



Global Student Networking & Green Jobs in the Forest Sector

A Joint EFI-IFSA-IUFRO Capacity Development Project (2018–2022)
 Website: <https://ifsa.net/efi-ifsa-iufro-project/>



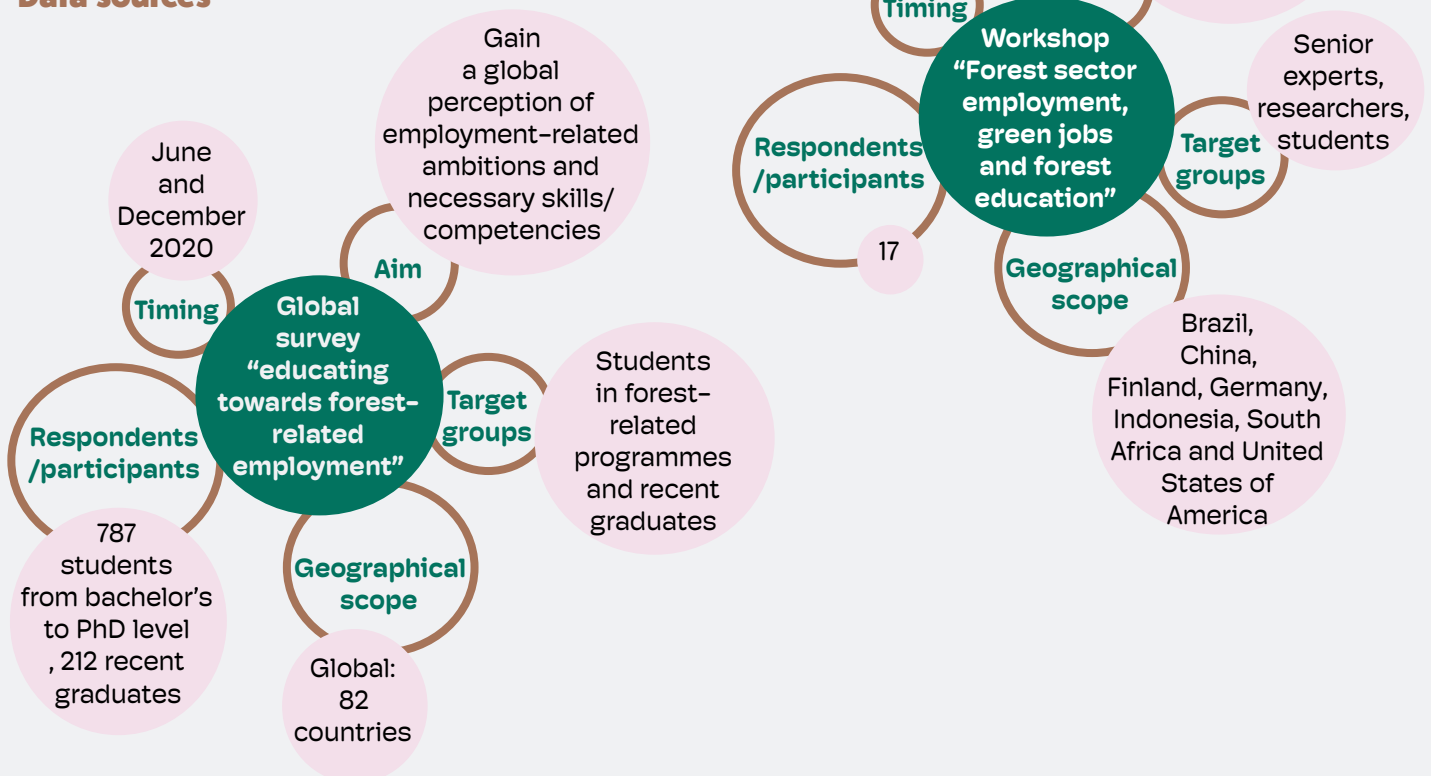
*What do **universities** offering forest-related programmes need to know about forest-related education and employment?*

Background

Universities are key stakeholders in matters of education and employment because they are involved in the training of professionals for the job market. To be able to address the changes happening in the sector, forest-related education and training and all stakeholders (students,

