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# The Presidency flash info

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## Commenting Report of the ongoing processes in European forest politics

After publishing the draft of the new Forest Strategy in September last year the topic of the new Forest Strategy has been discussed in different stakeholder meetings. The political discussion in the European bodies started as well.

During the UEF Round Table Meeting, held on 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2013 in Brussels, it became clear that the discussion is turning from commenting the draft to the implementation of the Strategy.

On 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2013 Copa-Cogeca held under the auspice of the chairmanship of the Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork a Workshop on the implementation of the new EU Forest Strategy. In this workshop the „EU sustainable forest management criteria“ were identified as one of the most important topics of the implementation of the new Strategy.

The Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork met on 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2014 and of course also discussed the implementation of the new Forest Strategy as a main topic.

But beside the implementation of the Strategy other points were on the agenda, such as:

- the review of the DG Agri Advisory Groups,
- the new Rural development policy and the low uptake of forestal funds in the past,
- the results of the Warsaw Climate change Conference and the targets and implications on forestry,
- the implementation of the Biodiversity strategy,
- the Guidance on Natura 2000 and forests,
- the implementation of the EU Timber Regulation
- and the opportunities for forest sector in research and innovation within the programme HORIZON 2020 such as EIP-platforms (European Innovation Partnership) and the public private partnership (PPP) on bio-based Industries.

Two resolutions of the Advisory Group were prepared.

One is underlining the need of the Advisory Group on Forestry & Cork, because in December 2013 the Commission decided about a new framework of civil dialogue in matters covered by common agricultural policy, which means that new dialogue groups have to be built until July 2014 with new applications for membership.

The second resolution is concerning the low uptake of forestal funds in the past and asking for ensuring a better uptake in the next programming period.

Also on 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2014 a Info Day on Horizon 2020 was held in Brussels.

The next Forest Europe Expert Level Meeting will take place on 4-5 February in Valladolid (Spain) in order to prepare the next extraordinary Ministerial Conference.

UEF is actively following all these developments, but sometimes it is hard to keep the overview and to focus on the **overriding mainstream**. Summing up the developments of the last years climate change seems to be the most important issue, which influences forestry.

Multifunctional forestry has ever been a sector with many different interested groups and the need to coordinate the partly conflicting interests in a balanced way. Because of the discussions about climate change these conflicts have become much harder in the last years. The enlarged biomass use and energetic use of timber started to be a hard concurrence for the classic use of timber in forest based industry (FBI). Harvesting too much wood can be a problem in keeping sustainability, also in countries outside Europe, which are importing wood products into EU. At the same time fears about the influence of climate change to the ecosystems and their biodiversity causes activities to widen the protection of forests. Many activities from the different forest related General Directorates of Commission were started.

Main task of the new Forest Strategy is now to coordinate all these different demands to the forest-based sector in a holistic approach. Also the negotiations about an legally binding agreement (Forest Europe) seems to aim at a European wide binding forest convention, which should prevent too extreme demands from single sectors.

UEF welcomed the new Forest Strategy and the Inc-process, which are needed in face of the new challenges for the forest sector. Hopefully many problems will be solved, but looking into the future new challenges are still waiting.

The project on bio-based Industries, which is a Public-Private Partnership between a Bio-based Industries Consortium and the EU, seems to be a good example for those upcoming additional challenges. For realizing the bio-based economy potential in Europe the project has a budget of 3.8 Billion € (!).

### Conclusion

Concerning forestry, the aim is to create the next generation forest-based value chains: utilization of the full potential of forestry biomass by improved mobilization and realization of new added value products and markets.

There are chances in this project for the forest sector, but also risks.

Anyhow, if the mostly oil-based chemical Industry is starting to substitute oil with biomass, there will be new global players in the forest sector and we will reach a new dimension in discussing forest politics matters.

UEF Presidency will give you next new information about this EU process.

**Michael Diemer**