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European Organisation of the Sawmill Industry aisbl
EOS
Rue Montoyer 24/20
B-1000 Bruxelles

Register of Interest representatives: 18751401956-24

EOS contribution to the "Commission working document – Consultation on the future "EU 2020" strategy", COM(2009)647 final.

The European Organisation of the Sawmill Industry, EOS, acknowledges the intention of the European Commission to adopt a formal Communication in spring 2010 to deal with the major challenges faced by Europe at the present time and to determine the policy as a follow-up to the current Lisbon strategy.

The working document released to this aim rightly refers to the need for partnership. EOS considers that well co-ordinated approaches are required, with uniform actions at European, national and local level, rather than a plenitude of different initiatives likely to lack the right focus.

The effects of the financial and economic crisis will need to be addressed with urgency. In this context it is important that, whatever measures are taken or support given, these ensure a level playing field for all economic actors and do not lead to distortions of competition between countries, sectors or even within sectors.

EOS considers that the impact of the digitalisation of society and economy is somewhat overrated. Europe has to maintain a basic production basis in order to ensure that other sectors can flourish and develop.

We can largely subscribe to the key drivers of EU 2020 put forward in the consultation paper, in particular the third on "creating a competitive, connected and greener economy". The sawmilling industry sees itself in the centre of this as it uses man's only naturally renewable and sustainably produced material: wood, and plays a key role in the development of new, greener technologies e.g. for wood products, bio-energy and biofuels.

Through an increased use of wood products, the pressure on non renewable and energy intensive resources can be reduced, allowing Europe to better comply with its commitments in the fight against climate change. Caution should be taken, however, when looking at the issue of low carbon or carbon neutral energy. Presently, EU member states strongly focus on biomass to achieve the targets imposed by Europe. These should, however, not lead to negative impacts on the raw material supply to industry in order to safeguard competitive operations. The EU and Member States should carefully monitor possible negative side-effects of an over-emphasis on renewable energy sources, and wood in particular. The sector should be involved at all stages of the decision-making process.



A topic hardly addressed in the consultation paper is the issue of climate change. Considering that the COP15 conference in Copenhagen has unfortunately not come up with a clear answer nor agreement, the EU will need to maintain putting focus on this global issue, and speed up its efforts to have harvested wood products recognised as part of the solution in further discussions.

Finally EOS suggests that, when further defining its EU 2020 strategy, the European Commission would duly consider the recommendations and action plan proposals included in its "Communication on competitive and sustainable forest-based industries in the EU" as issued in February 2008 already. These proposals match with the overall intentions of the EU consultation paper and translate the political goals into tangible actions. Their realisation would certainly bring the required support to the sawmilling industry in Europe.

Yours sincerely,
EOS

(signed)

Gabriela Gorostiza
Policy Adviser