

# The Professional Associations of Balkan Foresters until the First World War

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**Abstract:** *The article is devoted to the emergence and development of the modern forestry profession in the Balkans until the First World War. The main focus is on the establishment of professional associations of foresters in the region. The development of forestry services and the education of foresters in the Balkan countries is also discussed.*

**Key words:** Professionalization, Balkans, Forestry, Forest Administrations, Forest Schools

**Ключови думи:** професионализация, Балкани, лесовъдство, горска администрация, училища по лесовъдство



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During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the state of forests and the need for their conservation and restoration were taken increasingly seriously in Western Europe. In the period up to the First World War, forests in Europe declined sharply in view of the development of industry, mining, transport, construction, agriculture, etc. In response to these challenges, a new scientific discipline and modern professional activity gradually emerged. In the course of time emerged specialized academic discipline dealing with forestry and related services; relevant educational institutions were established. At the same time, the process of professionalization, or the formation and development of modern professions, is taking place in Europe and worldwide. In each case, this process is taking place differently<sup>1</sup>. As with the others, the emergence and development of the forestry profession has been influenced by the major economic, social and technological changes since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The article is devoted to the development of the modern forestry in the Balkans until 1914. The main focus is on the creation of professional associations of foresters in the region. It presents the general and specific manifestations of this process in the individual countries of the region: the Ottoman Empire, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Croatia – Slavonia as a part of Austria-Hungary.

The process of professionalization of forestry worldwide during the period from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century contained several components, the main ones being practice and education. The third of these is associations. The associations are the most important agent for the establishment of any profession. As a rule, they unite the elite of a given profession and fulfil certain functions, of which the most important are to provide possibilities for exchange of knowledge and experience through publications or conferences, seminars, and so on, to define who is a professional and who may (or may not) exercise the given profession; to assist in raising the status of the profession, etc.

### THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF FORESTRY IN EUROPE

This process has its origins – as in other areas – in the developed Western countries. It was there that forestry science emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the initial development of forestry, both as an activity and as a profession, the German states played a leading role. With a view to better forest management, the first forest administrations were set up in some of them as early as the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For their needs, specialized forestry schools also appeared at that time on the Old Continent in Saxony, Thuringia, and Bavaria. Later, in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, similar schools were opened in some parts of the Habsburg Empire, e.g. in Marienbrunn and in Schemnitz/Shelmecbanya (Banská Štiavnica in present-day Slovakia). Their example was followed by other countries on the continent – France, Belgium, Switzerland, Russia, and others.

In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the third major element of the professionalization of forestry emerged, namely the associations. Such organizations were established in a number of European countries – Germany, Switzerland, and others. In the Habsburg empire, a number of provincial organizations called 'Forstverein' were founded between 1848 and 1851 – in the Czech lands, in Hungary, and elsewhere. In 1852, the Imperial Forestry Union (Reichsforstverein) was founded in Vienna.

### FORESTRY IN THE BALKANS

In the Balkan countries, modern forestry was making its way relatively late compared to the West. The first serious attempts to introduce modern methods of forestry organization and management date back to the 1830s. Western models were adopted, but their adaptation to local conditions was a slow, difficult and controversial process<sup>2</sup>.

In the period from 1830 to 1860, the first forest services were established in the Balkan countries – in Greece (1836), the Ottoman Empire (1840-1841, 1857), Serbia (1837, 1864) and Wallachia (1851). In the following years, a number of transformations were made in their organization and functions. In order to fill them with qualified specialists, recourse was made to the employment of foreigners and the training of local personnel. The first specialized schools in the region were also founded during this period – in Bucharest (1851), Constantinople (1857), Križevci (Croatia) in 1860 and Požarevac (Serbia) in 1872. However, these educational institutions could not satisfy the needs of qualified specialists of the local forest services. For this reason, the governments trained a large number of Balkan foresters in Western and Central Europe.

