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The undergraduate studies program of the Faculty of Forestry and Natural Environment, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki: current status and future perspectives

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Abstract: The Faculty of Forestry, and Natural Environment of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, is a historic institution that was even founded before the establishment of the University where it is currently being hosted, as it was originally part of the National Polytechnic University of Athens. In its history of almost a century, it has contributed to the education of most of the foresters of the Hellenic Forest Service and the private sector. It educated as well, especially at the graduate level, many students from the Balkans, Africa and the Middle East. In addition, it has a paramount contribution to the development of forest research in Greece, as well as the Balkans and the SE Mediterranean area. Despite its relatively large size compared to peer faculties across the world, with over 60 academic staff and about 1000 undergraduate and graduate students, it is considered as a rather small faculty within the Aristotle University.

The Aristotle University is the largest in the Balkans featuring 10 Faculties with 49 Departments, 42000 full-time students, 2300 academic staff and about 2000 support staff, that has run in the past 15 years about 15000 research projects with an overall budget of 150 million €.

The position of the Faculty in the University, the reality of university-level education in Greece and the Faculty's place in the European and international scene, has been the center of an intensive debate over the past decade. Everybody agrees that its current program, which is based on a long tradition of central European forestry education influences, coupled with notable post-war inspirations of North-American forest science education schemes, is in urgent need of revision.

In this communication the present status of undergraduate level education of the Faculty of Forestry, and Natural Environment, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, is presented in detail, while some ideas of potential future perspectives are discussed in a critical manner.

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