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Competence - the key to enterprise development

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Abstract: In the near future forestry will face huge challenges. Increasing requirements for the protection of environment and securing of ecological functions go along with a growing demand for timber both for industrial and energy use. But there is concern that the availability of keen and competent workers and entrepreneurs will become limited due to demographic change, decreasing attractiveness of forestry work compared to competing professions. Generally, the chance to recruit a work-force both in sufficient numbers and with required physical and mental capacities will become one of the key factors for the future of forestry.

Forestry contractors more and more assume a key role in providing and maintaining the human and technical capacities for forest operations. Over the last decades a most radical transformation in forestry has taken place in work organisation in forest operation. Today, in most regions in Europe and world-wide the majority of forest operations are contracted to service enterprises, particularly when mechanised harvesting is concerned. Contractors are stipulated to fulfil complex requirements related to environmental protection and ecological functions of forests, and last but not least they have to provide operations with high productivity and cost effectiveness. Therefore, contractors need high and increasing competences for running a business. Further, they need competent staff, and again they need competences to perform as responsible employers who offer secure, safe, and attractive jobs.

Development of enterprises which provide services in forest operations is the core objective of the representative organisation of the forestry contracting sector in Europe, ENFE. An ongoing mission is to raise awareness on the political level that “sustainable forestry needs competent work-force and viable contractors”. This goes along with research and development activities to enhance the competences of contractors and their employees. The scope of activities ranges from facilitating the development of standards for basic skills, like chainsaw operations, and leads to the development of curricula for entrepreneurial competences of forestry contractors, that are based on the actual and emerging competence demands for contractors, and on the state of the art knowledge about good practice in forest management and operations.

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