Thus, in the course of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, relatively numerous groups of foresters gradually emerged in the Balkan countries, which realized the need to establish their own organizations in order to protect their rights and raise the prestige of the emerging profession in society. The first steps in this respect were made through publications aimed at promoting the ideas of modern forestry, opinions on the structure and functions of forestry services, the establishment of specialized educational institutions, etc. Initially, this was quite often done jointly with specialists in the related agricultural field, but gradually they became more independent. In fact, some of these means and ways were already apparent at the stage before the professional organizations were set up. We will see below how this process was taking place in the different countries of the region.

<sup>1</sup> For a comparison with a similar process among Balkan engineers cf *Kostov* 2018.

<sup>2</sup> *Kostov* 2016.

The earliest professional association of foresters in the region emerged in Croatia and Slavonia<sup>3</sup>. The specific conditions in the Habsburg Empire also contributed to this. The first attempts to establish an association of Croatian foresters date back to the early 1840s. Their initiatives were part of the struggle for the political and economic emancipation of the Croats within the Habsburg Empire. Initially, the foresters operated within the *Croatian-Slavonian Agricultural Society*, founded in 1842 in Zagreb. In 1846, they split into a separate section, which conducted independent activities. The number of its members reached 85 in 1851. Due to the unfavourable conditions in the Empire, the activities of this association were terminated five years later.

In 1867 the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary was formed, and one year later the autonomous kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia was formed under the authority of Budapest. In the new conditions the Croatian foresters again discussed the idea of association and later on, in October 1876, the *Hrvatsko-Slavonsko Šumarsko Društvo* was founded in Zagreb. In January 1877, its printed organ, the *Journal of the Forestry Society Šumarski List* was published, which was initially in Croatian and German. The activities of the association aimed at the realization of

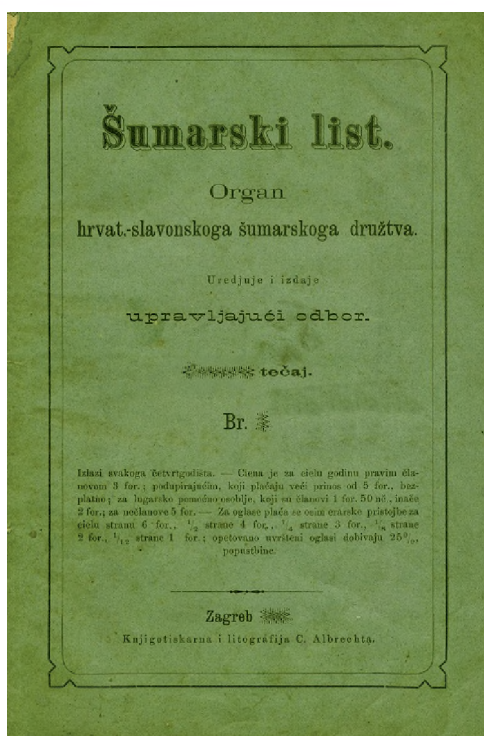
professional and national tasks – the introduction of specialized terminology in Croatian language, the improvement of the forest service in the province and in other parts of the empire, the improvement of the qualification of foresters and the opportunities for their realization, and others. For example, at the founding meeting the question of establishing a forestry academy in Zagreb was raised. It was also discussed *Šumarski List* to be published only in Croatian and since 1880 its publication in German was discontinued. Over the years, the influence of the Society expanded due to the involvement in its activities of all categories of employees in the forestry services, such as, for example, forest guards, who were accepted as second-class members.

A success for the Society was the establishment in 1898 of the Forestry Academy (*Šumarska akademija*) at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Zagreb on the basis of the relocated forestry department of the school in Križevci. During the period until the First World War, the number of members of the Society increased, and they were divided according to a hierarchical pattern into five categories (see table). This shows its growing influence in the professional community and also contributed to its increasing role in society.

