

Speakers



Tomass Kotovičs

Tomass Kotovičs is the Head of Corporate Communications at Latvia's State Forests. He is working in the Forest Sector already more than 30 years and is responsible for the communications process in Latvia's State Forests since the company was founded in 1999. He is member of the UN/FAO Forest Communicators' Network since 2002, also member of Latvia's Public Relations Professionals' Association since 2001. In LVM he is responsible for processes related to internal and external communications, international relations and children and teachers' education programmes.

Michał Mróz



Michał Mróz is a seasoned managing director of Paged Meble, one of Europe's most historic manufacturers of wooden chairs, with origins dating back to the Thonet Mundus empire of 1881. Joining Paged Group in 2019, Michał initially worked as the Sales & Marketing Director and a Board Member of its plywood division. His extensive career in sales and marketing includes notable positions with International Paper, where he worked across Poland, Belgium, and the UK. Michał holds degrees in Linguistics, Business Administration, and Production Management, reflecting his diverse academic background. As a dedicated member of the Product Development and Management Association (PDMA), he is passionate about implementing lean solutions in both production and general management. His expertise lies in driving efficiency and innovation within the industry. Originally from Poland, Michał currently lives in Gdansk by the Baltic Sea with his family. At the conference, Michał will share his insights into the development and environment of the Polish furniture manufacturing sector.



Professor Bo Kasal

Bohumil Kasal, Managing Director of WKI, graduated from the Technical University Zvolen in Slovakia (Ing., Wood Technology), received MS degrees in Wood Science (Virginia Tech, 1989), Civil Engineering (Oregon State University, 1993) and a PhD in Timber Engineering and Applied Mathematics (OSU, 1992). He then worked at Alpine Engineered Products, Inc., FL as an Engineer.

Kasal's academic appointments include: Professor (North Carolina State University (NCSU) in Raleigh, NC, 1993-2005), Bernard and Henrietta Hankin Chair of Residential Building Construction and Professor of Architectural Engineering and Civil and Environmental Engineering; Director of the Pennsylvania Housing Research Center (Penn State University, 2005-2010), and a Professor at TU Braunschweig (2010-present). Kasal has held honorary appointments at the University of Bristol, UK and University of New Brunswick, Canada, adjunct Professorship at the NCSU, USA and he is a Professor at the Czech Technical University in Prague, and Professor at the University of Primorska, Slovenia.

Since 2010, Kasal is the Director of the Fraunhofer Institute for Wood Research, WKI and Professor of Civil Engineering at the Technical University of Braunschweig.

Kasal, a professional engineer, is a member of the American Academy of Mechanics, American Society of Experimental Mechanics, Society of Wood Science and Technology and a number of other professional societies and editorial boards and has authored over 200 publications. He is a Fellow of the International Academy of Wood Science and Elected Member of the American Society of Civil Engineers. Kasal is a Fulbright Scholar.

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Māris Būmanis

Woodworking engineer with a master's degree in business management. During his career, he supplemented his knowledge in Latvia, the Baltics, Japan, the United States, and Sweden. For many years, he has been working in the joint-stock company Latvijas Finieris, holding various positions. He began his working career as a shift manager in production, then held the positions of manager/director of various factories/business units, and is currently an executive board member of the company. He is responsible for product development, chemical production and products, as well as transformation processes in the group's companies. Since 2022, he has been on the board of the Association of Latvian Chemical and Pharmaceutical Entrepreneurs.

Clive Pinnington



Clive Pinnington has served as Managing Director of the European Wood-based Panels Federation (EPF) since 2015. He is a public affairs leader with 25 years' experience in sales, marketing and management in industry. At EPF, Clive runs a team of professionals focused on public and regulatory affairs for wood-based panel products used mainly in furniture, construction and packaging. His objective is to deliver success through focus, target setting and a results-oriented culture. Prior to EPF, Clive was Senior Vice President for Dynea Chemicals Oy, responsible for the EBITDA of a €350 million adhesives business line. Rising to the management team in 2011, he helped to streamline the company into separate commodity and specialty business divisions. He has also worked for Metalube, a Queen's Award-winning UK manufacturer in the Oils & Lubricants sector, for Simpson Timber Company in North America and for Rexam, a Global market leader in the packaging industry, holding various positions in these companies. Clive is trilingual and holds degrees in Languages from Bristol University and in Marketing from the Chartered Institute of Marketing.



Kris Wijnendaele

Kris Wijnendaele is a chemical engineer by education. After 10 years as Secretary General of EPF and of the European Federation of the Plywood Industry (FEIC), he has been Technical Director and CFO of EPF since April 2016. For more than 20 years, he is employed to represent the European manufacturers of wood-based panels before European and international institutions. In this capacity, he has gained plenty of experience in passing the interests and messages of the industry he represents to regulators, standardisation bodies and other stakeholders achieving great successes for the industry helping it expand its businesses or save costs and safeguard employment. He is also the convenor of CEN/TC 112/WG 11 'Particleboards and Fibreboards' and WG 8 'Oriented Strand Boards' and he is also active member of ISO/TC 89 'Wood-based panels'.

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Pablo Figueroa

Pablo Figueroa is the Chairman of EPF. He is also part of the Executive Committee of ANFTA, as well as FINSA (Chief Sales & Finance Officer). With an academic background in Economics (University of Santiago de Compostela, SEP at London Business School, Executive programmes at MIT/Kellogg School of Management), Pablo Figueroa has held leadership roles as Sales & Finance Director for over two decades within the wood-based panel industry.

Mārtiņš Lācis



Mārtiņš Lācis is an Executive Board Member and Head of Marketing, Sales, and Logistics at AS Latvijas Finieris, as well as an Executive Board Member and Chair of the Plywood Product Group at the European Panel Federation (EPF). After graduating as a wood mechanical engineer from the University of Agriculture in Latvia in 1995, he joined Latvijas Finieris the same year. He started in Production Quality Control, Planning, and Management before shifting to Sales in 2000. By 2004, he became Sales and Marketing Manager and was promoted to the Executive Board in 2006. Mārtiņš manages birch plywood sales, marketing, and logistics, and 12 Riga Wood entities globally. Actively involved with the EPF, he has contributed to incorporating FEIC with the EPF and now leads its Plywood Product Group. To support fair trade principles for plywood on the Latvian and EU levels. His main focus since 2020 has been representing Latvijas Finieris in the Woodstock consortium, which was the complainant in an anti-dumping case against imports of birch plywood from Russia into the EU. The current challenge is to fight against circumventions of antidumping and sanctions regulations in the EU and Latvia and to secure market participants compliance with EU Timber Regulation.



Katharina Knapton-Vierlich

Katharina Knapton-Vierlich joined the Commission's Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs in 2010, and she currently leads the "Construction Policy" unit. Its mission is to support the construction ecosystem in the transition to a resilient, sustainable, and digital future that will strengthen its competitiveness. Before joining the European Commission, Katharina practiced law in Berlin, having started her professional career in academia. She holds law degrees from the Free University of Berlin (Ph.D.).