



PRESS RELEASE

EPF's ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2015

The European Panel Federation, representing the European manufacturers of particleboard, MDF, OSB, plywood, hardboard and softboard, held its Annual General Meeting in Vienna, Austria on 25th & 26th June 2015.

In his opening address, Mr Ladislaus Döry welcomed everyone to his home city of Vienna, and proudly informed the participants that Dr Paolo Fantoni had accepted to become the new Chairman of EPF and Mr Martin Brettenthaler the new Vice-Chairman. The General Assembly warmly greeted these appointments.



Mr Pinnington, Dr Fantoni, Mr Döry & Mr Brettenthaler

The following day, Dr Fantoni gave extensive thanks to Mr Döry and complimented him on the many wonderful achievements during his tenure, confirming that he will retain the title of EPF Honorary President. In his address to the General Assembly, Dr Fantoni presented 5 goals and commitments which he considers to be the strategic cornerstones of his Chairmanship:

1. E1 – All members commit to help make at least E1 quality compulsory in Europe for production, distribution and import for all wood-based panels (particleboard, MDF, OSB, fibreboards, and plywood). Legislation to ensure this should be sought country by country (following the successful example of Italy). On a pan-European basis, the EPF Internal Agreement dated February 2008 that commits particleboard, MDF and OSB members to manufacture boards of at least E1 quality remains valid.
2. New Standards – Any new standard should require the raw panel to meet the required emission level, irrespective of whether or not a surface or cover will be, or has been applied. In other words, the emission level should be at least the same “in” the board, as is defined by the standard (“outside”).



3. Image - We must strive to improve the image of our industry. We no longer wish to be seen as a “consumer of resources”. Instead we want public opinion to recognise our industry’s valuable contribution to recyclability, carbon storage, and low energy consumption, all on a sustainable basis.
4. Building Industry – The wood based panels industry is, and has been, too reliant on furniture for sales. In future we must actively engage, and work more towards the building industry, at every level, to ensure a bright future for our members in this field.
5. Africa – This continent offers great promise. New commercial and technical standards will be drawn up for Africa in the coming years. Currently there is a three way tussle for influence between Europe, North America and Asia. We must engage and be sure that Europe becomes the point of reference for this important potential market.

Mr Brettenthaler thanked members for their confidence in him and looked forward to actively supporting these core activities of the wood-based panels industry that now includes his sector of fibreboards.

In his speech, Mr Clive Pinnington, EPF’s new Managing Director, stressed the intention of EPF to grow its activities in terms of the Federation’s future being market growth, public image and positioning in the climate change, energy and economic debate. EPF remains committed to industrial competitiveness on a fair playing field, increased use of wood in daily life, and development of rural areas via reforestation. EPF’s lobbying activities will focus on these concepts, making the European Commission aware of the importance of our industry that assures jobs for 100,000 people in 5,000 companies with an annual turnover of €22 billion. More than anything else, Mr Pinnington urged the General Assembly to help EPF to move ahead of future legislation to shape and drive it, rather than chase behind it.



Addressing the Open Part of the General Assembly on Friday 26th June, Mr Pinnington reported that for the first time in several years, the most important economic developments are rather positive for the European whole wood-based panel sector. Indeed, the European particleboard production in the EPF member countries increased by 2.5% in 2014 and exceeded the projection made last year. The expectations for this year are largely stable and the rise in production in the EU-EFTA area as a whole is estimated at +0.5% for 2015. This should result in a particleboard production slightly above 29 million m³.

In 2014, MDF production in Europe grew further by 1% to 11.5 million m³, with consumption up by 4%. OSB production increased by 3% in 2014, to 4.8 million m³, with capacity set to develop by 8% in 2015. Hardboard production decreased slightly by 1% compared to 2013, down to 580.000 m³. For the third year in a row, the European production of softboard increased to 3.3 million m³.

The general economic situation in Europe is showing slow but steady improvement. The wood-based panels sector continues to face significant challenges such as the limited availability of wood and also some recent EU developments which are not supportive of the industry’s recovery. However, consumers’ confidence and other indicators continue their positive development. Overall, and with the exception of hardboard, markets for all types of panels are growing and expectations for the near term are cautiously optimistic.

Additional information: Mr Clive Pinnington, EPF Managing Director
Rue Montoyer 24 B20, B-1000 Brussels
Tel +32 2 556 25 89 – e-mail: info@europanels.org