



TIM/SEM.1/2003/R.38
10 February 2003
Original: ENGLISH

Seminar on
STRATEGIES FOR THE SOUND USE OF WOOD

Poiana Brasov, Romania
24-27 March 2003

PROMOTING WOOD CONSTRUCTION IN EU

Paper by Ms. Aila Janatuinen,
Department Manager, Finnish Forest Industries Federation, Finland

ABSTRACT

The presentation stresses the importance of a common vision for the European woodworking industries as well as lists the players and their roles in achieving the objectives. It also discusses possibilities for unifying the European building systems as well as launching European wide programmes for enhancing the use of wood in construction.

INTRODUCTION

The European woodworking industries have a common vision: *Wood-based products are by year 2010 the leading solution in structural building systems and as well as in interior system products.* This challenging vision covers two main end-use areas: wood products in structural uses ("building with wood") and in interiors ("living with wood"). Establishing wood-based systems is the only way for making the use of wood in construction more efficient and competitive.

The industry itself has the main responsibility for realisation of the vision. As competition between different building materials is getting tougher, the industry needs – in order to survive - to make sure that it has a healthy structure. The wood industry should also realise the strengths gained from cooperation. And it needs to be ready to sufficiently invest in research and development and especially be ready to develop their products further in order to better meet the needs of the users. The future wood products will be part of product families and systems, where service will be an integral part of the product.

The industry organisations have a role in organising and managing the cooperation processes. They need to have a clearly stated action plan that supports the reaching of the vision.

We should take care that the national as well as EU authorities contribute to realising the vision too. It is in their power to make sure that wooden products have a level playing field with other building materials. They are able to expose and eliminate the barriers for use of wood. Typical for the woodworking industries is the multitude of small and medium-sized enterprises and their viability is a key to the success of the whole industry.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES ON EUROPEAN LEVEL FOR SUPPORTING THE USE OF WOOD CONSTRUCTION

The Confederation of European Woodworking Industries (CEI-Bois) is the voice of the European woodworking industries. It has four main activity areas: lobbying, R&D, promotion and competence. CEI-Bois is active in cooperating with the European Commission in the so called "Enhanced use of wood" working group. As a result of the work four key areas have been identified where measures should be taken on EU-level.

Legislation and standards are the areas where barriers for use of wood should be exposed and eliminated. The European and national building regulations should support the cost-efficient and competitive use of wood compared to other building materials. European standards should be performance-based and promote the use of wood-based products in an efficient way.

Competence and education is one of the first areas where measures should be taken. If architects and designers don't know how to design wooden structures, they won't use wood! In many countries one can become an architect with knowing only very little about wood-based products. The aim is that wood-based materials should be in a same position in their education as any other building material.

R & D is an area where the industry has been very active during the last year. In connection with the preparation of the 6th framework programme for research, the industry has collected a large number of research proposals coming directly from the needs of the companies.

Information and tools relate to the overall image of wood. In the Nordic countries wood is well known as a construction material, but in many other countries there is a lack of knowledge. The public at large should know what kind of modern wood-based products are available and should have a positive perception of them.

Tools should be created to make the using of wood-based products easy. The industry e.g. should be able to distribute (preferably free of charge) CAD-programmes that facilitate the design of timber structures. There is also an aspiration to unify the building systems in different European countries in order to establish one harmonised pan-European building system and establish a large homogenous market for wood products.

The European timber councils have also joined their forces in the field of promotion. They are aiming at creating a European wood magazine and are discussing how to formulate and utilise wood's good environmental performance in communication.

CONCLUSION

Wood is the only sustainable building material and its increased use can be linked to many of the current European policies: promoting sustainable development, combating climate change, increasing and improving the quality of life, creating jobs especially in rural areas, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises etc.

Maybe we should stop talking about "wood construction". We could talk about sustainability, energy-efficiency, carbon stocks, healthy living environments etc. Whatever the problem is, wood gives a solution. The only way of increasing the use of wood is to make it an attractive option for builders and house buyers: more quality with less cost.

The European wood industries should join their forces in order to jointly create a favourable environment for use of wood. The industry should create a programme and action plan how to reach the vision on the European level. It should start by commitment to common aims and actively working for them. Achieving a will and determination is the first step and goes even before identification of barriers and their removal. The wood industry has a good environmental message and we shouldn't be afraid of using it.

REFERENCES

www.woodfocus.fi
www.cei-bois.org

CONTACT ON AUTHOR(S):

aila.janatuinen@forestindustries.fi