

Digitally Enhanced Education for Forest, Tourism & Wellness



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Summary Report I3.5

IDENTIFICATION OF FOREST- RELATED SKILLS



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INTRODUCTION

This document is a result of previous desktop-based secondary data and focus group interviews (primary data) examining existing business practices in Ireland and Denmark, focusing on forest-based business opportunities such as forest wellness, forest culinary, and forest tourism and existing vocational education practices in Finland, Iceland and Slovenia in the forest-based educational contents.

The first part of the analysis involved identifying reliable sources of businesses within Ireland and Denmark and conducting desk-top analysis. The research compared business practices in both countries, focusing on innovative business models, sustainable forestry businesses and tourism initiatives. Specific emphasis was placed on Denmark's leadership in green and sustainable tourism practices and Ireland's growing investment in nature-based enterprises. In evaluating forest-based business offerings, categories such as forest wellness (e.g., guided nature therapy, forest bathing), forest culinary (e.g., foraged food tours, culinary workshops), and forest tourism (e.g., eco-lodging, heritage trails) were identified. The second part of the analysis employed focus group interviews and identified gaps in the market that were later used for the design of competence framework and in parallel the design of online teaching materials in the forest-based contents.

The second part of the analysis involved identifying existing vocational education practices in Iceland, Slovenia and Finland and creating desk-top analysis. Existing programs promoting forest-based education contents were identified and presented. Here, especially the existing example from Finland, offering Vocational qualification in Natural and Environmental Protection offered a useful base to identify competence framework. Further analysis employed focus group interviews and identified gaps in the education market that were later used for the design of competence framework and in parallel the design of online teaching materials in the forest-based content.

By synthesizing findings from primary and secondary sources, this methodology identifies best practices, opportunities, and gaps in forest-based business sectors to present innovative, useful and competent teaching materials for VET and businesses in order to create business opportunities and fulfill the gap in the market of forest-based tourism, well-being and culinary. The comparative approach highlights successful strategies, offering a foundation for proposing innovative competence framework, bringing together business and educational aspects of forests, and creating a foundation for innovative ForestWell online learning content.

01

METHODOLOGY





1 METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study is based on desktop research, a secondary data collection approach, mixed with focus group interviews that systematically review relevant gaps in vocational education and SMEs market with a specific focus on forest-related topics such as forest wellness, forest culinary, and forest tourism. This method enables an in-depth understanding of current educational practices, curricula, and trends within Slovenia, Iceland, and Finland and current business enterprises in Denmark and Ireland.

The research process began with defining clear research parameters to ensure focused data collection. In the context of VET research in Slovenia, Iceland and Finland these parameters included: (1) identifying existing Vocational education programs related to forest, nature and well-being (2) identifying gaps in the Vocational programs related to forest, nature and well-being education and (3) identifying skills needed to develop effective educational and business programs in the forest-related contents. In the context of business and SMEs in Denmark and Ireland, these parameters included: (1) identifying existing businesses related to forest, nature and well-being and (2) identifying gaps in the market related to the business offer in the context of forest, nature and well-being and (3) identifying skills needed to develop effective educational and business programs in the forest-related contents.

The collected materials were analyzed using a comparative approach to identify similarities and differences in how forest-related content is integrated into vocational education and in business practice. Special attention was paid to programs that blend theoretical knowledge with hands-on, experiential learning. For example, Finland's strong tradition of forest-based education and Slovenia's innovative wellness programs were juxtaposed with Iceland's unique focus on nature tourism.

In evaluating forest-based business offerings in Ireland and Denmark, categories such as forest wellness (e.g., guided nature therapy, forest bathing), forest culinary (e.g., foraged food tours, culinary workshops), and forest tourism (e.g., eco-lodging, heritage trails) were analyzed. Sources from tourism agencies, case studies, and online business directories provided insights into the development, marketing, and customer engagement practices associated with these offerings.

The results of the mix-method research were synthesized to highlight and identify a foundation for understanding how the ForestWell module can enhance and fulfill existing gaps in pertinent countries and across the EU.

02

RESULTS





2 RESULTS

2.1 Finland's Forest-Related Education Sector and Opportunities for Development

2.1.1 Introduction

Forests are integral to Finland's identity and sustainability, shaping its culture, economy, and education system. The country boasts one of the highest forest coverages in Europe, with approximately 75% of its land area cloaked in woodlands. 70% of forests are private, all the forests are open for everyone in accordance with the "everymen rights".

Finland has about 168.000 lakes and 179.000 islands. Much of the geography of Finland is a result of the Ice Age. The glaciers were thicker and lasted longer in Fennoscandia compared with the rest of Europe. Its highest point, the Halti at 1,324 metres (4,344 ft), is found in the extreme north of Lapland at the border between Finland and Norway.

This extensive resource has spurred the development of forest-based education programs across multiple levels. This report examines Finland's existing forest-related educational services, evaluates gaps, and identifies opportunities for free educational programs to enhance forest-based and business skills.





Existing Educational Programs and Certifications

Finland's education sector integrates forest-related content through diverse programs, ranging from primary education to vocational training and advanced certifications.

Environmental education is provided by Parks and Wildlife Finland, Wildlife Service Finland, other units of the Metsähallitus /Forestry Authority group and Forestry Ltd alike.

