ID: WOOD Clustering knowledge, Innovation and Design in the SEE Wood Sector

www.idwood.eu

Jointly for our common future

ID: WOOD

Clustering knowledge, Innovation and Design in the SEE WOOD sector
With its surplus of forest resources the wood sector in the SEE area presents significant potentials still to be exploited. In most countries of southeastern Europe the wood sector is rather fragmented and there is a lack of organic policy approach that would create the basic conditions for its development. However, some countries in this area managed to develop their sectoral potentials reaching levels of excellence, while other countries still struggle to tune up the right support approach. Wood sector is showing very low R&D investments and scarce innovation levels in most of the involved countries. SMEs lack access to technology and knowledge and record a poor internationalization. Sector data shows significant opportunities for recovery by reducing gaps in terms of productivity and capital formation.

ID:WOOD aims to promote and foster innovation and competitiveness of SMEs in the wood sector in the SEE area by sharing and transferring technical and organizational know-how to enable local support organizations to address structural deficits of SMEs and enhance innovation potentials.

I. ID:WOOD Summary

With its surplus of forest resources the wood sector in the SEE area presents significant potentials still to be exploited. In most countries of southeastern Europe the wood sector is rather fragmented and there is a lack of organic policy approach that would create the basic conditions for its development. However, some countries in this area managed to develop their sectoral potentials reaching levels of excellence, while other countries still struggle to tune up the right support approach. Wood sector is showing very low R&D investments and scarce innovation levels in most of the involved countries. SMEs lack access to technology and knowledge and record a poor internationalization. Sector data shows significant opportunities for recovery by reducing gaps in terms of productivity and capital formation.

ID:WOOD aims to promote and foster innovation and competitiveness of SMEs in the wood sector in the SEE area by sharing and transferring technical and organizational know-how to enable local support organizations to address structural deficits of SMEs and enhance innovation potentials.

Project objectives:
- building up and consolidating the transnational network of wood-furniture clusters, wood technology centres, RDAs and knowledge poles;
- fostering innovation skills in the wood sector supporting structures;
- creating new functions and competencies on design, intellectual property and environmental issues;
- bridging gaps between the productive sector and knowledge poles;
- rising SMEs capacity to implement innovation processes.

Results:
- improved capacities of support organisations;
- transnational cooperation between support organisations, knowledge poles and productive sector;
- increased information flow towards SMEs;
- innovation, design and knowledge transferred to SMEs;
- sustainability of the transnational network / support system and SMEs cooperation after project end;
- increased knowledge on market opportunities.
II. ID:WOOD Network

Slovenian Forestry Institute

The Slovenian Forestry Institute is a public research institute of national importance, which conducts basic and applied research on forests and forest landscape, forest ecosystems, wildlife ecology, hunting, forest management, and other uses of the resources and services forests provide.

As part of its research program and related studies, the Institute provides forestry and environmental services in the public interest. The Institute intensively monitors forests, which includes recording and monitoring forest degradation and damage, providing a diagnostic reporting service, developing an information system for research purposes, and monitoring forest seedling and nursery activities. It also monitors emissions and sinks of greenhouse gases resulting from land use, land use change, and forestry.

The Institute is committed to sustainable forest management and the conservation of its biological diversity, as well as to the further development and organization of the Slovenian forestry system and forestry policy. The Slovenian Forestry Institute successfully collaborates with Slovenian forestry, timber, and natural conservation practices, as well as with other educational and research organizations both in Slovenia and abroad.

Contact person: Dr. Jozica Grilčar; e-mail: jozica.gricar@gozdis.si, www.gozdis.si

Wood Industry Cluster, Slovenia

A non-profit organization founded in 1999 by woodworking companies and institutions as a Wood Industry Development Centre and in 2003 renamed Wood Industry Cluster (WIC). One third of the employees in WIC come from the forest sector, the wood-processing industry and the most important research institutions in Slovenia. Some companies offer surface coatings, PU foam materials and energy. WIC has been operating together with the Association of the Wood and Furniture Industry at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia since 2007.

