

LJILJANA SOVILJ

ROLE MODEL IN FORESTRY SECTOR

HER CAREER

Ljiljana has started her career in 1991 and she has been working in public administration ever since. "First I worked on study-analytical work in forestry (6 years), and then for 12 years, I was in charge of the department of forest seed production and nursery production in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management. It is also one of the areas of forestry that I love the most and in which I had exceptional cooperation with colleagues in practice". During that period, she singles out the preparation of the Law on Reproductive Material of Forest Trees according to EU directives, with the help of the OSCE. She is also proud of the coordination of the project of construction and equipment of the Seed Center in Požega. Ljiljana was in charge of the admission of Serbia in the OECD Forest Seed and Plant Scheme, where she still serves as the national coordinator. After that, she was the head of the different organizational units in the Forest Directorate, in charge of subsidies in forestry, international cooperation and forestry policy, which she still does today.

She remembers her first day at work as the first day at school: "as the beginning of something big and important in my life, a bit solemn, a bit confusing, because I did not have a very clear idea of what my future job was, but also happy because I knew that there was something new in front of me, which was always challenging for me and gave me positive energy and a desire to get to the heart of the matter as soon as possible and master the necessary knowledge".

PERCEPTIVE ABOUT THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN FORESTRY

"Based on my own experience and communication with colleagues, I believe that women in forestry are accepted by male colleagues, although forestry is considered a traditional male occupation, with certain areas of work still reserved mainly for men (eg forest harvesting). Women role models in forestry need to prove themselves more and overcome a certain type of prejudice that exists in the sense that forestry is generally a more male occupation and that men as managers are more desirable and more "up to the task". However, with a lot of effort, learning, knowledge and work, that prejudice can be overcome, and then women are respected in the same way. So, it is harder for a woman to prove herself and get a position, but she is respected when she succeeds in that".

EXPERIENCES WITH WOMEN WORKING IN FORESTRY SECTOR

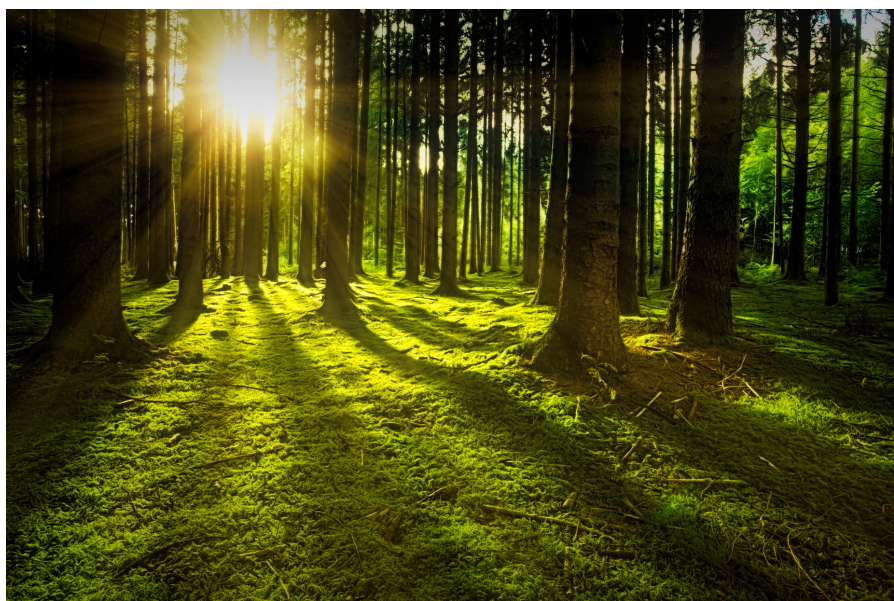
Women in forestry mostly perform protection, seed and nursery work, silviculture, and study-analytical work. They are "mostly more involved in jobs that require to be analytical, systematic, persistent. They are also present in education and research organisations, but generally less in management positions than men". They are least present in forest harvesting jobs, construction of forest roads and generally jobs that are more physically demanding. She thinks that "women can do those jobs as well, but it is certainly easier and more attractive for women to do less physically difficult jobs".

She believes that "women are less present in leadership positions due to a lack of ambition compared to men, which is sometimes caused by circumstances other than a lack of ambition per se" (i.e. it is challenging to reconcile family obligations and leadership position). On the other hand, "women who want to be leaders need to stand out more and show that they are capable compared to their male colleagues".

"The impression is that women also unconsciously accept lower positions, so traditionally men are the first choice for a leadership position".

ABOUT LJILJANA SOVILJ

She has been working in the forestry sector for 30 years. Currently, she holds position of Head of the Department for Forestry Policy and Implementation of Measures to Improve Forestry within Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management-Forest Directorate.



WHAT SHOULD BE DONE FOR BETTER INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN FORESTRY SECTOR?

Public administration and employers should generally "take into account gender equality, i.e. equal or at least approximately equal representation and engagement of women in hiring new staff, as well as in electing managers". "Women need to be given a chance, and they will use their perseverance and dedication to work to fight for the position".

There are certain areas that still provide the opportunity to hire new, young colleagues (female and male), and these are jobs that require knowledge of foreign languages because the area of international cooperation is really diverse and will be so in the future. Also, "project preparation and management are skills that are required and I think it will be the same in the future, where women can participate on an equal footing with men, and it would be good to further educate and train in that field".



INTERESTING INITIATIVES WHICH HELPED WOMEN WITH THEIR CAREER

"All colleagues that do their job diligently and devotedly - which is why they always stand out as such. In fact, I cannot think of any negative example. So, my assessment is that women in forestry are generally successful women".

KEY MESSAGES FOR YOUNG FEMALE IN EARLY CAREER

You need to believe in yourselves, to value yourselves and not to feel inferior to your colleagues.

Always follow what is right in terms of the rules of the profession, ethics and legality. If you have dilemmas, challenges or pressures, do not forget that in the end, it is important that you are right in front of yourself and know that you acted the best you can and know.

The most important thing is that you are satisfied with yourselves and your performance, and then your environment will accept you.

It is also important to have a collegial approach in relation to all colleagues - forestry is as small profession and such a relationship should be nurtured.



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