- A large number of Metsähallitus / Forestry Authority staff members interact with children, adolescents and educators while working on environmental education and communication addressed to young people.
- Every year, some 37,000 children and adolescents are encountered at Metsähallitus' service points around Finland.
- In particular, these encounters take the form of guided activities, including tours of exhibitions and guided walks on nature trails at visitor centres and Science Centre Pilke, in Haltia Nature School as well as in Junior Ranger activities.
- Additionally, Metsähallitus organises events, offers support and training for teachers and educators, produces digital teaching materials, carries out projects and supervises on- the-job learners.
- Forestry Authority also interact with organisations working with children and adolescents and other stakeholders.

Vocational education, tourism 150 cp (Cp = credit point):

- Curriculum basically only in Finnish and Swedish, but some of the vocational qualification criteria is available in English such as Further Vocational Qualification in Tourism Services
- One of the units can be related to forest-based activities: Providing tourism activity services, 45 cp

Students know how to:

- present tourism activities and the operating environment
- plan or develop tourism activities for different customer groups
- prepare for providing tourism activity services and customer service situations
- work in tourism activity tasks
- comply with safety instructions and regulations
- follow the principles of sustainable development in their work
- conclude customer service situations and check for customer satisfaction
- assess and develop their work.

Further Vocational Qualification in Tourism (120 cp)

1. Further Vocational Qualification in Tourism Services

Unit: Providing tourism activity services, 45 cp

- Present tourism activities and the operating environment
- plan or develop tourism activities for different customer groups
- prepare for providing tourism activity services and customer service situations
- work in tourism activity tasks
- comply with safety instructions and regulations
- follow the principles of sustainable development in their work
- conclude customer service situations and check for customer satisfaction
- assess and develop their work.



2. Further Vocational Qualification in Guide Services

- carefully plan and provide customer-centric guide services independently and responsibly
- productise, market and price different guide services
- work adeptly and flexibly with partners and customers in different tourist guide tasks in Finland and abroad
- guide and serve customers with good language proficiency
- ensure customer safety and address exceptional situations
- assess and develop their work.

3. Vocational qualification in Natural and Environmental Protection 180 cp

Content only partially available in English. Very good content to benchmark for Forestwell – courses. Competence areas are:

- Environmental Protection
- Reindeer Farming
- Nature-based Services

One example: Unit: Nature-based wellness services, 20 cp includes eg:

- understand the essential content of the basic elements and prerequisites of a nature-based welfare service
- separates nature-based welfare services from other nature activities
- names the well-being effects of nature and their generation mechanisms.

Interest in Free Training Programs

Feedback from Finland's education sector and forest-related industries reveals a strong interest in free training programs that address evolving needs. Topics of interest and potential training contents are:

- Marketing and sales (20% of respondents)
- Responsible and sustainable management (20% of respondents)
- Digital contents (20% of respondents)
- Other: Language skills, Productizing and pricing, New customer segmentation

Potential Training Content

Based on feedback, the following content areas are recommended for new or expanded training programs:

1. Forest Wellness Techniques: Training educators and practitioners in forest bathing, mindfulness exercises, and eco-therapy to integrate wellness into educational and recreational programs.
2. Product Development and Value Addition: Workshops on creating high-value products from forest resources, such as teas, salves, and artisanal crafts, while maintaining sustainability.
3. Digital Marketing and Branding: Equipping forest-based businesses and educators with tools for online marketing, storytelling, and audience engagement.

Recommendations

To strengthen forest-related education in Finland, the following actions are recommended:

- Expand Free Training Programs: Offer workshops and courses addressing sustainability, wellness, and forest-based business skills.
- Enhance Collaboration – also internationally: Encourage partnerships between schools, universities, businesses to create comprehensive programs. Finnish people are very international and willing to learn about the existing practices abroad, thus, also international collaboration is desired.



- Develop Online Resources: Create accessible e-learning platforms for forest-related training.
- Foster Innovation: Support the development of new educational models, such as hybrid outdoor-digital learning experiences.
- Monitor Impact: Evaluate the outcomes of educational initiatives through regular surveys and case studies.

2.1.2 Conclusion

Finland’s education sector is uniquely positioned to lead in forest-related training and innovation, leveraging its rich natural resources and strong educational infrastructure. By expanding existing programs and introducing targeted training initiatives, Finland can further its reputation as a global leader in sustainable forest education. With an emphasis on collaboration, creativity, and accessibility, these efforts can drive environmental stewardship, economic growth, and wellness for generations to come.



2.2 Iceland’s Forest-Related Education Sector and Opportunities for Development

2.2.1 Introduction

Iceland, known for its dramatic landscapes and sparse tree cover, has embraced reforestation efforts to combat erosion, enhance biodiversity, and address climate change. Despite limited natural forests, Iceland’s commitment to ecological preservation and environmental education positions it uniquely in developing forest-related educational initiatives. This report examines existing forest-



related education programs, evaluates the interest in expanding such initiatives, and identifies opportunities for free training programs in Iceland's education sector.

Existing Educational Programs and Certifications

Despite Iceland's limited forest resources, educational institutions have begun integrating forest-related content into broader environmental and sustainability programs.

