

SILVIJA ZEC

ROLE MODEL IN FORESTRY SECTOR

ABOUT SILVIJA

Silvija is the head of the Croatian Chamber of Forestry and Wood Technology Engineers. She was a secretary of the Chamber from the establishment of the Chamber in 2007. Since 2018 she is the president of the Chamber, which makes her the only woman in that position since its establishment. As a head of such an important organisation, she holds the responsibility of quality checking of the experts in the profession but also protects the reputation, honour, and rights of its members. Therefore, the Chamber protects and regulates the quality of the forestry sector. She is proud to be a part of something that has a positive impact on the forestry sector in Croatia.

HER CAREER

Silvija graduated from the Forestry Department, Faculty of Forestry and Wood Technology in Zagreb in 1992. Her career started with an internship in the mechanization and construction department. After she progressed to a forester in the forestry Velika and after that, she came to the position of manager of the forestry Gračac.

In 2007 she became the secretary of the newly established Croatian Chamber of Forestry and Wood Technology Engineers. She has helped to build the Statute of the Chamber, the basis for the Acts, and designed licensing regulations.

In 2018 she was elected for the president of the Chamber, which is her position today. The leadership position she is in gave her opportunities to participate in decision-making processes and make a positive impact on the sector.

PERCEPTION ON LEADERSHIP ROLES OF WOMEN IN THE FORESTRY SECTOR

In Croatia, in the forestry sector, women hold leadership positions in quite a few organizations. The assistant of the Minister of Directorate for Forestry, Hunting, and Wood Industry, Croatian Forest Research Institute, and the head of the largest forestry in Croatia are all women. Although statistics show that women are present in various leadership positions, they still have to prove themselves as valuable and capable more than their male colleagues.

FACTORS THAT DETERMINE SUCCES IN THE FORESTRY SECTOR

Understanding and supportive surroundings are keys to success for a woman in the forestry sector. These include family as well work surroundings.

Coordination of professional and personal life can be challenging, so supportive surrounding is crucial for a balanced work-life dynamic because the nature of the job is that it requires long hours and physical strain.



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

A mentoring program can be a great basis for the support of women in the sector.

Women are active in the forestry sector and there has been a positive change in the numbers of women foresters. The women who paved the way for younger generations can act as mentors, and younger women can be built further on that

The lack of awareness of the importance of gender equality in the sector is an area that needs improvement. If everyone made decisions based on what would be the best for the sector, and the company, gender would become less important when employing and giving tasks.

Support in form of **the Council for women in rural areas** is an initiative that would be extremely beneficial for women working in the forestry sector.

What women can do from their side is show that there are willing and open to all aspects of the work forestry requires, including fieldwork and long hours. It will help to break the prejudices toward a woman that do exist, particularly in forestry.

INTERESTING INITIATIVES WHICH HELPED WOMEN WITH THEIR CAREER

- Every initiative where women can act as mentors to the next generation is a good initiative. Especially in the sectors with so few women as in the forestry sector.
- Helping women connect via various initiatives like this one where women can connect internationally is also a step forward towards a supportive environment that celebrates women's success and professional development.
- Croatian Chamber of Forestry and Wood Technology Engineers holds professional training for foresters which supports the forestry sector by providing education and knowledge.
- Education is equally important as an equality awareness initiative because it gives an opportunity to women to widen their knowledge and build their confidence.



KEY MESSAGES FOR YOUNG FEMALE FOREST PROFESSIONALS

To succeed in your professional career, you have to show that you can and you will do the work.

Don't give up on your ambitions and goals, acknowledgment for your hard work will come eventually.

Find ambition in role models, regardless of their gender, and ask yourself, what do you see in them?

The answer to that question will lead you towards your path and give you the motivation to follow it.



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