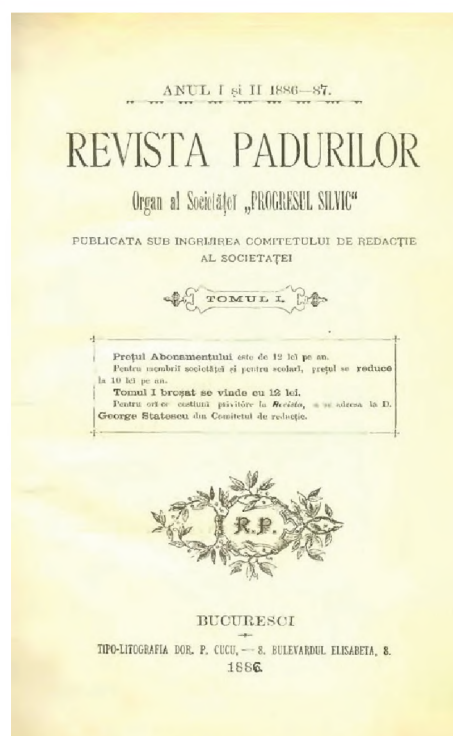
**Table:** Membership of the Croatian-Slavic Forestry Society in the period 1877–1911

Year	Honorary	Founders	Auxiliary	Regular		Total
				1st Class	2nd Class	
1877	2	-	37	258	-	297
1881	8	-	29	287	-	324
1886	9	26	32	206	350	623
1886	9	40	26	230	500	805
1896	6	56	33	304	632	1031
1901	7	56	17	375	1140	1595
1906	5	52	17	289	878	1241
1911	8	61	19	297	1017	1402

<sup>3</sup> Dojković 1926.



Cover page of Šumarski list (Zagreb) – 1877,  
source: internet



Cover page of Revista padurilor (Bucarest) – 1886,  
source: internet

What is interesting in the Croatian case is the establishment of a student association (*Udruženje akademičara šumara*) in 1903 in Zagreb. This was the first of its kind in the Balkans and defended the rights of student foresters in their education and future realization. They had the support of their teachers and members of the *Croatian-Slavonian Forestry Society*. It was thanks to their common pressure that the *Forestry Academy* was reorganized in 1908, thus equating its status with that of the *Mining and Forestry Academy* in Chemnitz. In this way, they won the right for graduates from Zagreb to hold state and municipal positions in the forestry services throughout Austria-Hungary and to be recognized with the title of 'forest engineer'.

After the establishment of unified **Romania** in 1859, there was a move towards the improvement of forestry services and the development of forestry education<sup>4</sup>. The established schools of forestry continued having problems, and thus until 1914 the country relied to a large extent on training in educational establishments abroad.

As early as the 1860s the emerging and growing forestry community was involved in forestry reforms. In the early 1880s, the country's forestry services and education were reformed. This helped to develop the process

of professionalization. In 1881, the first forestry journal, *Revista Padurilor*, appeared, but only a few issues were published. At the same time, the idea of founding a professional association was increasingly discussed. Eventually, in 1886, on the initiative of a group of foresters, the *Progresul Silvic Society* was founded. Initially it included 46 people, divided into two groups – active and honorary. An important feature of the organization is the participation not only of professional foresters but also of forest owners. This to some extent blunts the demands specific only to forestry professionals, but at the same time strengthens the influence of the Society in society and in particular in defending its proposals for the organization of forestry services and forestry in general. Since its foundation, the *Progresul Silvic Society* has published its own printed organ, bearing the name of the former journal, *Revista Padurilor*. The number of active members grew over the years and reached 200 at the turn of the century, and in 1911, at the time of its 25th anniversary, it already counted 221 members.

For the needs of the forestry service in **Serbia**<sup>5</sup>, as early as 1855, state forestry students were sent abroad, the first graduating from the school in Tarandt(Saxony). They were joined by the graduates

<sup>4</sup> Ivănescu 1972: 264-315, Giurescu 1980: 88-122.

<sup>5</sup> Dirčković 1926.