Náttúruskólinn (16+ years)

Their goals are:

- Increase children/adolescents' self-esteem and activity through collaborative challenges and training.
- Live education on nature, nature conservation, history and cultural heritage.
- Engage and train students' creative thinking and skills, with new approaches.
- Sowing seeds to inspire interest and respect for nature for the future.
- Teach the basics of tourism and natural literacy.
- Work with each individual's strengths.

Through live education about nature, individuals gain an increased interest and attraction for nature. The project comes with challenges that empower individuals and then work in a group as well as with each individual's strengths. The project strengthens skills in collaboration and togetherness outside the computer world. Increased knowledge and connection to the environment can even increase the likelihood of permanent connection to the environment.

The project is health promoting and promotes interest in outdoor activities, which can develop more weeks and family togetherness going forward. It is easy to work with mindfulness in nature.





Markmið – Náttúruskólinn

What are they doing:

The course stays at the pavilion at Laugarfell on Fljótsdalsheiði and at the Wilderness Center in Fljótsdalur. Both places offer safe facilities for the children and the environment is particularly suitable for live education and connection to nature. Outdoor teaching is a form of teaching that generally reaches a wide range of students. The popularity of outdoor teaching is growing and Icelanders have looked a lot towards the Nordic countries in this regard. There they have done outdoor teaching diligently over the years. Outdoor teaching is often suitable for students who are repelled by the book or inactive in traditional education. Their self-esteem grows as they discover their own strengths. In nature, the endless possibilities for learning and its complexity are unquestionable. In outdoor teaching, students are given the opportunity to use all their senses, along with personal and direct experiences of the reality-game. They also have the opportunity to act, play on their own, feel curious, imagined, experienced and empathetic as they grow and discover. There is no substitute for the natural environment in raising children, nature is not organized and therefore both varied and exciting.

What is lacking:

Focus on outdoor teaching not specifically in forests. Focus on personal growth not wellbeing. No connection to tourism

Garðyrkjuskólinn á Reykjum (16+ years)

Gardening has been taught at Reykjavik in Ölfus since 1939. First as an independent school, but then as part of the Agricultural University of Iceland. In the fall of 2022, the Horticultural School became part of the Polytechnic School of Suðurland. Reykja's nature and environment play a major role in school activities and students learn to use nature in a variety of ways. The program is available both on-site and distance learning. In local studies, students attend the school for 2 winters or 4 semesters. Distance learning is taken at half the speed, so the theoretical part takes 4 years. Apprenticeship in horticulture is practical workplace training for 60 weeks at an apprenticeship site recognized by the school.

What are they doing:

The aim of the forest and nature study program in Reykjar is to prepare students for diverse jobs in the field of forestry in such a way that they meet the qualification requirements of the job, and to prepare students for further studies. A forest technician/horticulturist in the field of forest and nature works in the care of woodlands and green areas near settlements, often in the management of outdoor areas. They are in charge of supervision, project management and education in the field of forestry, reforestation and other land improvements. A forest technician/horticulturist in the field of forest and nature takes care of safety, complies with the laws and regulations that affect his field of work and is capable of providing extensive advice. The program provides students with basic knowledge in jobs related to forestry and environmental care. A good part of the study takes place in the forest near Reykjavík, but in addition to basic subjects, students learn about planting forest plants, caring for the growing forest, felling trees and processing forest products. Emphasis is placed on forestry with a view to rational use of nature.



Garðyrkjuskólinn Reykjum | Fjölbrotaskóli Suðurlands (fsu.is)

What is lacking:

Nothing on using the forest for tourism, or for wellbeing, nothing on utilizing the forest for other than growing it.

Icelandic forest service

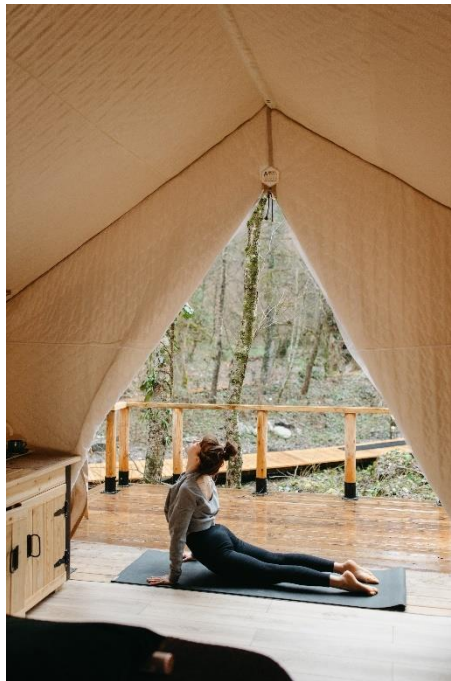
The Icelandic Forest Service (IFS) is a governmental institution that works with and for the government, but also the public and other interested parties, on the subjects of research, development, consultation and distribution of knowledge within forestry. The institution is also Iceland's representative in forest-related cooperation with other countries. For over a century the IFS has been protecting and expanding the remaining native birchwoods in Iceland as well as executing afforestation projects and growing commercial forests on its lands situated in different locations throughout the country. In recent years, with ever clearer signs of global warming, carbon sequestration has become one of the most important drivers of new afforestation projects in Iceland.

What are they doing:

The Icelandic forest service main goal is to support forestry in Iceland with research and education. They have a wide range of educational material on their website ranging from material for young kids to educational materials designed as basic education for foresters. Projects with emphasis placed on participants learning about the forest, exploring it and its diverse aspects. There is also an opportunity for benefit and experience in school work and for the general public.

