



The FOPER project as a driver of the regional network in research and education in forest policy and economics

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Keywords: *FOPER, forest policy and economics, gender issues*

Extended summary

International Master Program in Forest Policy and Economics was implemented within the project "Strengthening Capacities of Education and Training for Forest Policy and Economics Development in the Western Balkan Region – FOPER" and realized at the Universities of Sarajevo and Belgrade in the 2007-2012 period.

The overall objective of the FOPER Master program was to enable the forest sectors of the Southeast European countries, to make an increased contribution to national economies, reduction of poverty and inequalities, environmental sustainability and cultural development. For this, the establishment of long-term and sustainable capacities for forest policy and economics research and education was crucial. FOPER was financed by the Government of Finland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs and implemented by the European Forest Institute in collaboration with the faculties of forestry and forest research institutes in Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. In addition to being the first regional joint educational program in the field of forestry in English, and having a number of novelties (block system and twining teaching, soft tutoring, internship programs, integration of research and education, etc.), this program was recognized as a tool for educating students, young leaders and professionals for forestry and environmental sector, capable to deal with various forest policy and economics issues.

This paper presents the achievements of women who were involved in the FOPER Master program, as students, teachers and researchers. Many of them have made enviable professional careers in their countries and internationally, working for universities, international agencies, consultancy, public administration and the non-governmental sector. The knowledge and skills they acquired from the FOPER Master program enabled them to become leaders in the fields of forestry policy and economics, nature protection, and sustainable development in their institutions. It can be argued that this education program was the starting point for truly unique networks of women engaged in research and management of natural resources, and thus contribute significantly to gender equality in forestry and management of natural resources.