

FOREST ACADEMY

Program for Increasing Dialogue on Forest in Society

Forest Academy – Program for Increasing Dialogue on Forest in Society is a long-term communication program which aims at increasing social capital (i.e. knowledge, trust and networks). It is based on a series of cross-sectoral forums that utilise a specific structure and educational working methods. In Finland, the Forest Academy communication program has been running successfully since 1996.

Social capital – a bridge to the future

Forestry is often viewed as a problem for society in issues related e.g. to biodiversity or forest fires. However, from the point of view of sustainable development, responsible forest utilisation can be considered as a solution to many societal challenges. A key factor for future success of the forest sector is its ability to operate in a cross-sectoral spirit.

In many countries, when involving in interaction with other sectors, the forest sector has realised having insufficient trust, networks and shared views. There has been a lack of **social capital**.

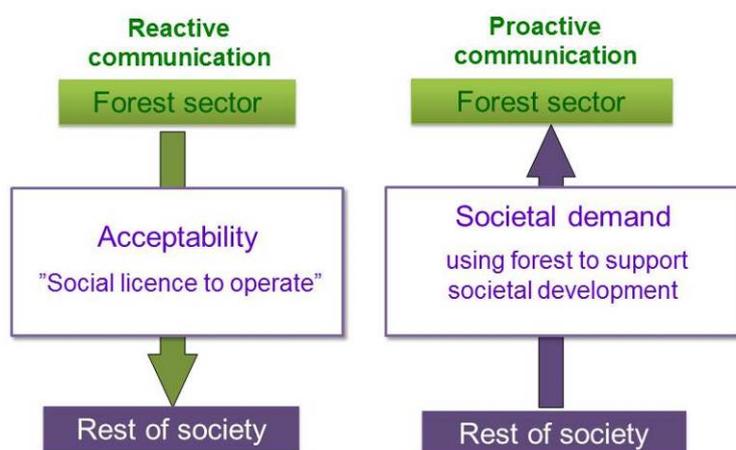
However, social capital is needed to improve the influence, image and attractiveness of the sector in the eyes of the rest of society. Social capital creates positive opportunities for influence, and an essential bridge for initiating cross-sectoral action. This is why many organisations have included the creation of social capital into their strategies.

Small proportion of the forest sector in the national economy of a country is not an obstacle to increase social capital and cross-sectoral influence.



Forest Academy – a communication program

Forest Academy is a **communication program** to increase social capital. A basic element for creating social capital is a reasonable mix of reactive and proactive communication.



By reactive communication it is tried to increase the acceptability of the forest sector's present activities, i.e. achieve social licence to operate, whereas, by proactive communication it is tried to identify societal demand for the potential benefits and services offered by the forest sector (e.g. rural development, employ-

ment, energy production, climate change, biodiversity, ecosystem services).

In order to create societal demand for the services of the forest sector in a proactive manner, Forest Academy's working methods differ from most seminars, workshops and conferences.

The working methods are designed to ensure effective information input, innovative group work results, and a relaxing atmosphere for network building.

Benefits for the participants

Forest Academy **forums** bring together a mix of decision-makers and opinion leaders from the forest sector and the rest of society.

For the participants, a Forest Academy forum offers a meeting point, where they can gain new insight to the potentials that forests have in supporting the resolution of societal challenges that are in the joint interest of the participants.

Each Forest Academy forum is participated by 30 to 35 societal decision-makers and opinion-leaders. They are selected to form a balanced mix of persons representing politics, public administration, interest groups, business, R&D, media, NGOs and culture.



A coalition of different persons participates on each Forest Academy forum. For those who have already participated in, will be arranged follow-up seminars and excursions.

As a result from participating in a Forest Academy forum, the participant:

- has gained high quality **information** on forests, their importance and the possibilities of the forest sector to contribute to the resolution of wider societal challenges
- has **expanded his/her views** and is increasingly **interested** in the possibilities to utilise forests in support of societal development
- has created new **cross-sectoral contacts** with persons who are interested in similar societal challenges
- is aware of who are the most potential **co-operation** partners - both in the forest sector and outside - when using forests to support societal development, and knows these potential partners in person
- feels a sense of **influence** on the forest sector's strategies to support societal development in the future
- has gained new **faith** in the forest sector and its future.



Forest Academy – a package directly to the use

The Forest Academy communication concept has been customised into an easily applicable format. It is applicable in different national conditions and topics. The client is provided with abilities to market, plan and implement the Forest Academy communication program.

The package includes:

1. Manual for planning and implementing the Forest Academy Courses (in English)
2. Material for marketing the Forest Academy Courses for potential participants (in English)
3. Model documents (in English)
4. Four-day training of the project personnel in Finland (in English)
5. Remote consulting in planning and implementing of the first forum
6. Participation of two representatives to the Finnish Forest Academy for Decision-Makers (FADM) as observers (simultaneous translation in English)

The total price (net) is **EUR 40.000** (excl. VAT). The price does not include:

1. Travel and accommodation costs related to training and FADM sessions.
2. Personal consultancy during implementation of forums in target country.



The organization behind the product

The Forest Academy communication tool is produced by the **Finnish Forest Association** which is a non-governmental, non-profit cooperation and communication body joining all major forest-related interests in Finland.

Since 1996, the Finnish Forest Association has organised 40 forums for top-level decision-makers from the forest sector and rest of society, under the project **Forest Academy for Decision-Maker**. So far, 1 200 top-level societal decision-makers, most of them acting outside the forest sector, have participated in the forums.

Forest Academy for Decision-Makers has received several valued acknowledgements from Finnish forest sector organizations.

The Forest Academy communication package has been sold to Latvia, Tanzania (UONGOZI Institute) and Costa Rica (CATIE).

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