The staff in WIC has more than 25 years of working experience in the wood-processing sector, especially in the fields of clustering, networking, development, project coordination and management, participation in EU projects as well as in training and internationalization. The WIC staff has participated in several international projects and proposals (FP7, FP6, Eureka, ERA-NET, LiVe, IEE, SEE Programme).

WIC has established close contacts with most of existing Slovenian RTDs, supporting organizations and international networks in forest-based sectors. WIC is also the co-founder of the Development Centre of Creative Furniture Industry.

Contact person: Bernard Likar; e-mail: grozd@sloles.com www.lesarski-grozdi.si

Department of Wood Science and Technology, Biotechnical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Research activities:
- Wood formation and response of trees to stress;
- Durability of wood. Thermal modification of wood;
- Engineering approaches to transforming wood and gluing it into limitless sized wood composites;
- Innovative use of wood. Liquefied wood. Chemicals from wood. Wood Coatings;
- Organizational and IT solutions in the wood processing industry;
- Mechanical processing technology.

Key Competencies:
- Education in the field of wood technology;
- Research on new wood-based materials and composites and their innovative use for products;
- Testing and advising on glues, coatings, wood composites, furniture and free formaldehyde;
- Solving technical and technological construction problems associated with cutting tools and CNC machine tools, flexible automation and robotics;
- Promoting the use of wood in innovative products and wood constructions.

Contact person: Urška Kovačič; e-mail: urska.kovacic@bf.uni-lj.si

The Technological Pole of Pordenone, Italy

The Technological Pole of Pordenone (Polo Tecnologico di Pordenone) is a Technology park in the Region Friuli-Venezia Giulia region dealing with technology transfer, promoting the dialogue between enterprises, institutions and the regional research system to support company competitiveness and stimulate the growth of enterprises with high development potential. Polo Tecnologico di Pordenone “Andrea Galvani” was set up in 2002 with the main goal to support start-ups and SMEs and create industrial environment for supporting technology projects in the area. It hosts around 100 companies involved in various industrial processes. There the companies can develop business challenges based on innovation and it is a point of conjunction connected to the research and offer of partners, technologies and components by Universities, Scientific Parks, and Italian and international operating Research Centers. It monitors innovative technologies and high development potential manufacturing sectors to pull enterprise needs and provide assistance in targeted knowledge and know-how aggregation.

The Pole provides knowledge and develops a platform for businesses that are strongly innovative oriented for attracting foreign partnership and stakeholders.

Contact person: Marco Olivotto; e-mail: marco.olivotto@polo.pn.it www.polo.pn.it

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The participation of the Friuli Venezia Giulia autonomous region, Central Directorate for education, university, research, family, associations and cooperative entrepreneurship is ascribed to its institutional role in legislating and providing regional measures/laws on research and education. The Directorate is well integrated with the economic development Directorate and they are involved together in the promotion of innovation and technology transfer towards SMEs. It provided the project with its experience in supporting measures directed towards integrating the knowledge/educational system with entrepreneurial and industry level. It will further ensure the sustainability of the ID:WOOD actions: strengthening of partnership and cooperation in the wood sector also after the project’s end, which is a strategic action for the competitiveness of one of the most important sectors in Friuli Venezia Giulia region.

Contact person: Ketty Segatti; e-mail: ketty.segatti@regione.fvg.it
www.regionefvg.it

Wood Cluster Styria, Austria

With almost 150 member companies in the forest sector and wood industry, as well as in adjacent sectors, Holzcluster Steiermark is one of Europe’s largest clusters today. Founded in 2001, the company develops and implements projects along the entire value-added chain of the wood industry – and focuses most of its work on timber construction.

Holzcluster Steiermark sees its role in facilitating networking between business, science and politics, in promoting internationalisation efforts primarily in South East Europe and in providing services for companies in the forest sector and wood industry. It intends to further develop its fields of competence as an implementer of ideas and a driver of innovation.

Business location development: Increase in R&D ratio, further development of technologies and securing the long term future of the industry by providing a highly qualified workforce.

Innovation: Monitoring and support for innovation processes in a corporate landscape with a high proportion of SMEs.

Cross-border projects: Initiation and involvement in projects with an international focus, enhancement of corporate competitiveness in export markets.

Sectoral solutions: Development and implementation of innovative business solutions.

