

# EDITORIAL

## *SHOULD THERE BE CONCERN OVER THE FUTURE OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN FORESTRY?*

For the past several years, the Faculty of Forestry and Wood Technology of the University of Zagreb has been promoting the faculty by visiting secondary schools across Croatia and by posting advertisements on websites. These activities were prompted by the reduced interest in enrolling in the only faculty in the country that educates experts in forestry and the wood industry. The justification of such measures has been confirmed by the fulfilment of enrolment quotas in recent years. In contrast to earlier periods, particularly the eighties and nineties of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, when forestry itself was a motive for enrolment in the faculty by a larger number of candidates than needed, recent times have brought about changes that require efforts to make the profession recognized on the education and labour market. New generations of students find private entrepreneurship in forestry more attractive, compared to earlier preference for employment in the state company Croatian Forests Ltd. Probably an important part of the reason for this change was the business policy of Croatian Forests from 2012 to 2018 whereby there was a significant reduction in the number of workers of all profiles, which in turn made education in forestry less attractive. In addition, the average salary in a state-owned company, which is not significantly higher than the national average, also lessens interest in employment there. More recently, efforts have been made to attract new work force in the state-owned company by offering scholarships to students. The current age structure of the employees at Croatian Forest Ltd shows that the generation which started working at the company when it was established in the early 1991 is retiring. Will the lost years without timely recruitment and training of personnel, especially forestry engineers/masters and technicians, create problems in the business of this state-owned company?

The Croatian Forestry Association (CFA) has dealt with the topic of education and employment in forestry on several occasions. At the Days of Croatian Forestry, held in 1999 in Ogulin and Bjelolasica, one of the professional topics of the 103rd CFA Assembly was "Employment of forestry workers and development of entrepreneurship in forestry". As part of the 109th CFA Assembly, at the Days of Croatian

Forestry in 2005, a conference was held in Karlovac focusing on "Secondary-school and higher forestry education in Croatia with a special emphasis on the needs of forestry practice." The Editorial of Forestry Journal 9-10 from 2012 addressed employment in forestry. It was stated that "for the past several years there has been no permanent employment of forestry engineers, but rather temporary employment or employment under various contracts." This was a period in which graduates with a master's degree in forestry thronged employment agencies and had a hard time even getting an internship. When the company Croatian Forests Ltd advertised for the post of district rangers at the beginning of 2015, as many as 220 candidates applied but only 79 were accepted. Not even ten years later, job advertisements for internship in traditionally forest regions such as Slavonia, do not attract young foresters with master's degrees. According to the Editorial of Forestry Journal 7-9 from 2011 "... this issue of Forestry Journal states that the enrolment quota for the school year 2011/2012 for the profession of forestry technician was 290 students in 11 (!) secondary forestry schools, while at the same time there were over 500 unemployed forestry engineers registered with the Croatian Employment Service." Obviously, there was discord between education and the labour market, as well as the inability of employers to recognize the need to hire young forestry technician who should replace the departing generations and become the bearers of operational forestry.

Another long-lasting problem, apart from an insufficient number of professional workers, is the lack of manpower to perform field work, from forest management and silviculture to logging operations. Modern technologies have compensated for the part of this problem, but some operations cannot be done without human labour. Will it become normal in the future not to implement management regulations because it is not possible to find adequate and trained workforce? All factors within the forestry profession, including the responsible ministry and the Ministry of Science and Education, should think about it and act on it.

Editorial Board