What is lacking:

Nothing on using the forest for tourism, or for wellbeing, nothing on utilizing the forest for other than growing it.





Interest in Free Training Programs

Feedback from Iceland's educational institutions and environmental organizations highlights significant interest in free training programs. Special topics of Interest are:

- Reforestation Techniques: Training on tree species selection, planting methods, and long-term forest management.
- Forest-Based Business Skills: Workshops on integrating forestry with tourism, wellness, and culinary industries.
- Eco-Therapy and Forest Wellness: Techniques for incorporating forest environments into mental health and wellness programs.

Recommendations

To expand forest-related education in Iceland, the following actions are recommended:

- Develop Free Training Programs: Focus on sustainability, business skills, and wellness applications.
- Enhance Collaboration: Partner with schools, NGOs, and businesses to create comprehensive educational resources.
- Leverage Technology: Use digital platforms for remote learning and resource dissemination.
- Promote Innovation: Encourage creative approaches to integrating forests into tourism, wellness, and education.

2.2.2 Conclusion

Iceland's forest-related education sector is poised for growth, driven by the country's commitment to sustainability and reforestation. By expanding educational opportunities and integrating forest-related content into diverse fields, Iceland can foster greater environmental stewardship, economic innovation, and community engagement. Training programs and collaborative initiatives will ensure that Iceland's efforts align with global best practices, positioning it as a leader in reforestation education and sustainable development.





2.3 Slovenia's Forest-Related Education Sector and Opportunities for Development

2.3.1 Introduction

Slovenia is a country where forests cover approximately 58% of the total land area, ranking among the most forested countries in Europe. Forests play a significant role in Slovenia's ecological, cultural, and economic landscapes, influencing biodiversity conservation, tourism, and sustainability initiatives. Slovenia's commitment to forest management is evident in its educational programs, which integrate forest-related content across various levels of learning. Below are existing educational initiatives, assesses gaps and interests, and provides recommendations for enhancing forest-related education in Slovenia.

Existing Educational Programs and Certifications

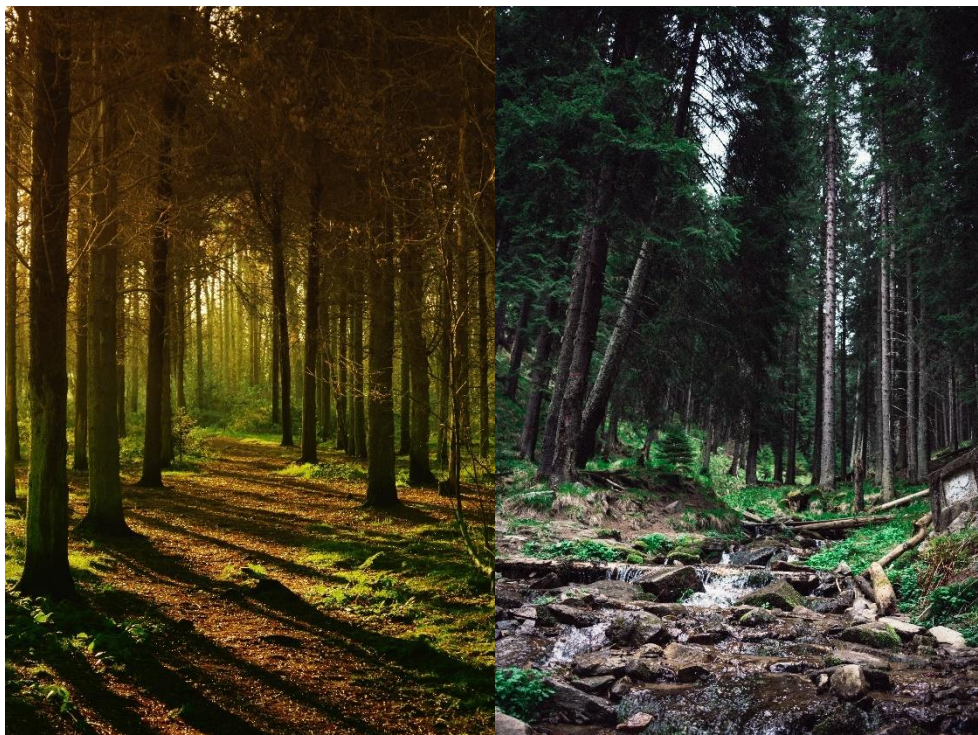
Slovenia's education sector incorporates forest-related content through a range of programs, from early education to higher education and vocational training.

a. Vocational and Technical Training

Forestry Technician Programs: Vocational schools such as the Biotechnical Center Naklo offer forestry-focused training that includes sustainable logging practices, forest ecology, and timber processing.

b. Higher Education

University-Level Forestry Degrees: Universities, including the University of Ljubljana, offer degrees in forestry, ecology, and environmental science. These programs cover advanced topics such as forest policy, biodiversity conservation, and carbon sequestration.





Interest in Free Training Programs

Stakeholders across Slovenia's education and environmental sectors have expressed significant interest in free training programs. These initiatives could address skill gaps and expand the integration of forest-based learning.

