



Second Announcement
SILVA Network Annual Conference
18. – 20. May, 2026

Länggasse 85 | 3052 Zollikofen | Bern, Switzerland

**Co-operation in higher forest education
– from open educational materials to
joint curricula and degrees**

Preliminary Program

Monday 18.05.2026	
11:00 – 12:00	Conference Registration & Welcome Venue: Bern University of Applied Sciences, School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences HAFL, Länggasse 85, 3052 Zollikofen
12:00 – 13:30	<i>Lunch at HAFL</i>
Opening Session	
13:30 – 13:45	Welcome speech by Prof. Dr. Ute Seeling
13:45 – 14:00	Conference Opening: Balint Heil
14:00 – 14:30	Introduction of forestry and forest education in Switzerland: Prof. Dr. Bernhard Pauli
First session – Focus: Joint curricula und programs, incl. factors of success for collaborations Moderation: tbc	
14:30 – 15:10	Keynotes incl. discussion
14:30 – 14:50	Overview of joint programs and curricula (title tbc): Keynote by Annie Biju (Deputy Coordinator, Research Group 6.09, Forest Education, IUFRO/ Senior Program Specialist, SankalpTaru Foundation, India)
14:50 – 15:10	Multi-Level Collaboration in Forest Education – Case: University of Eastern Finland: Keynote by Piritta Torssonen (University of Eastern Finland, Finland)
15:10 – 15:45	<i>Coffee</i>
15:45 – 16:30	Group discussion
15:45 – 16:30	Group discussion: barriers and incentives for establishing new joint programs Moderation: tbc
16:30 – 18:00	Presentation & discussion of abstracts
16:30 – 16:45	Development of transdisciplinary international curricula „Digital Forestry" at Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania (Vitas Marozas & Nerijus Kupstaitis, Lithuania)
16:45 – 17:00	Comparative analysis of BSc level forestry engineering curricula at Romanian higher education institutions (Attila Farkas & Gabor Molnar, Romania)
17:00 – 17:15	Examples of University Educational Collaborations in Hungary (Balint Heil et al., Hungary)
17:15 – 17:30	Forest 4.0 Centre of Excellence as a Driver of International and Interdisciplinary Cooperation in Higher Forestry Education (Nerijus Kupstaitis et al., Lithuania)
17:30 – 17:45	A Future Dream of Collaborative Forestry Education (Noëmi Brüggemann, Switzerland)
17:45 – 18:00	International Integrated Degree Programs - A Success Story? (Achim Dohrenbusch & Dirk Jäger, Germany)
18:30	<i>Dinner at the Dormitory of HAFL</i>
Tuesday 19.05.2026	
Second session – Focus: Open access materials Moderation: tbc	
09:00 – 09:40	Keynotes incl. discussion
09:00- 09:20	Open educational resources (OER) – aims, functions and motivations: Keynote by Mika Rekola (University of Helsinki, Finland)

09:20 – 09:40	Factors inhibiting and promoting the exchange of teaching materials: Keynote by Natalie Räber (Bern University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland)
09:40 – 10:10	Presentation & discussion of abstracts
09:40 – 09:55	Transforming the International Forestry Training Centre into a Digital and Gender-Responsive Centre of Excellence (Esra Türkyilmaz et al., Turkey)
09:55 – 10:10	Linking Forestry Education, Digital Training and Cross-Institution Cooperation (Pavlina Pankova Simkova, Czech Republic)
10:10 – 10:45	<i>Coffee</i>
Third session – Focus: Microcredentials and massive open online courses MOOCs	
Moderation: tbc	
10:45 – 11:05	Keynote incl. discussion
10:45 – 11:05	Massive open online courses MOOCs: Keynote by Steven Whyatt (tbc)
11:20 – 12:30	Presentation & discussion of abstracts
	Abstracts tbc
12:30 – 14:00	<i>Lunch at HAFL</i>
Fourth session – Focus Misc.	
Moderation: tbd	
14:00 – 14:40	Keynotes incl. discussion
14:00 – 14:20	Competence center for coordination and documentation of forest education in Switzerland CODOC (title tbc): Keynote by Julia Isler (Co-Director Codoc)
14:20 – 14:40	Student’s view on higher forestry education: their experiences, needs and wishes for the future: Keynote by students representatives (tbc)
14:40 – 16:00	Workshop and conference wrap-up
14:40 – 15:30	Workshop & discussion on co-operation in higher forestry education (topic tbc)
15:30 – 16:00	Wrap-up of the conference
16:00 – 17:00	General Assembly of the SILVA Network
18:00	<i>Meeting point at the main entrance of the Bern station</i>
18:00 – 19:00	<i>Guided tour through the Old City of Berne (UNESCO World Heritage Site) by Alexander Dominik Ezuma May</i>
19:00 – 21:30	<i>Conference Dinner at restaurant “Rosengarten” (Alter Aargauerstalden 31b, 3006 Bern)</i>
Wednesday 20.05.2026	
8:00 – 16:00	<i>Field trip on the topic of mountain forestry in the Bernese Oberland</i>

TOPIC AND CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Co-operation in higher forest education – from open educational materials to joint curricula and degrees

Higher education in forestry is undergoing a period of rapid transformation, driven by global sustainability challenges, changing labour market demands and the growing interdisciplinary nature of forest-related professions. In response to demands for climate-smart forestry, biodiversity conservation, bioeconomy development and digital innovation, universities are recognising the importance of deeper cooperation in teaching across institutions. Such collaborative approaches facilitate the sharing of expertise, the development of complementary strengths, and the creation of learning pathways that better prepare graduates to tackle complex, transboundary issues.

