

Feedback

44th International Forestry Students' Symposium (IFSS) 7th until 23rd of August 2016 Austria and Friends

"It was definitely the best I've ever done in my life, but where were the kangaroos?"

Deutsch:

Das IFSS 2016 Organisationskomitee hat nach Abschluss der Veranstaltung einen Fragebogen an alle 134 TeilnehmerInnen des Symposiums geschickt. 29 Prozent der Studierenden haben die Fragen online beantwortet. Die Fragen umfassen die vielfältigen Aspekte des Events - von organisatorischen Fragen bis hin zu konkreten fachlichen Aspekten wie der Waldbewirtschaftung in Österreich und Bayern. Wir haben die Antworten in englischer Sprache zusammengefasst, relevante Teile herausgearbeitet oder in Form einer Grafik aufbereitet.

Wir wünschen eine gute Lektüre!

English:

The IFSS 2016 Organizing Committee sent out a questionnaire to the 134 participants of the Symposium. A total of 29 percent replied. The questions ranged from general organizational topics to more specific questions on forest management methods in Austria and Bavaria. We summarized the answers and would like to share this short overview of the most important results with you.

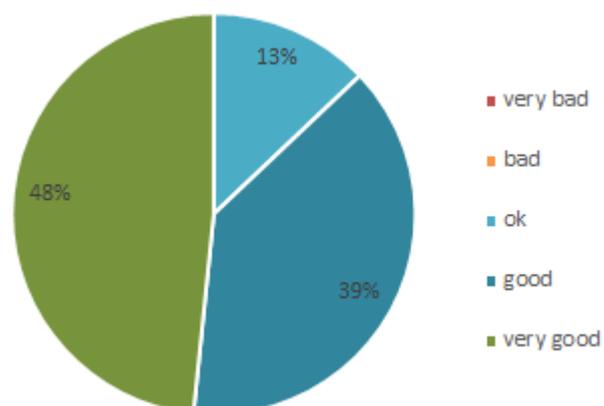
Enjoy the read!

Lisa Lehner
Chair of the Organizing Committee
International Forestry Students' Symposium 2016
International Forestry Students' Association Local Committee at the University of Natural Resources
and Life Sciences (BOKU) Vienna



Dear participants ...

1. How did you like the program?

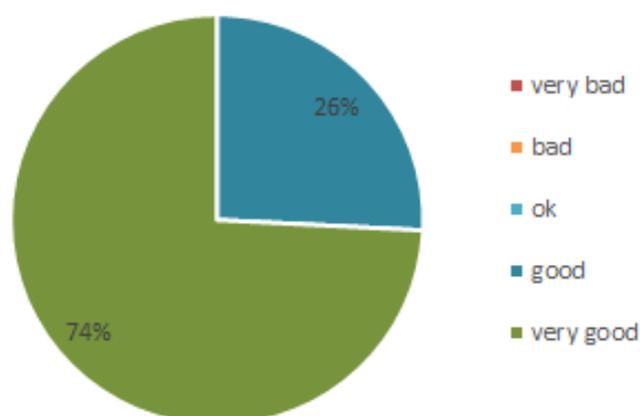


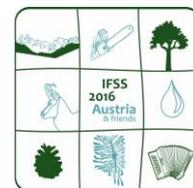
2. What did you enjoy most?

The great variety of the program, the activities and places visited during IFSS 2016 were seen as extremely positive. Participants highlighted the **excursions** in general and emphasized single concrete program points such as e.g. fishery and bark beetle management at the Austrian Federal Forests (ÖBf), Mayr-Melnhof-Forsttechnik with their field demonstration of cable yarding systems, Lenzig AG, the game management shown on the excursion to the National Park Gesäuse and Styrian Provincial Forests, Hallstatt salt mine, the field trips guided by the Tyrolean Forestry Board as well as the Panel discussion with Minister Andrä Rupprechter (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management) at Binderholz, to name a few. Furthermore, some participants stated to have enjoyed the 27th General Assembly (in particular the elections).

Quote: *“Talking about the vision of forestry and thinking about what we would change about the current educational system etc. It was inspiring and made me think.”*

3. Do you think the program provided a good insight into forest, forestry and the forestry based sector?





4. Did you learn something new?

Some respondents indicated that the way forests and especially mountain forests are managed in Austria and Bavaria (**sustainable forest management**) was new to them. The concept of **multifunctional** management approaches including ecosystem services, protective functions, timber production and tourism was highlighted as well. In addition, respondents stated that the **rotation period** for managed forests and cutting practices – in particular **cable yarding** – were basically new to them.