Potential Training Content

Feedback from stakeholders suggests several areas for expanding training content:

- *Forest Wellness and Eco-Therapy*: Integrating mindfulness practices, forest bathing, and therapeutic uses of forest environments into wellness and recreational programs.
- *Sustainable Product Development*: Workshops on creating high-value products from forest resources, including herbal teas, essential oils, and artisanal crafts.

Recommendations

To strengthen forest-related education in Slovenia, the following actions are recommended:

- *Expand Free Training Opportunities*: Focus on programs addressing sustainability, wellness, and forest-based entrepreneurship.
- *Foster Public-Private Partnerships*: Encourage collaboration between educational institutions, businesses, and NGOs to create comprehensive learning resources.
- *Leverage Digital Tools*: Develop e-learning platforms and online resources to make forest-related education more accessible.
- *Promote Innovation*: Support creative approaches to integrating forests into tourism, education, and wellness sectors.

2.3.2 Conclusion

Slovenia's extensive forest resources and strong tradition of environmental stewardship provide a solid foundation for expanding forest-related education. By addressing identified gaps and introducing targeted training initiatives, Slovenia can further enhance its leadership in sustainable forestry and eco-education. Collaboration, innovation, and accessibility will be key to ensuring these efforts contribute to long-term ecological, social, and economic benefits.

2.4 Ireland's Forest-Related Businesses and Opportunities for Educational Programs

2.4.1 Introduction

Ireland's rich forest landscape presents a significant opportunity for developing forest-based businesses and enhancing public engagement with forest-related activities.

Ireland's forests cover approximately 11% of the land area, equating to around 770,000 hectares. This is significantly below the European average but growing due to afforestation initiatives. These forests comprise a mix of native woodlands and commercial plantations dominated by non-native species like Sitka spruce.

Key Forest Areas

Prominent forested areas include:

- *Wicklow Mountains National Park*: Known for its native oak woodlands and recreational trails.
- *Killarney National Park*: Home to some of Ireland's oldest oak and yew woodlands.
- *Ballyhoura Forest*: A hub for mountain biking and adventure tourism.



Ireland's forests are managed by entities like Coillte and private landowners, focusing on sustainability, biodiversity, and recreational use.

The identification of current issues and gaps in tourism and wellness businesses and industry in Ireland are identified in two ways (A Review of Forest Recreation Research Needs in Ireland):

- The identification of best practices in integrating forest recreation with tourism development.
- The examination of successes and failures, and what can be learned from them

In Ireland, the concept of forest recreation as an integral part of tourism is new although, given the access issue to land in general for recreation, Irish forests are a major part of the outdoor recreation infrastructure that services the tourism sector. However, within current tourism and rural development structures, opportunities exist to provide a supportive framework in which it could be further developed.

The Fáilte Ireland Special Interest Tourism (SIT) provides measures to encourage greater uptake of outdoor activity-based tourism. The measures only include a commitment to ensure sensitive development in relation to the conservation and protection of the natural and built environment.



Forest-Related Products and Services for Guests and Visitors

Examples of private sector smes working with community initiatives:

- *Ballyhoura mountain & forest trail*

Ballyhoura Mountain and Forest Trail is a state-of-the-art mountain bike facility. The park has over 98Km of sustainable trails and the associated car parking, visitor center and trail facilities. Like



North Wales this development is seen as considerably adding to the attractiveness of this area as a tourism destination and supporting rural communities and national spatial distribution of tourism. They are well established in other forest experiences such as well-being (e.g., Yoga Walks, Dance, Mindfulness, Meditation, Mudras) recreational and forest experiences (e.g., outdoor pottery classes and crafts, festivals, events).

– *Lough Key Forest Activity Park*

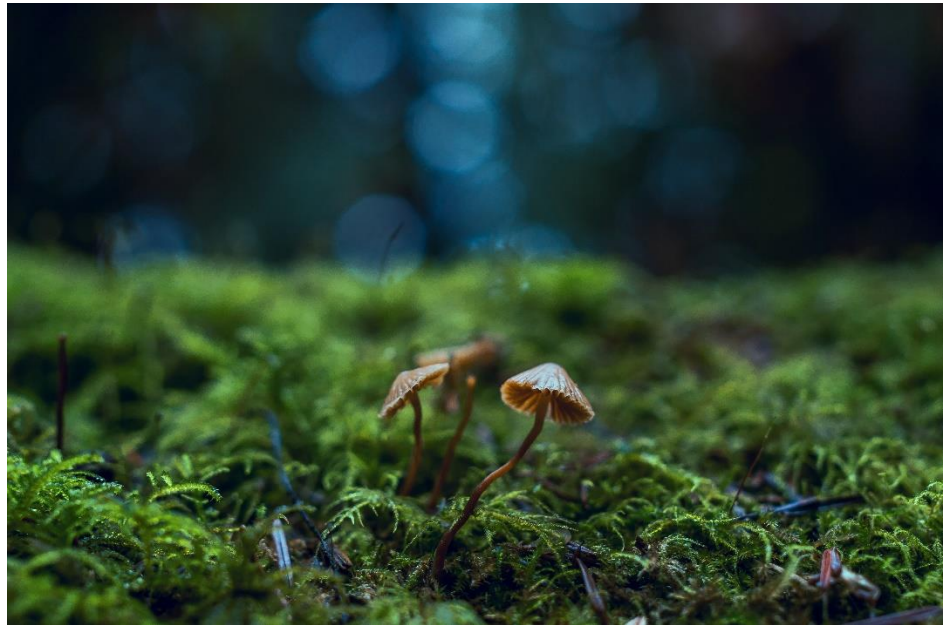
Lough Key Forest Activity Park contributes significantly to the economic redevelopment of the predominantly rural area and is already a major resort-type.