Contact person: Višnja Jurnjak; e-mail: jurnjak@holzcluster-steiermark.at
www.holzcluster-steiermark.at

MoU partners of Holzcluster Steiermark are holz.bau forschungs GmbH and the Institute of Construction Management and Economics (ICME)
The holz.bau forschungs GmbH has the self-conception as an institution that is linking the basic science oriented research and educational work of the university, and stimulating and realising organisations and companies in the field of wood and timber economics.

The holz.bau forschungs gmbh has its core competence in the area of working and linking on research questions of timber engineering and wood technology. The holz.bau forschungs GmbH addresses itself in the development, the pre-processing and the targeted transfer of know-how to reach a maximum potential of implementation in the timber engineering and wood technology branches. Wood cluster Styria is a 10 % shareholder of the holz.bau forschung GmbH.

Contact person: DI Manfred Augustin; e-mail: manfred.augustin@tugraz.at

www.holzbauforschung.at

Civil engineering economics is not only the title of this field of expertise but also the frame and content of the educational aims and knowledge generation. Following the substantial technical education within the Bachelor programme, Civil engineering economics is not only the title of this field of expertise but also the frame and content of the educational aims and knowledge generation. Following the substantial technical education within the Bachelor programme, the Institute of Construction Management and Economics (ICMSE) enhances a wide spectrum of interdisciplinary knowledge in construction management, building economics and building legislation as well as competence in organisation and management of building projects. It is the aim of the academic education to be qualified in scientific, economical and practically orientated aspects.

Contact person: DI Jörg Koppelhuber; e-mail: joerg.koppelhuber@tugraz.at

www.holzbauforschung.at

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Among the regional stakeholders involved in the activities of ID:WOOD, two organizations showed a strong commitment towards the achievement of the project goals:

Transylvania University of Brasov through the Faculty of Wood Engineering brought its contributions in the drafting of the “Technological centre development plan”, and it was also involved in the elaboration of the “Competitiveness project for the regional wood industry”. Working closely with the experts of RDA Centru, the specialists of the Wood engineering faculty offer assistance and support in solving the problems and challenges presented by the regional SMEs.

Contact person: Dr. Alin Olărescu; e-mail: a.olarescu@unitbv.ro

www.unitbv.ro

PRO WOOD Regional Wood Cluster is another constant partner of the ID:WOOD activities, representing the interests of the companies from the regional wood sector and ensuring the connection between the private, public and research sectors.

Other types of organizations that joined the activities of the regional ID:WOOD work group are: chambers of commerce and industry, public authorities, producers’ associations, individual SMEs, vocational schools and mass-media.

Contact person: Kadar Rezso; e-mail: kadar@fatip.ro

www.clustero.eu/pro-wood-regional-wood-cluster

Agency for Sustainable Development and Eurointegration – ECOREGIONS (ASDE)

The Agency for Sustainable Development and Eurointegration – ECOREGIONS is a NGO for public purposes. The ASDE has been working in partnership with the state administration, municipalities, university and research centres, business and civil society organizations for already 17 years and for the purpose of:

- application of the principals for sustainable development, environment protection, energy efficiency, support of the innovation and eco-friendly energy efficient technologies, and transfer and dissemination of the relevant knowledge and know-how
- support of the Eurointegration process at local and regional level, especially concerning the development of the local operative capacities;
- support of the development of knowledge and innovation based society.

ASDE is a member of two European networks–URBAN-NET (NEXUS) and ERACOBUILD, founder of the Bulgarian Cluster on Aerospace Research and Technology, one of the initiators of the Bulgarian Information Office on Earth Observation – .GMES for development of a Regional Unit / Centre for Integrated Risk and Security Management for SEE and member of Innovation and Environmental Technologies, Green Building and Renewable Energy Cluster. With its branch in Ruse, ASDE partakes in cross-border cooperation projects with Romania.