Furthermore, respondents listed e.g.:

- Austrian National Forest Inventory,
- cooperation of government and forest owners,
- Austrian wood processing industry,
- the fact that Austria ranks 6th globally in coniferous roundwood production,
- voluntary fire fighters,
- the importance of forests for drinking water supply,
- bark beetles,
- fish nurseries,
- forest genetics,
- construction of forest roads.

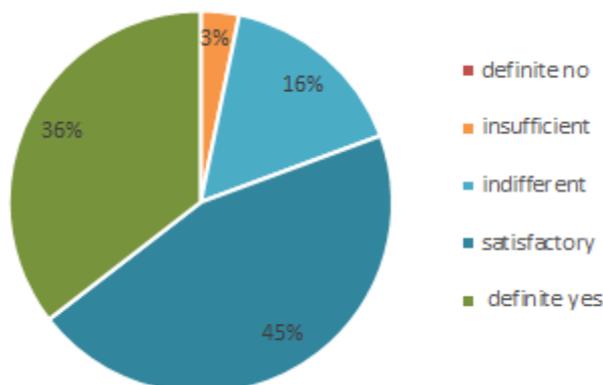
Respondents pointed out that they got an idea how forestry evolved through history and about the conditions for living in Alpine climate (“*apparently no mosquitos*”).

Respondents also indicated to have learned about unknown **plant species and natural hazards** in mountain ecosystems e.g. mudflow or avalanches and the importance of soil protection in steep terrain.

Cultural aspects and especially the interaction with other nationalities were underlined. In this context it seems that the fact that Austrian people are proud and commonly wear traditional clothes and drink sparkling water with white wine has left a permanent impression to at least one of the respondents.

Quote: “*I learned too many things to count here. Generally, I learned a lot about forestry (I am in ecology), forest management, Austrian and German culture, timber uses, a very little bit of German, a lot about international organizations and international processes, and a lot from the students I met from all over the world!*”

5. Do you think Austrian forest management practices are sustainable?





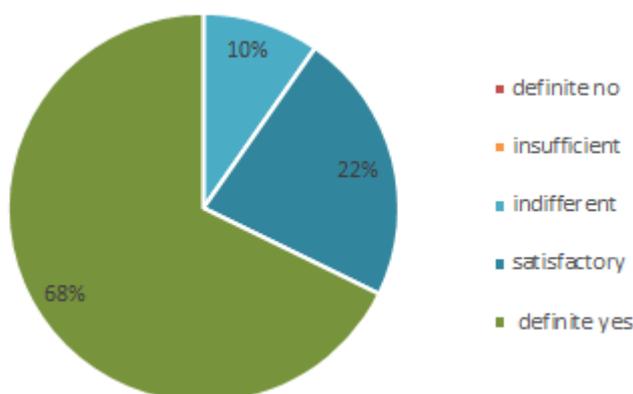
6. What would you do differently in Austrian forests?

Whereas a big group of respondents stated that they would not change anything, others brought up following proposals:

- More species **diversification** to increase resistance and **resilience** - less spruce production
- Incorporate more management for **wildlife** - promote predators like bear, wolves or lynx
- Reduce logging on steep terrain (protect mountain area) - Manage flat harvest sites more effectively
- Reduce clear cuts

In addition to the proposal above single respondents claimed the general accessibility of forest roads for mountain bikers and argued about scattered forest areas with diverse (small private) ownership structure. Another idea was to find faster growing tree species.

7. Do you think multifunctional forests are a good concept?



8. Would you like to apply some methods learnt during IFSS in your home country?

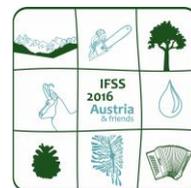
Respondents indicated that they would like to apply **cable yarding** (also in wetlands) and a more applied **silviculture** in their home country. Furthermore, **pest management**, especially in controlling the bark beetle population (using pheromones) could be applied in the home countries of the respondents.

The use of bioenergy, forest culture, the use of a cable winch with tractors in forests or voluntary firefighters were also mentioned. Moreover, the way of managing the wood supply in the **industry** and the timber market were brought as positive examples by respondents.

In addition a single respondents stated that it seemed to be socially acceptable to bring dogs everywhere in Austria and Bavaria.