New developments in higher education such as European Degrees, joint degrees, microcredentials, and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are reshaping the academic landscape in Europe. European and joint degrees strengthen cross-border collaboration and enhance student mobility, fostering a more integrated European Higher Education Area. Microcredentials and MOOCs, in turn, support more flexible, modular, and lifelong learning opportunities beyond traditional degree structures. Moreover, Open Educational Resources (OER) have recently emerged as powerful as a powerful foundation for collaboration. By promoting transparency, accessibility, and adaptability, OER facilitate the co-creation of teaching resources, reduce duplication of effort, and support harmonised quality standards across programmes. Building on these open resources, universities are increasingly exploring joint curriculum development and establishing shared or double degrees that offer students richer and more diverse academic experiences. Together, these innovations are expected to significantly influence the structures and processes of higher education in Europe by promoting greater flexibility, internationalization, and accessibility.

Thus, the SILVA Network Annual Conference 2026 brings together educators, researchers, and institutional leaders to explore new pathways for collaboration in teaching in higher forest education. The event focuses on strengthening cooperation through open educational resources, innovative teaching practices, and the development of joint curricula and degree programs.

We look forward to contributions from students, teachers, and administrative staff regarding:

- Success stories, challenges, and future perspectives of horizontal and/or vertical collaborative forest education
- Designing, using, and sharing open educational materials in forestry and related fields
- Cross-institutional teaching models and digital learning environments
- Strategies for co-creating joint curricula, courses, micro-credentials and MOOCs
- Governance, accreditation, and quality assurance in joint degree programs

Participants are invited to submit their abstract by February 20, 2026 (extended deadline)

Please e-mail your abstract (max 300 words) to Miriam Hug (miriam.hug@bfh.ch). The SILVA board will decide on contributions (oral presentations / posters) and all applicants will be informed as soon as possible after the deadline. Confirmed abstracts will be published in the Conference proceedings (SILVA Network Publications).

Venue

The conference will be hosted by the Bern University of Applied Sciences, School of Agriculture, Forest and Food Sciences HAFL at Länggasse 85, 3052 Zollikofen (near Bern), Switzerland. The campus is located near the city of Bern but is situated among fields and forests. [Here](#), you'll find general information about Bern and its surroundings.

Arriving by public transport

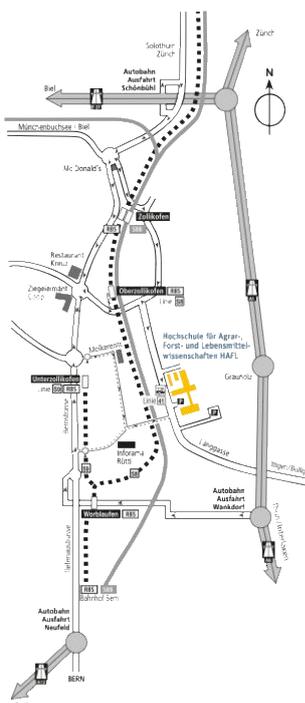
As there are no free parking spaces at the campus of HAFL, we highly recommend you travel by public transport. You can easily reach HAFL by train. From Bern railway station, take RBS regional transport line S8 towards Jegenstorf. Trains leave every 15 minutes. Leave the train at Oberzollkofen, cross the tracks via the underpass, and follow signs to 'BFH HAFL' (around 10 minutes on foot).

During commuter hours, you can travel right to our main entrance by public transport. Take RBS bus number 41 (Breitenrain–Zollikofen) and alight at the 'Rütti Hochschule' stop.

You can buy your ticket for public transport on site (ticket machines accept credit cards) or online in the [libero webshop](#) (tickets for the city of Bern) or via the [SBB app](#) or [SBB website](#) (all tickets for Switzerland, incl. cities). Choose the two zones 100 and 1001.

Arriving by car

As there are **no free parking spaces available at HAFL**, we invite you to arrive by public transport. If you are travelling from western Switzerland, exit the motorway at Bern-Neufeld. Anyone travelling from the Bernese Oberland should leave the motorway at Bern-Wankdorf. From Bern, you can reach us in 10 minutes by following Worblaufen–Zollikofen or Wankdorf–Ittigen–Zollikofen. Take the Zurich–Basel A1, exit the motorway at Schönbühl, and drive via Moosseedorf to Zollikofen.



Accommodation

Participants must make their own accommodation arrangements at their cost. Here, you'll find a list of hotels and hostels in Bern and surroundings: <https://bern.com/en/inform/accommodations/>

The following are examples of accommodation:

- [Novotel Bern Expo](#) lies close to the train station Bern Wankdorf where you have a bus connection to Zollikofen.
- [Bern Youth Hostel](#) is in the old town and very close to the idyllic river Aare.



Travel Arrangements

Participants make their own travel arrangements at their own cost. You can reach the campus of HAFL in Zollikofen via Bern (see above). There are several possibilities to get to Bern.

- **By train** to Bern train station. For more information about train tickets and connections see the [SBB website](#). For more information about special train tickets for tourists see [here](#).
- **By car** directly to Bern and then take public transport to reach the campus of HAFL in Zollikofen (see above).
- **By plane** to [EuroAirport Basel](#), [Zurich airport](#) or [Geneva airport](#). From the airport take the train to Bern and then public transport to the campus of HAFL (see above).

Registration and Fees

The early bird registration fee is €200; this applies up until March 20th, 2026 after which, a fee of €250 applies. There is a student rate of €150. Registration includes coffee, lunches, the conference dinner, and the field trip. Please note that the conference fees will be billed **after** the conference.

You can register on the website or via [this link](#). The **deadline for registration is April 19th**.

Organization and Local Organizers Contacts

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