write stories about »successful women in forestry« who will change our sector. But first, the stories had to change me.



SLOVENIA

ZALA UHAN

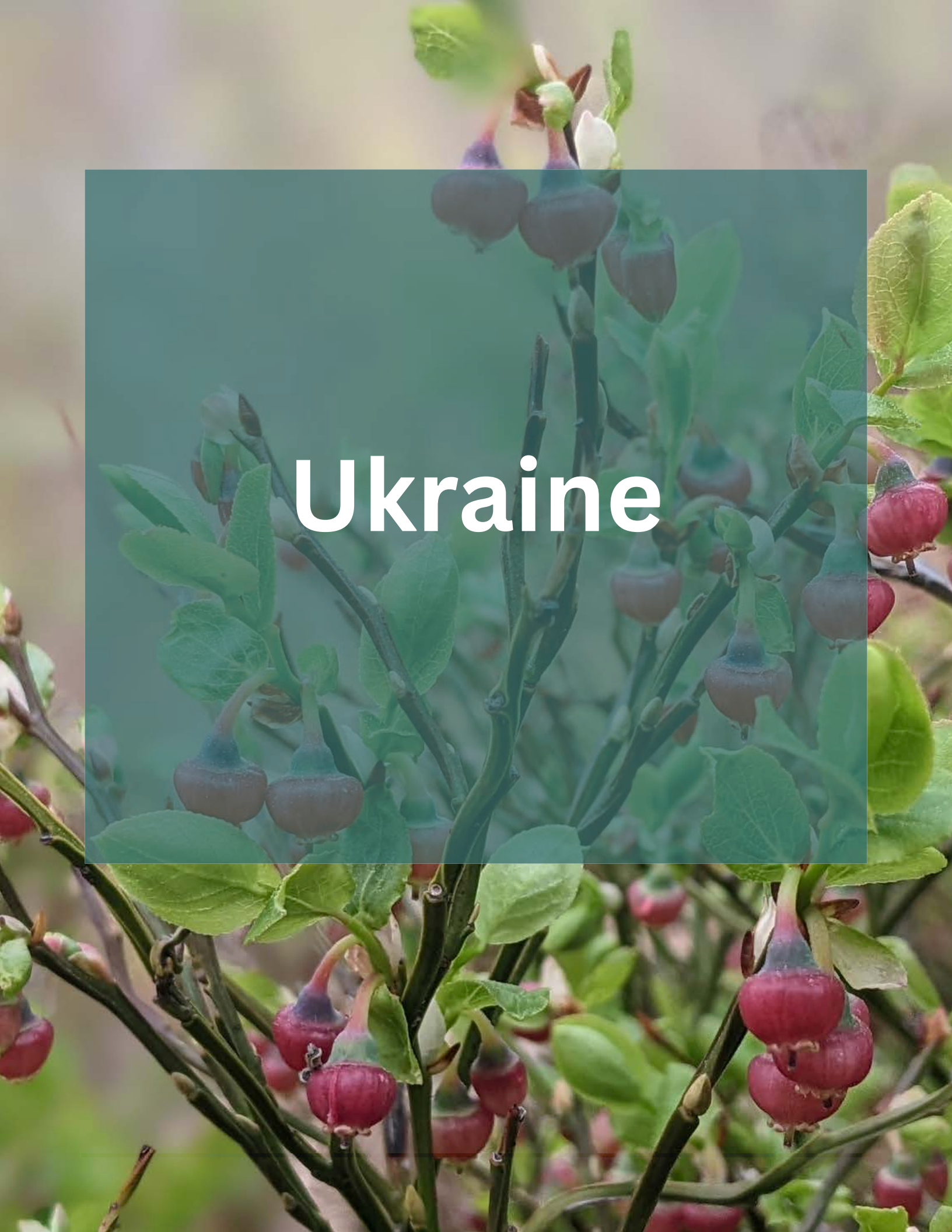
*Teaching assistant, University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical faculty,
Department of Forestry and Renewable Forest Resources*

I didn't grow up in the countryside; I grew up in the city. I love city life – drinking coffee in the city centre and going to the theatre. At the same time, I appreciate the closeness of nature, with its fields, forests, hills, valleys, and everything we encounter along the way. If someone had asked me in primary school or in high school whether I would ever study or work in forestry, I would probably have laughed, because it would have seemed impossible to me. I always thought I would work in education, wearing high heels, a skirt and have a perfectly manicured nails. But things turned out differently. I didn't get into biology studies, so I ended up studying forestry almost by accident. Before I enrolled, I quickly looked at the syllabus, which seemed interesting to me, and decided to give it a try. I am glad I did. I got to know forests and forestry in depth and truly enjoyed my studies.