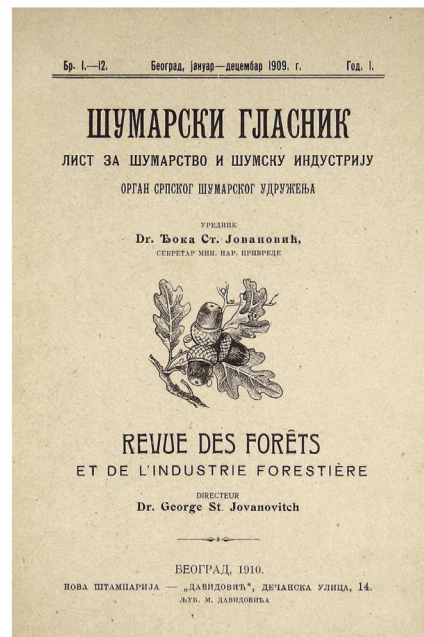


of the Požarevac School until its closure in 1883. At the same time, the dissemination of knowledge in the field of forestry expanded. Initially, this was done together with similar specialists within the *Serbian Agricultural Association* founded in 1869. In its journal *Težak* articles related to forestry were regularly published.

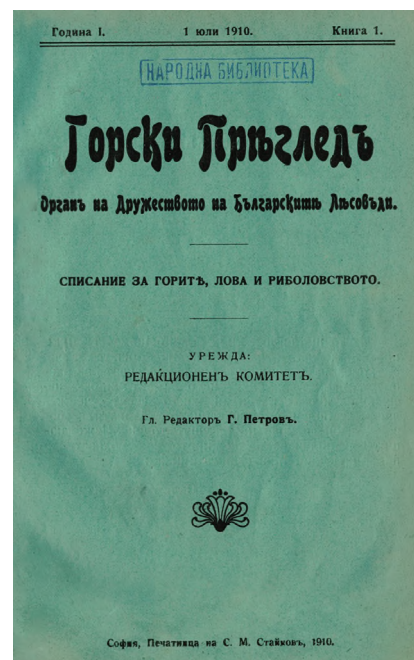
From the beginning of the 1880s, the idea of establishing professional organization gradually emerged. It was first launched at the first congress of district foresters in Serbia, held at the end of 1899. At their second congress in May 1904, the question of founding a 'special association' was discussed more seriously. In March 1907, the third assembly was held, at which the *Serbian Forestry Society* was founded, and in January 1909 its printed organ, the *Šumarski Glasnik*, began to appear.

In **Bulgaria** the formation of the forestry community took place only in the midst of the Liberation from Ottoman domination<sup>6</sup>. The country's forest service, established in 1879, needed personnel at all levels. By 1914, however, only a forest guard school was opened. Ideas of opening a specialized school at the secondary level were not realized. Therefore, during the period from 1879 to 1914, the country relied solely on foreign graduates. The gradual increase in the number of forest rangers went hand in hand with the launch of ideas for a professional association. As early as 1894, two Bulgarian students at the school in Križevci proposed, guided by the Croatian experience, to found an agricultural and forestry association in the country. In 1897, on the initiative of a group of foresters from Varna region, the *Bulgarian Forestry Society* was founded. It set itself a number of objectives, among which was to promote 'mutual acquaintance of forest workers and the development of solidarity in their activities'.

Two years later, in 1899, a group of foresters began publishing the journal *Lesovudska sbirka*. However, this organization was not officially registered. It was not until 1909 that the *Society of Bulgarian Foresters* was founded in Sofia. One of its main aims was 'to protect the legitimate rights and interests of its members'. According to the statutes its members were divided into three categories – full, honorary and auxiliary. In 1910, the Society had 74 full members. Through its journal *Gorski pregled*, and in other ways, the Society actively participated in public discussions on the structure



Cover page of *Šumarski glasnik* (Belgrade) – 1909, source: internet



Cover page of *Gorski pregled* (Sofia) – 1910, source: internet

of the country's forest service and defended the rights of its employees.