Coillte believes that this redevelopment provides a model for similar forest park developments both in Ireland and abroad, marrying as it does landowners, with commercial objectives, tourism businesses, and organisations such as the local authorities, who have other objectives including the economic and social development of rural communities.

Lough Key Forest Experiences include local tourism SMEs e.g., Electric Bike Trails and Zipit Forest Adventures.

A circular trail which brings together the existing tunnels and a treetop walk in an innovative and iconic mix which will attract a cross-section of visitors:

- The Adventure House for the 15 to 35-year olds
- A welcome center with catering, retail and rest facilities
- The pay to play zone for younger people
- A range of forest recreation activities in the surrounding park
- Caravan and Camping Park and car parking for over 300 vehicles.



Interest in Free Training Programs

Training needs for forest tourism, recreation and wellbeing SMEs should address the questions on:

- HOW TO CONNECT WITH AND LEVERAGE RECREATIONAL FORESTS AS A BUSINESS RESOURCE: How to align and implement local recreational forest experiences into existing experience offering or as an opportunity to diversify existing experiences?
- HOW TO COLLABORATE AND NETWORK WITH OTHER BUSINESSES: How to work together as a destination and facilitate visitors needs and demand for experiences and new



experiences? How to pool resources, share forests as a resource? How to complement the resource, identify gaps and overcome challenges unique to forest recreation?

- HOW TO CONNECT WITH VISITORS ONLINE AND OFFLINE: How to promote, connect, showcase and commercialise the forest experience online and offline to potential domestic and international visitors e.g., VR, online bookings, video showcases, Mixed Reality, social media... How to build a brand, marketing campaigns and promote as a recreational forest experience.
- HOW TO BECOME A RECREATIONAL WELLBEING FOREST BUSINESS ENTREPRENEUR: What do you need to know to become a competent recreational wellbeing forest entrepreneur? What skills do you need, how to develop recreational forest products and experiences for the new tourist who is wellbeing and environmentally focused? How to become economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. How to keep on trend and meet customers' expectations?

Training Needs Analysis Study

Pilot Area: Great Western Greenway, Mayo

Wellbeing & recreational forest experiences are already transforming rural communities linking with greenways. However, they lack training, workshops and education in experience development, environmental management and brand development. In 2011, the Greenway became the Irish winner of the annual European Destination of Excellence Award, establishing it as one of the finest trails in Europe. The Great Western Greenway walking and cycling trail is Ireland's fastest growing and most sought-after tourism attraction. Running 44km around the Eastern and Northern stretches of Clew Bay in Co Mayo. Famous recreational forests on this route include:

- Wild Nephin National Park which is Ireland's 6th National Park
- Belleek Woods one of the largest urban woodlands in Europe

Greenways provide opportunities for the development of local businesses that can contribute to health and wellbeing! Greenways provide an excellent opportunity for Irish people to participate in healthy outdoor activities. Evidence from the Waterford Greenway has shown that 50% of users are walkers, this is a hugely important element and shows that Greenways can play a vital part in addressing physical inactivity

- The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport recognises the benefits that can arise from the further development of Greenways in Ireland, as a tourism product with significant potential to attract overseas visitors, for local communities in terms of economic benefits, and for all users as an amenity for physical activity and a contributor to health and wellbeing.

The health of our population is also a major focus for the Government. For example, the National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland – Get Ireland Active, states "physical inactivity is a demonstrated clear risk to health and wellbeing in Ireland. Physical inactivity and sedentary behaviours are associated with numerous chronic diseases. With people no longer as physically active as they should be, there are many threats to our health and wellbeing from being inactive".

Recommendations

Enterprises have received training in Food and Drink Experiences and Culture through the new Fáilte Ireland 'Savour the Greenway Program' however this is the only training received. There is potential for businesses to receive training that references the 'New Tourist' using FORESTWELL particularly on:

- How to mitigate environmental impacts on sites, areas, heritage areas and Special Areas of Conservation
- Experience development and provide a variety of 'New Tourist' experiences e.g., environmentally friendly and climate aligned experiences, wellbeing activities, forest bathing,



foraging. So they can provide new well-being and recreational experiences that will enhance and maintain their competitiveness

- How businesses can market themselves better e.g., through technologies, Virtual Reality, Mixed Reality, 3D brand alignment etc.

2.4.2 Conclusion

Ireland's forest industry holds vast potential for growth through the development of forest-related products and services. By addressing the needs and interests identified in this report, businesses can enhance their offerings, attract more visitors, and contribute to the sustainable management of Ireland's natural heritage. Case studies demonstrate the success of current initiatives and highlight areas for further development, particularly in training and education. With continued investment and innovation, Ireland's forests can become a cornerstone of the country's tourism and wellness industries.