9. Is there anything you would like to tell us concerning forests and forest management you've seen during IFSS?

Critical respondents pointed out **challenges** regarding forest management addressed during IFSS 2016. Generally the silvicultural management (focus on spruce) tends to diminish the **biodiversity** in forests.



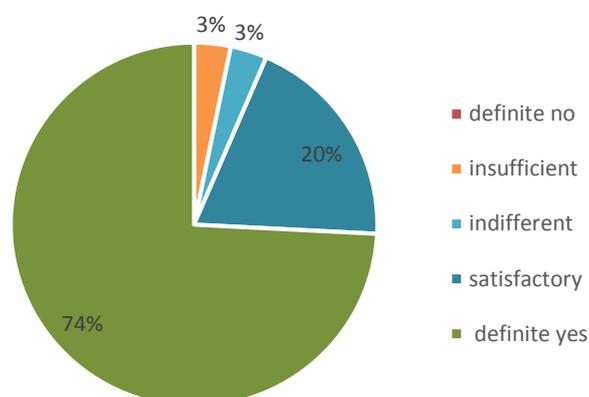
Quotes:

“I was amazed by how thoroughly thought out each management plan is, and how rooted in science it is. I am not very familiar with the practices in my own country, so I can't give much comparison. My only thought is positive, that you should continue to respect and manage Austrian ecosystems with as much care as you are already.”

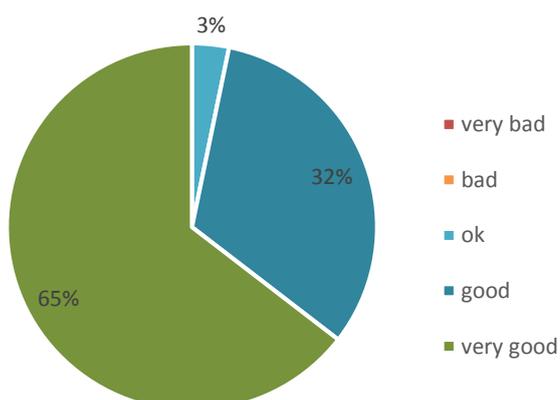
“The forest products are actual and innovative (CLT, Lenzing AG, Egger).”

“The management in the Austrian forests is very effective in terms of sustainable output of forest resources now. If this is sustainable in the long run, is to be questioned considering the low amount of species (and maybe genetic material), considering most stands are planted with an excellent fit for the location now. This means no other species and genetic material are introduced to most sites. This might lower resistance and resilience in the long run.”