Contact persons:
Nadia Dandolova; e-mail: nadia.dandolova@asde-bg.org
Julia Spiridonova; e-mail: julia_spiridonova@mail.bg

www.asde-bg.org

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Contact persons:
Nadia Dandolova; e-mail: nadia.dandolova@asde-bg.org
Julia Spiridonova; e-mail: julia_spiridonova@mail.bg

www.asde-bg.org
In order to contribute to bridging the gaps between the knowledge poles and the productive sector, ASDE signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a team from the Department of Economics, Industrial Engineering and Management of the Technical University of Sofia, who acquired broad sectoral observation developing three joint research projects with the Branch Chamber of Woodworking and Furniture Industry, the Bulgarian Furniture Cluster and the Association of the Interior Designers.

Their main expertise in the field of providing support to SMEs is as follows:
- eliminating processes and activities which do not generate value;
- practical activities for orientation of SMEs towards the consumer;
- operative management and control of the productive activities;
- products design coordinated with production.

Contact person: Associated Prof. Dr. Svetoslav Dimkov; e-mail: sdim@tu-sofia.bg

www.tu-iiim.org

In the solving of the SMEs cases, ASDE was supported by the Bulgarian Furniture Cluster—an association of furniture producers, design studios and educational institutions, member and co-founder of the Association of Business Clusters in Bulgaria.

The main purpose of the organization is to raise the competitiveness of its members including in the foreign markets.

The set of the important support measures directed towards SMEs provided by the Cluster are in the fields of:
- innovation;
- design and design trends;
- quality;
- environment friendly production;
- product development and management;
- marketing;
- education of human resources.

Contact person: Genoveva Hristova-Murray; e-mail: info@furnitureclusterbg.com
furnitureclusterbg.com/en

Zala County Foundation for Enterprise Promotion, Hungary

Zala County Foundation for Enterprise Promotion (ZMVA) has been established by the Zala County Government as its only founder in 1992. ZMVA operates as a member of the National Enterprise Promotion Network, but it is a non-profit organization that is independent organizationally and financially, and an important element of the Hungarian institution system promoting the improvement of the national and international economic relations. The objectives are to promote the economic development of Zala County, support the establishment, survival and first of all the growth of SMEs by operating with 5 offices. Within the framework of the ID:WOOD project, a Memorandum of Understanding between the accredited Pannon Wood- and Furniture Innovation Cluster, the University of West Hungary and the Zala County Foundation of Enterprise Promotion was signed.

Contact person: Andras Nagy; e-mail: nagyandras@zmvau.hu
www.zmvau.hu

The Pannon Wood- and Furniture Cluster was established in 2001 by 15 members. The collaboration started from Zalaegerszeg and the founder management organization is the Zala County Foundation of Enterprise Promotion. In the life of the PANFA cluster, 2013 was an important milestone as PANFA became the first accredited innovation cluster in the Western Transdanubian Region and in the traditional industries. The accreditation was awarded by EFFIX.

A significant part of the members of the Pannon Wood- and Furniture Cluster operate in woodworking and furniture production, however the professional, academic and technical activities also include industries based on the nationally unique R&D&I capacity of the University of West Hungary, which offer the opportunity of introducing innovative solutions (technology, commodity, product development) as a result of cooperation among the cluster member research centers and enterprises.

Contact person: Dr. Judit Kovats Pakainé; e-mail: info@effix.hu
www.panfa.hu

Local Development Agency PINS, Croatia

The Local Development Agency PINS is a limited liability non-profit company focused on research and development in economy, and established in 1996. PINS implements activities across the mountain region of Gorski kotar in the western part of Croatia. Its vision is to become a competitive development institution impacting the development of the Gorski kotar region and becoming a prominent factor. PINS services are used by existing and new entrepreneurs, local authorities, schools and NGO’s. Portfolio of the services: business/investment plans, cost benefit analysis, preparation of development plans, marketing, business networking, consultancy, administrative services, event organization, non-formal education. PINS implements different projects and focuses on encouraging sustainability and development of SMEs in the region. PINS has a high-educated staff, implements EU funded projects and is a member of Euromontana, Main projects: Added value for crafts, Small business in big Europe, ID:WOOD, Operators in wood industry. PINS signed an MoU understanding with the Faculty of Forestry of the University of Zagreb for providing support to the wood industry sector in Croatia.