2.5 Denmark's Forest-Related Businesses and Opportunities for Educational Programs

2.5.1 Introduction

Denmark's forest landscapes play an essential role in the country's cultural, ecological, and economic framework. Forest-based businesses in Denmark offer various products and services that attract tourists, support local economies, and promote environmental sustainability. This report examines existing forest-related businesses, evaluates visitor interests, and highlights opportunities for educational programs tailored to industry needs.



Forests cover approximately 14.6% of Denmark’s land area, with an ongoing goal to increase this to 20% by 2100. The forests are a mix of state-owned and privately managed lands, comprising:

- Native deciduous woodlands such as beech and oak.
- Coniferous plantations, including spruce and pine.

Notable Forest Areas

Key forested regions in Denmark include:

- Rold Skov: One of Denmark’s largest forests, known for its biking trails and diverse ecosystems.
- Gribskov: A UNESCO World Heritage site, notable for its ancient trees and biodiversity.

Forest-Related Products and Services for Guests and Visitors

Denmark has a diverse range of businesses offering forest-based products and services. These cater to both domestic and international visitors, blending adventure, wellness, and education with sustainable practices.

- Nature-Based Tourism:* Denmark’s emphasis on sustainable tourism has resulted in a robust offering of nature-based activities. Examples include:
 - Camp Adventure, located in Gissfeld Klosters Skove, offers treetop climbing, ziplining, and the iconic Forest Tower, which provides panoramic views of the surrounding woodlands.
 - Himmelbjerget: A hub for hiking and lake activities in a forested setting, attracting families and eco-tourists.
- Wellness and Mindfulness Programs:* The demand for wellness tourism in Denmark has led to businesses offering forest-based wellbeing services such as:
 - Skovbad (Forest Bathing), modeled after the Japanese Shinrin-yoku, offered by wellness retreats like Nordisk Skovbad.
 - Outdoor yoga and meditation in forest settings, often integrated into retreats or day programs.
- Forest-Driven Culinary Experiences:* Denmark’s gastronomic excellence extends to forest-based culinary activities, such as:
 - Foraging tours to discover wild herbs, berries, and mushrooms.
 - Forest-to-table dining experiences offered by high-end restaurants like Noma, which incorporates forest ingredients into its seasonal menus.
- Educational and Cultural Activities:* Many businesses focus on educational opportunities to deepen visitor engagement with forests:
 - Nature walks with professional guides who explain local flora and fauna.
 - Historical insights into Denmark’s forestry practices, often provided by organizations such as the Danish Forest Association.

Interest in Free Training Programs

Overview of Training Needs

Businesses have expressed significant interest in training programs to enhance their offerings and operate sustainably. Topics of interest include:

- Sustainable forest management.



- Branding and marketing forest-based products.
- Skills in forest culinary arts and the use of wild herbs.
- Health and wellness training focused on forest environments.

Case Study: Nordic Forest Network

The Nordic Forest Network has successfully implemented workshops on sustainable forestry practices, attracting participants from Denmark and neighboring countries. This initiative demonstrates the viability of targeted training programs for forest-based businesses.

Potential Training Content

- Teambuilding programmes: Training in navigation, shelter building, and fire-starting could attract adventure-based businesses and outdoor education providers.
- Developing Forest Products: Guidance on sustainable harvesting, processing techniques, and creating value-added products such as herbal teas or wooden crafts.
- Marketing Strategies: Training on storytelling, branding, and digital marketing to highlight the unique aspects of forest-based offerings.

2.5.2 Conclusion

Denmark's forest-based businesses are poised for growth, driven by rising interest in sustainable tourism and wellness. This report highlights the potential to enhance the industry through targeted training programs, innovative offerings, and strategic marketing. Case studies from existing businesses demonstrate the viability of integrating forest-related activities into diverse service models. With concerted efforts to support these enterprises, Denmark's forests can become a cornerstone of its tourism and cultural identity, while promoting environmental stewardship.



03

**IDENTIFIED
COMPETENCE
FRAMEWORK**





3 IDENTIFIED COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK

Based on the results of desktop research and identified gaps in VET and businesses in the field of forest-related products in wellness, tourism and culinary, the chapter presents identified areas of ForestWell module with competencies and learning outcomes. The Competence framework is the baseline for the further development of learning materials.

Area	Identified competencies	Learning outcomes
Introduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What ForestWell is about? What are we trying to achieve? 2. Digital and VR application to ForestWell 3. Innovation and Adaptability: case studies, support 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand the importance of strong relationships between various stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, employees, communities, and NGOs. 2. Understand social responsibility by considering the well-being of employees, communities, and society at large. Implement fair labor practices, support community development initiatives, and contribute positively to social causes.
Regenerative concept and employed concept	<p>Understanding the concept of regenerative tourism</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conservation and sustainability 2. The concept of regenerative tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Understand sustainability, responsibility and regenerative thinking concepts.
ForestWell experience development (business and tourist point of view)	<p>Creating the wellbeing experience with examples</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intro: what types of experiences 2. Who is ForestWell tourist and their expectations? 3. Creating wellbeing experiences, activities, accommodation and food 4. Diversification of existing forest wellness experiences: farming perspective, tourism businesses and food businesses 	



