**First announcement**

Symposium

**Forest Education – Merging theory and practice with help of digital tools**

October 2-4, 2023, Finland

with hybrid participation option

**Background**

A continuous discussion in forest education has been so-called gaps, they are differences between students’ learning outcomes or graduates’ competences and working life needs (Arevalo et al 2012). It is evident that gap analysis has its roots in aims and methods of teaching which are behind the learning outcomes. Therefore, the discussion about gaps is a debate on curriculum, teaching practices, theoretical studies and professional working life.

It has been found that professionals continuously perceive larger gaps both in learning outcomes and in curricula of forest education than teachers and students (Rekola & Sharik 2022). It can be asked first, why professionals are more critical towards education than others or in which extent perceived gaps in education are real and in which extent biased. A hypothesis is that more interaction between teachers and professionals might create common ground among participants regarding teaching evaluations and thus reduce differences in gap perceptions. A particular question is could any digital tools such as platforms or online discussions work towards common understanding of educational aims and achievements.

**Target**

Symposium participants will discuss gaps in forest education at university and college level including further education, curriculum of forest education such as Forest Education Global Core Curriculum (FEGCO), and digital tools and platforms.

The aim of the symposium is to discuss about

-how education could find best ways to combine theory and practice

-how digital tools could be used to enhance forest education.

**Content**

The symposium will consist of invited keynotes and seminars, voluntary papers and round table discussions, short communications, field visits and teaching observations. These activities take place in Helsinki and other places in Southern Finland.

Most activities are also communicated in hybrid mode.

Topics of the symposium (voluntary presentations called for):

1. teaching methods, all aspects accepted, especially how to teach gap areas such socio-economic issues
2. field education in general and using digital tools in field studies in particular
3. teachers’ training, especially how to better cover theory and practice, such teachers’ internships in professional organizations
4. digital tools all kinds
5. further education of university and college level graduates

**Time**: October Mo 2 – Wed 4, 2023

**Place**: University of Helsinki (Helsinki in Viikki campus and field station Hyytiälä), Lohja, Nemus Futurum visit by Metsä Group and partly virtual platform (hybrid).

[**https://www.helsinki.fi/en/about-us/campuses/viikki-campus**](https://www.helsinki.fi/en/about-us/campuses/viikki-campus)

[**https://www.metsagroup.com/metsa-group/experience-metsa/nemus-futurum/**](https://www.metsagroup.com/metsa-group/experience-metsa/nemus-futurum/)

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**Tentative programme:**

**Draft programme**

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| Time | Topic | Details | Place |
| Sun Oct 1 | arriving in Helsinki | get-together | Helsinki city center |
| Mo Oct 2 | opening, keynotes, presentations | presentation and roundtable discussions | Helsinki, Viikki campus |
| Tue Oct 3 | voluntary papers, forest visit | before noon presentations, afternoon visiting forests (Nemus Futurum) & travelling to Hyytiälä, dinner | Viikki campus  Southern Finland, Lohja  Hyytiälä, Juupajoki |
| Wed Oct 4 | Observing field education and intro to field station | intro: living lab building concept, SMEAR station  teaching observation: Introduction to forest sciences BSc course teaching  travelling back to Helsinki | Hyytiälä field station |

**PRESENTATIONS and POSTERS**

online presentations tbc

**Organisers:**

Mika Rekola (chair) University of Helsinki (UH)

IUFRO RG6.09 “Forest education” in cooperation with IUFRO-IFSA Task force on forest education, Mika Rekola, UH & Sandra Rodriguez Autonomous University of Chihuahua Mexico

Local partners

**Registration**

Registration will open during April.

Number of onsite participants is limited up to 35

**Further Information:**

iufro RG6.09 webpage: <https://www.iufro.org/science/divisions/division-6/60000/60900/>