

Best Practice cases in VET - Bulgaria (Partners: LUT)

Vocational Mobile Training of Forest Workers In Bulgaria, Bulgarian – Swiss collaboration programme

The training of forest workers in the various forest activities after 1990 has been terminated for more than 10 years. Strong need of qualified workers emerged, and this is still the case in timber harvesting, due to the increased demand of timber for the renewing economy in Bulgaria, timber harvesting from the forest increased. many young workers, which were not trained for the specific timber harvesting activities, started their work in forests.

The vocational mobile training for operating with chain-saws and bush cutters was launched based on the idea of the Bulgarian – Swiss Forestry Programme (BSFP) and in 2003 the first Mobile Training Unit for forest workers was established by the Vocational Gymnasium on wood processing and construction in Haskovo, which was later on transferred to the Vocational Forest in Bansko. A Concept and a Strategy for the establishment of Mobile Training Units (MTU) was developed and a training curriculum was approved. The achieved results and the undisputable advantages of the vocational mobile training raised the interest towards this form of training and in 2004 the BSFP equipped another two MTU, which were assigned to The Vocational Gymnasium on Forestry and Wood Processing in the town of Teteven and the University of Forestry in Sofia.

For approximately three and a half years the MTU under the BSFP has conducted totally 40 courses and trained 876 forest workers and instructors, while the trend was to increase the number of trainees during the separate periods – 106 in the first year compared to 314 trainees for the first 9 months of the last year.

Data about populated areas, the courses were held in shows that the MTU covered areas with an intensive timber harvesting i.e. including both the mountainous and the plain regions in Bulgaria, which is a good evidence for their activity and shows the advantages of the vocational mobile training.

The indicators of sustainability of the vocational mobile training are as follows:

- A Strategy and a Concept for vocational mobile training of forest workers in Bulgaria was developed.
- A training curricula has been developed and approved, which is complied with the contemporary requirements for conducting forest workers training and include the best European practices in felling and initial processing of timber with Vocational Mobile Trainings are managed on entire self-financing based on the fees for training, which the trainees or their employers pay.
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- Training materials were developed and published, such as: "Manual for the preparation of chain-saw operators in timber harvesting", which was run out of and prepared for printing under the title of "Handbook for training instructors and chain-saw operators in timber harvesting" and "Manual for the use of timber from forests". The listed training materials were printed with the financial support of the BSFP and were distributed for free to the trainees.
- In order to support the training process, the educational film of Stihl company "Safety and economic use of chain-saw" was translated and adapted into Bulgarian. It is used by the MTUs for visualization during the training sessions.



Fig.7 Equipment of Mobile Training Unit

- The evaluation and the outcomes of the vocational training of forest workers” made by Mr. Alan Kocher, Director of the training forestry centre in Lys reports the positive impact of the Mobile training unit and its favourable influence in training forest workers on site, where they work.
- The use of chain-saws not only for timber harvesting but also in other sectors such as electro distribution, railway transport and water and sewerage system imposes the introduction of training to operate with chain-saws and bushcutters outside the forest sector, which increases the perimeter of activity of the training institutions, including training with the MTU.



Fig.8 Conducting a training in operating with chain-saws and bush cutters – Mobile Training Unit in Haskovo, June 2003

- The ownership of the Mobile Training Units was transferred to the training institutions and the transfer documentation includes clauses, which oblige the training institutions to use the vehicles and the equipment only for the purposes of the Mobile Training Units, in conducting vocational training for acquiring the authorization to operate with chain-saws and bush-cutters.

- The lecturers of the MTUs are qualified specialists in their field of work, who have sufficient experience in organization and conducting theoretical and practical training.

The BSFP contributions can be summarized in the following areas:

- Support to the socio-economic and silvicultural surveys;
- Improvement of the political dialogue in the forest sector and improvement of the political framework;
- Support to the updating of the normative basis in forests;
- Extending the training curricula of the University of Forestry, raising qualification of people working in forests and exchange of experience between Bulgaria and Switzerland;
- Adaptation and institutionalization of the best practices in the Bulgarian forest sector.