	<p>5. Destination = community enhancement, integration and wellbeing</p> <p>(basics: understanding the key elements of ForestWell experience; middle: understanding standards and expertise in the business; upper level: exceeding the expectations of the experience, longevity and regenerative perspective)</p> <p>6. Inclusion</p>	
	<p>Culinary</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is forest culinary experience? (theoretical) 2. Knowledge of edible forest plants: knowledge of the identification, seasonality, and preparation of edible forest plants. This can include wild mushrooms, berries, nuts, and greens. <p>(practical example)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Harvesting skills: Harvesting skills include knowledge of harvesting seasons, methods, and tools, as well as the ability to identify and collect forest 	



		<p>foods safely and sustainably.</p> <p>4. Preparation techniques: knowledge of the various techniques used to prepare forest foods, including preservation methods such as canning and drying, as well as cooking methods such as roasting, grilling, and sautéing.</p> <p>5. Pairing with other ingredients: knowledge of how to pair forest foods with other ingredients to create balanced and flavorful dishes. This includes understanding the flavor profiles and culinary uses of different forest foods, as well as knowledge of flavor pairings and cooking techniques.</p>	
	Wellness and wellbeing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is forest-based wellbeing? (theory) 2. Forest therapy: knowledge related to forest therapy include knowledge of the health benefits of spending time in 	



		<p>forests and skills related to facilitating forest therapy sessions. (practical examples)</p> <p>3. Forest bathing: knowledge related to forest bathing include knowledge of the physiological and psychological benefits of forest bathing and skills related to facilitating forest bathing experiences (practical examples)</p>	
	<p>Tourism</p>	<p>What is ForestWell tourism (theoretical)</p> <p>1. Interpretation: understand how interpretation includes knowledge of the natural and cultural resources of forested areas, as well as skills related to designing and delivering effective interpretation programs. (practical examples)</p> <p>2. Forest-based activity tourism: knowledge of safety practices, environmental conservation, and</p>	



		<p>cultural preservation, as well as skills related to designing and promoting adventure tourism experiences (practical examples).</p> <p>3. Accessibility and inclusivity of forests</p>	
ForestWell product development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Testing and validation 2. Continuous Improvement 3. Safety and security 4. Digital aspect 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand principles and practices of product design, including user experience. 2. Understand emerging trends, innovative principles in product development.
ForestWell marketing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is ForestWell marketing (theoretical) 2. Marketing campaigns in each partner country promoting ForestWell (practical examples) 3. Manifesto 4. Educating people and involving communities 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand the concept of regenerative product development practices. 2. Understand the principles of regenerative internal and external communication with target audience. 3. Develop tailored messaging that resonates with each segment and target audience, emphasizing the sustainability attributes and benefits of your products or services. 4. Understand the importance of digital marketing channels to promote sustainable products and initiatives. Utilize social media, content marketing, and online platforms to engage with sustainability-conscious consumers. 5. Understand the importance of networking and collaborations to develop



		<p>mutual sustainable products and marketing channels and to reach a broader audience.</p>
<p>ForestWell storytelling</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Storytelling 2. Narrative structure 3. Storytelling techniques 4. Story development 5. Emotional and Psychological Impact of Storytelling 6. Storytelling in different contexts 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand the importance of storytelling, its historical and cultural significance, and its impact on communication and engagement. 2. Understand various techniques and strategies for effective storytelling, such as character development, dialogue, pacing, suspense, foreshadowing, and storytelling devices like flashbacks or symbolism. 3. Understand the process of developing a story, from initial idea generation to crafting a well-rounded narrative. Exploring techniques for brainstorming, outlining, and refining story concepts. 4. Understand storytelling in diverse contexts, such as marketing and advertising, public speaking, journalism, and digital media. 5. Understand Understanding the emotional and psychological aspects of storytelling and how to create a connection with the audience.
<p>Leveraging local communities and regional stakeholders</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How to work with local communities? Local governments? Industry supports? (theoretical part) 2. Networks as case study examples (events, workshops, planting trees etc) (practical examples) 	

04

CONCLUSION





4 CONCLUSION

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of forest-related education and business opportunities across Finland, Iceland, Slovenia, Ireland, and Denmark. By examining existing programs, identifying gaps, and highlighting best practices, the study underscores the pivotal role of forests in fostering sustainability, innovation, and economic growth.

In Finland, the strong integration of forest-related content into education at multiple levels showcases a model for sustainable learning. Iceland, despite its sparse forests, demonstrates a unique approach to reforestation and environmental education, with potential for growth in wellness and tourism sectors. Slovenia, with its extensive forest cover, reflects a strong tradition of environmental stewardship that can further expand into entrepreneurial and wellness-driven opportunities. Ireland and Denmark emphasize the commercial and recreational aspects of forest usage. Ireland's burgeoning interest in forest wellness and tourism highlights the untapped potential of integrating forest-related businesses into national development. Denmark leads in sustainable forest management, showcasing innovative practices that blend cultural heritage with economic pursuits.

The ForestWell Competence Framework emerges as a cornerstone of this analysis, bridging educational and business contexts. This framework identifies key competencies across wellness, culinary, and tourism dimensions, offering a roadmap for tailored educational program and entrepreneurial training within ForestWell project.

By addressing identified gaps and leveraging regional strengths, the ForestWell initiative can foster a sustainable and inclusive future for forest-related education and businesses across Europe. These efforts not only enhance economic resilience but also promote environmental stewardship, well-being, and community engagement, laying the foundation for long-term ecological and societal benefits.