10. Did you feel safe & well supported during the IFSS?

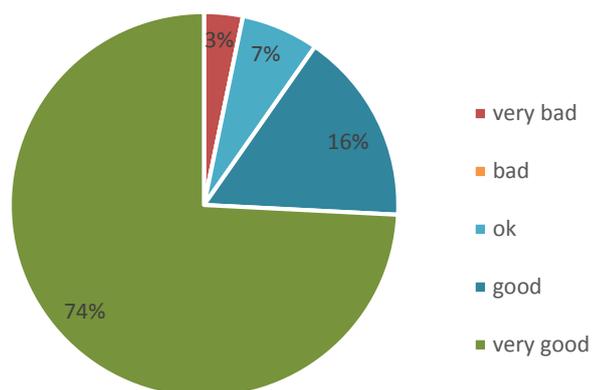


11. How was the communication with the OC during the event?

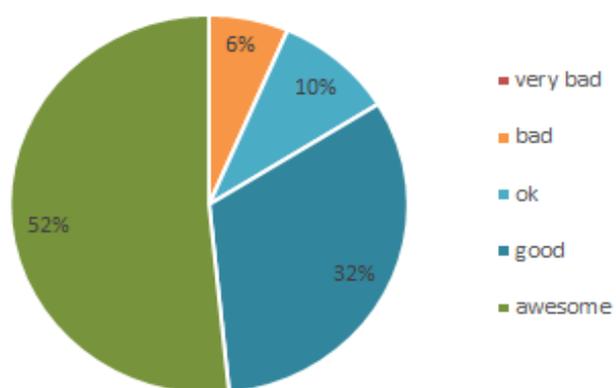




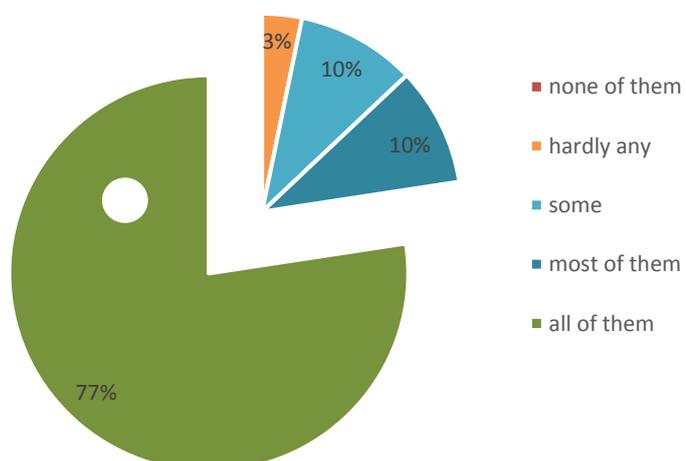
12. Were you satisfied with the accommodations?



13. How did you like the food?

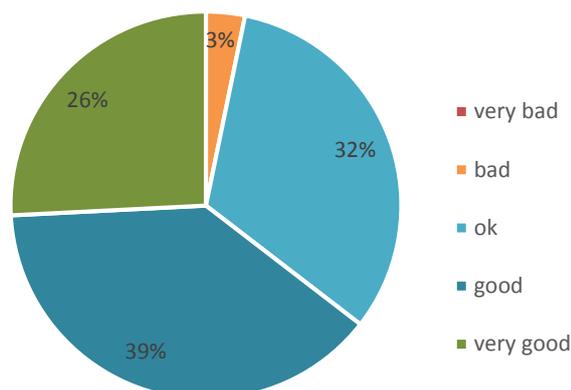


14. Did you attend all plenary sessions?





15. Could you follow discussions in plenary sessions?



16. Do you have any further comments regarding the program or General Assembly?

It takes more time for the General Assembly (GA) - which is seen as clearly necessary - and also workshops. Therefore, less program should be planned on these days. This should also allow more time for **questions and discussions**. Participants wished for more information (e.g. workshops) to make decisions easier. Individual terms - such as "commissions" - should also be clarified in advance.

According to the respondents, the GA should be more effective and more compact. Another suggestion was that there should be some kind of Pre-GA. This is intended to help those participants who have never been on an IFSS. There should be a better **overview**, what a GA is and how this runs. Furthermore, a single respondent suggested also to abolish compulsory Plenary Sessions, whereas another called for more **coffee and sweets**.

17. What would you have skipped?

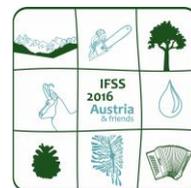
The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that they would not omit a single moment of the IFSS2016 program. Individual participants, however, called the **waiting times** for meals, plenary sessions, which were partly felt as too long (e.g. the interviews of the candidates).

Before leaving for Germany or after the International Evening, a less **tight program** plan would have been better for some of the respondents. Furthermore, some participants indicated that parts of the visit to Binderholz (not specified in detail) and the TU Munich could have been shortened.

Finally, a single respondent stated that if something the "virus" should have been skipped.

18. Is there anything you would like to tell the OC?

The huge majority of respondents used this survey to thank the OC for the "**very memorable**", "**wonderful**" and "**amazing**" IFSS2016. The event was, moreover, seen as seriously prepared, well planned and both places (Austria and Bavaria) were seen as exceptional in terms of showing their culture and specific forest related background. Furthermore, participants highlighted the **smooth and punctual organisation** of the symposium and the fact that no negative unforeseen difficulties occurred during the 16 days of IFSS2016.



Suggestions of improvement:

- One or two days of additional free time (to relax, play games, chat...)
- Additional Facebook-Group for participants to get to know each other before the symposium
- Explicitly point out the importance and the time requirements of Plenary Sessions
- Inform participants early enough about the upcoming room sharing conditions and food to facilitate preparations
- Washing machine and laundry facilities for everyone at the half-time of the event
- Consider voluntary attendance of meetings with focus on IFSA politics
- Shorten the event (5-7 days of program)

Quotes:

"Best"

"It was an incredible experience best IFSA meeting EVER!!!! I love you all <3"

"Great team, great event!"

"You were awesome guys, I loved my adventure in Austria and Germany! "

"I have one more thing to say! You guys have been amazing from the beginning till the end of the event."

"Great teamwork, excellent event."

"Thank you again for all you did, love and miss you all a lot"

Responsible for the content:

IFSA LC BOKU Organizing Committee of the International Forestry Students' Symposium 2016

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