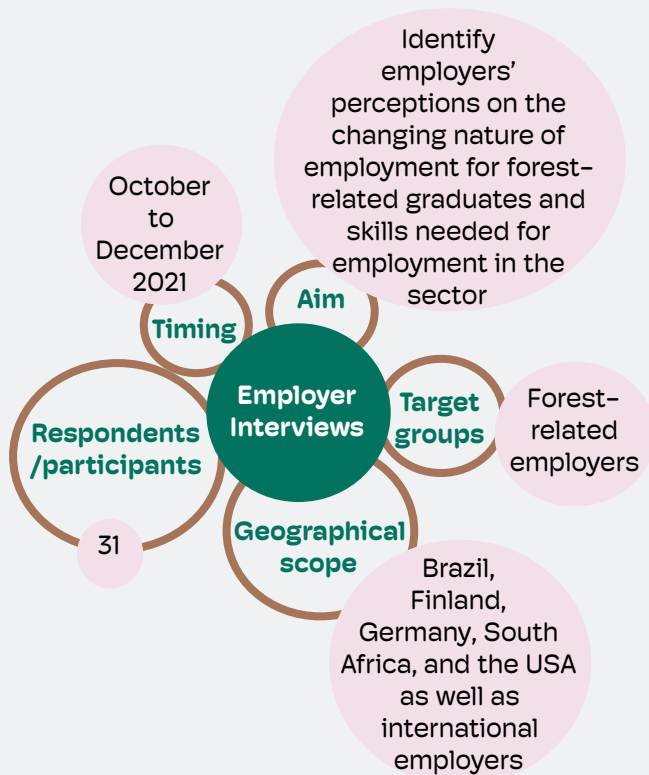
researchers, employers, communities and organisations) need to work together and constantly provide feedback on areas that need further improvement.

Data sources



by decision of the German Bundestag

Perceptions of students in forest-related programmes about:



Career aspirations

- Top activities that shape the students' career decisions are: practical/field exercises; work experience(s); field trip/excursion to companies and workplaces (national) and field trip/excursion to companies and workplaces (international).
- Most students want to work in the forest-related sector, especially in:
 - Forest-related Nature and Biodiversity Conservation
 - Forest-related Research
 - Forest-related Regional and Land Use Development (Agroforestry and Mountain Forestry etc.)
 - Forest Management.
- Students prefer employment with international organizations; research organizations (e.g. universities or research centres) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The least preferred types of employers are private companies (other than forest service) and self-employment/entrepreneurship
- Students highly appreciate work experience from forest-related internships/traineeships, volunteering, and part-time jobs and they prefer to work outdoors.

Motivation to pursue forest-related programmes

Most students are pursuing forest-related programmes as their first choice. Students' first decision to pursue a forest-related programme was driven by intrinsic factors especially desire to do beneficial work (make a positive difference for environment / communities) and job satisfaction (e.g. enjoyable work, high quality of life), while extrinsic factors like employment opportunities (e.g. positive career outlook, high job security) and earning potential (e.g. Good pay, government benefits) played the least role.

Top concerns for students regarding their studies and employment are:

- Limited knowledge about forest-related career options and how their studies prepare them for future careers
- Negative perception by the public on forest-related jobs including "Green Jobs"
- Limited knowledge about "Green Job" initiatives in their countries and at global level
- Lack of sufficient preparation by universities to take up "Green Jobs" in the sector



Perceptions of forest-related employers:

Skills of the future

- Forest economics, forest management and planning, and environmental protection are the top three subject-specific skills considered essential by employers.
- The top-three generic skills required by employers are communication, problem-solving, and creativity.
- Employers are more satisfied with the level of preparedness of students for subject specific skills compared to generic skills.
- Skills of the future include leadership skills (conflict resolution) and general academic competencies (willingness to learn, open-mindedness, holistic view of the sector).

Importance of traineeships

- Majority of employers consider internships/traineeships as important work experience during the hiring process because it:
 - helps employers prepare the graduates for permanent positions and to identify the fields of specialization they are interested in,
 - helps employers evaluate the graduate's ability to fit in their organization before offering long-term employment,
 - demonstrates the graduate's proactivity and ability to apply what they have learnt at university,
 - shows that the graduate has experience with the work environment and is flexible.

- The demand for university graduates with forest-related degrees (Bachelor to PhD) by companies/organizations has been on the rise recently.
 - Graduates with bachelor's degrees are hired for part time positions and by employers who were willing to train them on the job.
 - Graduates with master's and PhD degrees are preferred for positions that require in-depth knowledge and expertise as well as for permanent positions.
 - Some employers prefer to hire graduates from universities outside their countries because they have international experience.
- The scope of many organizations has been expanding in the last decade hence the changes in generic and subject specific skills that employers look for in graduates with forest-related degrees.

Recommendations from forest-related employers:

- The level of preparedness of students for generic skills needs to be increased.
- Students have to be encouraged to actively pursue internships/traineeship to equip them with the skills and experience required for the job market.
- Universities should request feedback from forest-related employers on the performance of graduates after traineeships.
- Partnerships between employers and institutions of higher learning are needed to better understand each stakeholders needs and adequately meet their expectations.