I completed my master's degree in no time. I didn't have to look very hard for my first job, because it found me. In fact, it was my master's thesis mentor who found me. She was looking for someone to work on a project, and that's how I got my first job at the Department of Forestry and Renewable Forest Resources. First, as a researcher, then as a professional associate, and now as a teaching assistant.

I'm very happy in my role at the Department of Forestry and Renewable Forest Resources, as I feel it is a perfect fit for me. I get to do a variety of things (and still wear high heels, a skirt and have perfectly manicured nails), from teaching and public speaking to working in nature and with people. As a teaching assistant, I meet students every day. Some of them need a little encouragement, while others need a little more motivation. I know how important teachers are. They teach us facts, but they also show us how to live our lives. My mentor, now a colleague of mine, is a great example of this. Maybe one day, I will be a role model and inspire someone, just like she inspires me.





Ukraine

UKRAINE

LIUBOV KONDRATIUK

Lecturer at the National Forestry University of Ukraine

Since childhood, I have been captivated by parks. I loved wandering through their pathways, imagining how one day I would design my own landscapes—beautiful, welcoming, and alive. I dreamed of becoming a landscape architect, creating spaces where nature and people could speak the same language.

But life sometimes offers different routes. My path eventually led me to the National Forestry University of Ukraine—first as a student, and later as a lecturer. And then I realized that instead of designing parks, I was shaping something even more meaningful: the knowledge, experience, and worldview of students who will one day define the future of our forests and communities.

Today, I participate in international initiatives and work closely with young people who genuinely want to change the world. This is what inspires me most: dynamic dialogue, thoughtful questions, and a deepening curiosity about the natural environment.

For me, this program is an opportunity to show girls and women that there is a place for them in the forestry sector. Here, you can build a meaningful career, dream boldly, make real impact—and remain in harmony with the nature we all strive to protect.



UKRAINE

GANNA LOBCHENKO

WWF-Ukraine

For me, being a Forestry Ambassador is about inspiring others to see forestry as a profession of purpose, dedication, and continuous growth. I chose this field because I truly enjoy it, and throughout my studies and career - from leading field-training teams at university to completing a PhD, teaching, and now working as a forest expert at WWF-Ukraine - I have always felt supported and respected. My experience taught me that the strongest limitations we face are often the ones we place on ourselves.



Today, as Ukraine's forestry sector adapts to new challenges brought by the war, it needs passionate and skilled people more than ever. As an Ambassador, I want to encourage everyone - especially young professionals - to step forward confidently, to trust their abilities, and to see forestry as a place where they can make a real contribution. This profession rewards curiosity, resilience, and commitment, and there is space for those who are ready to bring their energy and ideas to it.

UKRAINE

IVANNA KULBANSKA

*Associate Professor, National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine,
Department of Forestry*

Doctor of Biological Sciences, Associate Professor, author of over 150 scientific and educational works, including patents for utility models. Scientific interests are related to the study of the ecological and biotic stability of forest trees and the establishment of predictors of their weakening. I teach courses in forest phytopathology, fungi of the forests of Ukraine, integrated forest protection, and others at the Department of Forestry of the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine. I have experience working in a microbiological laboratory. I chose my profession thanks to my father, a forester, who instilled in me a love and deep respect for the forest.



What helps me move forward is the understanding that my knowledge and efforts can help forests live longer, maintain their health and biodiversity. This is what gives meaning to each day and makes my work not only a profession, but also a life calling.

To make my work more productive and effective, I would greatly benefit from modern research equipment and expanded opportunities to collaborate and exchange ideas with colleagues and students. It is through this shared learning and discovery that we can advance knowledge and make a meaningful impact on forest management.

First of all, I am proud to be Ukrainian. Secondly, I am proud to be a forester and scientist who combines a love of the forest with scientific research. And also that I can find a “common language” with trees, mushrooms, and students.

“My knowledge and efforts can help forests live longer, maintain their health and biodiversity. This is what gives meaning to each day and makes my work not only a profession, but also a life calling.”

This booklet was a short “walk through the forest” with our international female forest ambassadors.

May their journeys encourage curiosity, build confidence, and open new perspectives. The forestry sector needs diverse voices, fresh ideas, and passionate individuals. Their experiences show that there is no single path into this sector—only opportunities to grow, contribute, and lead.

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Forest ambassadors:

Different paths. Shared passion. One future.