



A wooden art exhibition formed part of the event



A message through art

Enhancing the competitiveness of the European woodworking sector is an essential element in tackling climate change and ensuring a green economic growth for the European Union, says the European Panel Federation (EPF).

A few days after the conclusion of the UNFCCC Doha negotiations, the woodworking sector wants to stress once again its important contribution in reducing atmospheric levels of greenhouse gases through the use of wood and wood products.

The same message was given to the visitors to the exhibition *Tackle climate change: use wood*, which took place in the European Parliament during the first week of December.

Indeed, works and installations of renowned European artists using wood, such as Stephan Balkenhol (Germany), Gorzo Dumitru (Romania), Arne Quinze (Belgium), Philippe Ramette (France) and Richard Long (UK) were displayed in a specially conceived 'wood garden', and highlighted a selection of the best harvested wood products which art can produce.

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) were invited to visit this unusual

European wood industry associations jointly organised a second exhibition in the European Parliament building, in December 2012. We bring this report on a major event to promote wood as an environmentally sound raw material

setting. The artists Mr Ramette and Mr Gorzo, and the art curator, Jan Hoet, were present to give detailed information on the art exhibition to the MEPs.

The European Commissioner for Trade, Karel De Gucht, participated in the event and expressed his great appreciation for this unique initiative.

"It is therefore unsurprising that wood is the preferred material of a lot of artists, both traditionally and among contemporary artists. It is at the same time the most recognisably natural, the most authentic matter, to work with," the Commissioner stated.

Commissioner De Gucht visited the exhibition with Mr Gaston Franco, MEP, chairman of the Club du Bois of the European Parliament, and other participants. As part of the programme, sponsored by Mr Franco, a workshop about the uses, availability and climate sequestration potential of wood was organised on December 5.

Serge de Gheldere, Belgium's Climate



Ladislav Döry, Mrs Antigoni Papadopoulou, MEP, and Gaston Franco, MEP

Ambassador to the former US vice-president Al Gore, and Prof Udo Mantau, Head of the Centre of Wood Science of the University of Hamburg, took part in the debate and discussion, providing scientific proof of the benefits related to increasing the pool of harvested wood products in everyday life.

Mr de Gheldere drew a clear picture of the role of harvested wood products in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. He underlined how the European Union can achieve its ambitious environment targets simply by enhancing the use of wood products and substituting – whenever possible – wood with other more energy-intensive construction materials.

“These are the 10 most important years in history,” said Mr de Gheldere, “with a strong push in carbon sequestration, paired with energy efficiency in existing buildings, we are still on track to prevent the global temperature rising to unmanageable levels.”

Professor Mantau underlined the importance of respecting the life cycle of wood in order to prolong its carbon sequestration. “Only burning wood in the last part of its life cycle, once its utilisation has been maximised, can guarantee the extension of the carbon stored in wood through photosynthesis during the tree’s life,” he said.

Ladislaus Döry, President of EPF and vice-chairman of CEI-Bois said: “In order to tackle climate change and reduce CO₂ in the atmosphere, nature’s recipe is simple: lock carbon in forests. What mankind has to do is to continue the process by using, re-using and recycling wood. At the end of its useful life, wood can be burned and the energy recovered,” he confirmed.

Matti Mikkola, chairman of CEI-Bois said:

“The longer the pool of harvested wood products exists, the longer carbon is stored. European policy makers are invited to enhance the use of wood products in everyday life. Moreover, they are invited to remove all unnecessary restrictions to building with wood”.

The exhibition was co-organised by the European Confederation of Woodworking Industries (CEI-Bois), the European Organisation of the Sawmill Industry (EOS) and the European Panel Federation (EPF), with the great support of the MEP, Gaston Franco.

With more than 100 participants present in Brussels on December 4, the multimedia exhibition *Tackle climate change: use wood* was declared open at the European Parliament.

Hosted by MEP Jean-Pierre Audy, the president of the French delegation in the EPP Group; chairman of Club du Bois Gaston Franco; the reputed art curator Jan Hoet, founder of the City Museum for Contemporary Art (Ghent) and curator of Documenta IX (Kassel, Germany); and Dany Vandebossche, Member of the Flemish Parliament, explained to the audience the common ground we all share around a material that is capable of conveying emotions and closeness in such a unique way.

Jean-Pierre Audy, MEP, in his opening speech, stressed the importance of using wood: “We have to promote the use of wood as a natural and renewable material. It really is a simple and effective way to reduce atmospheric CO₂.

“Wood is an asset to meet 25% reduction in CO₂ emissions required by the Kyoto

Protocol,” said Mr Audy.

He added that he believes that the wood must be primarily a material “for use in construction, furniture, packaging, art....but at the end of its life, we should not neglect its energy potential”.

Mr Audy closed his presentation by expressing his wish that “this exhibition is an appeal to the European institutions and the governments of member states to realise the potential of wood and to work to not sacrifice one area [the wood] at the expense of another”.

Amid this spectacular setting, the public also met with artists whose work was on display.

Mr Jan Hoet stated: “In this exhibition, the artists try their link with nature, and bring us a provocative message: they push us to think about the function and the future of wood.”

The subtitle of the exhibition was *Plant a second forest*, referring to the carbon stock from the forest that remains in harvested wood products. Carbon captured by the trees will remain in the products we use daily, until the end of the recycling cascade.

The European Parliament provided an exceptional setting for communication between policy makers and those who have a stake in their decisions.

Close to half the audience were European woodworking industry representatives, as their confederation, CEI-Bois, held its general assembly in Brussels on December 5.

“We are conscious of the importance of being here at the European Parliament – our industry’s future depends for a large part on coherent and informed policy decisions”, said Ladislaus Döry. ■



MEPs and visitors study the exhibits, and the message, of the event