In the 1860s and 1870s, a forestry community gradually took shape in the **Ottoman Empire**, including forestry school staff, teachers and graduates<sup>7</sup>. The first articles and books presenting the ideas of modern forestry were also published. Towards the end of the nineteenth and the

<sup>6</sup> Kostov 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Özdoğan, Ekizoğlu 1993, Dursun 2007: 172-214.

beginning of the twentieth century, the Ottoman authorities made frequent changes in the forestry services within the state administration and in specialized education.

However, the forestry community in the empire could not actively participate in the process of forming decisions on these issues as it was not yet officially organized. Various reasons had an adverse impact in this respect. Along with economic and ethnic factors, restrictions on the organization of social activities and the creation of all kinds of associations in the empire played a negative role. It was only after the Young Turk Revolution of summer 1908 and the introduction of constitutional government that more favourable conditions were created for the emergence of professional associations. Among the first to take advantage of them were the engineers and architects, who founded their own society in the summer of that year, though the foresters failed to follow their example. However, a higher school of forestry was established in the context of liberalization in the Empire. It opened in Constantinople in 1911. Soon after, the first step was taken towards the establishment of a professional organization of Ottoman foresters. In 1913, an association of graduates of the *Higher School of Forestry (Orman Mekteb-i Alisi Mezunin Cemiyeti)* was established. Along with this, its printed organ, the journal *Toprak*, began to appear. However, no organization of foresters was established in Ottoman Turkey until after the war.

In **Greece**, efforts to build a modern forest administration continued from the 1830s until the end of the century<sup>8</sup>. Due to the lack of trained personnel, initially persons without special education were appointed to the forestry service. In the course of time, Greeks who had graduated abroad or foreigners with adequate training were recruited to the service. For many years, the country had been plagued by a shortage of

sufficiently well-trained staff. It was not until 1896 that the first forestry school was founded in Vytina, but it trained forestry professionals at lower and intermediate level. It was the only one in the country until the beginning of the First World War. It was not until 1917 that the Higher School of Forestry was opened in Athens.

Until the First World War, Greek foresters failed to establish a national professional organization. There were indeed associations, such as the *Athenian Forestry Society*, founded in 1900, but its activities were limited to promoting the ideas of modern forestry. An independent professional organization of Greek foresters did not take place during this period due to a lack of maturity and solidarity.

## CONCLUSION

The process of professionalization of forestry in the Balkans until 1914 is characterized by a slow and uneven development, following the example and experience of the West. The emergence of such an important component as the professional associations is determined by the specific conditions in each of the countries of the region. Undoubtedly, the impact of social and ethno-national factors on the formation of forest communities and their consolidation must be taken into account here. Where the multiethnic empires are concerned, we see the positive influence of the national factor in the case of Croatia-Slavonia and the negative influence in the Ottoman case. In Greece, on the other hand, the social factor obviously did not contribute to the creation of a professional organization of foresters. The successes and failures in the establishment of professional organizations of Balkan foresters show the state and maturity of their communities, which are at an early stage of their formation during the period under study.

<sup>8</sup> *Grispos* 1973: 128-250, *Panagouli* 2016: 80 seq.

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## Професионалните сдружения на балканските лесовъди до Първата световна война

Александър Костов

Процесът на професионализация на лесовъдството на Балканите до 1914 г. протича, макар и със закъснение, по примера на Запада. След създаването на горски служби и специализирани образователни институции в региона се появява и третият основен компонент от него – професионалните сдружения. В течение на втората половина на XIX век постепенно в балканските страни се оформят сравнително многобройни групи от лесовъди, които осъзнават нуждата от създаване на собствени организации с цел защита на правата им и издигане престижа на появяващата се професия в обществото. Успехите и неуспехите при създаването на професионални организации на балканските лесовъди показват състоянието и зрелостта на техните общности, които през разглеждания период са в начален етап на своето формиране.

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