Contact person: Danijel Bertović; e-mail: danijel@pins-skrad.hr
www.pins-skrad.hr

Faculty of Forestry, University of Zagreb

The Faculty of Forestry of the University of Zagreb is an internationally recognized institution in the education of highly skilled professionals for forestry, wood processing and furniture production. The Faculty of Forestry systematically develops nationally and internationally recognized excellence in education and research in forestry, wood technology and related fields based on the establishment of a quality system and the transfer and application of knowledge for the welfare and prosperity of all components of the community. The fundamental purpose of the Faculty is creation, analysis and exchange of ideas through teaching, research and professional activities. In this respect its main goal is to become the leading higher education institution in the life and environmental sciences at national and regional level. The institution employs 201 people. Within the Faculty there are 11 departments, five teaching and experimental forest facilities and 14 laboratories.

Contact person: Danko Motič; e-mail: motik@sumfak.hr
www.sumfak.unizg.hr

Contact person: Andras Nagy; e-mail: nagyandras@zmvau.hu
www.zmvau.hu
The Croatian Wood Cluster is an operational and active cluster within the wood-processing sector and forestry. It is a professional business association which continuously aims to strengthen the competitiveness of the wood-processing sector in various areas: harmonization of policies in the field of raw material and energy prices, the development of new products, the entering of foreign markets. In this regard, the Croatian Wood Cluster represents a platform providing answers to current issues and strategic and developmental challenges of the Croatian wood-processing sector. The aims of the Croatian Wood Cluster for the forthcoming period are to enable a better functioning of the Croatian wood-processing industry in the EU environment, to strengthen the competitiveness of the Croatian economy, to prepare a new export strategy and to be included in the EU’s development programs for this sector.

Contact person: Marijan Kavran; e-mail: mail@drvo-namjestaj.hr
www.drvo-namjestaj.hr

The Institute is market oriented and devoted to developing cooperation and partnership with similar Croatian, German, Italian and Serbian Institutes, and together with NERDA Tuzla, it participated in several wood-sector oriented international projects.

Contact person: Zeljina Begić; e-mail: tzgi@bih.net.ba
www.institut-git.com.ba

Forest Management Unit of Tuzla Canton, the organizational part of the Tuzla Canton Government Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Waters is in charge of forest management and forestry issues. Presently it has 4 staff members and is planning on expanding its scope and thus increasing its staff to 95 in the following years.

Contact person: Kasim Aljić; e-mail: kasim.aljic@hotmail.com
www.vladatk.kim.ba

Agency for economic development PREDA from Prijedor is one of the leading development organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The main focus of the Agency PREDA is set on entrepreneurship development and competitiveness of SMEs. PREDA is very active in environmental protection and social development, with a project-based approach applied planning and implementation of activities. Particular importance is given to the EU pre-accession financial instruments and available EU programs. With more than 10 years of experience in regional economic development activities, PREDA has exceptional references, particularly in cluster development within the wood and furniture sector. Established with support of PREDA, the Wood and Furniture Cluster DRVO-PD from Prijedor is one of the main actors in the wood and furniture sector in the region.

Contact persons:
Goran Rodić; e-mail: goran.rodic@preda.rs.ba
www.preda.rs.ba
Sanja Karanović; e-mail: sanja.karanovic@drvo-pd.com
www.drvo-pd.com

ZEDA Agency is an institution for development whose task is to design, prepare and implement development projects of Zenica Municipality. LIND laboratory, which operates within the ZEDA Agency, deals with furniture testing in accordance with BiH and EU and is accredited according to BAS EN ISO/IEC 17025 with the aim to create conditions for the development of a dynamic, modern and diverse economy through the development of entrepreneurship and SMEs by combining and directing the material, human and financial resources, taking into consideration gender equality principles and protection of the environment.

Contact persons:
Senad Pasalić; e-mail: senad@zed.ba
Amir Kubat; e-mail: amir@zed.ba
www.zeda.ba

The North-East Region Development Agency, Bosnia and Herzegovina (NERDA) was established in 2005 in Tuzla, registered as a NGO for regional economic development of the NE part of BiH, with the seat in Tuzla and field offices in Bijeljina, Zvornik and Orasje, has highly qualified staff of 16 and 10 years of experience in participating, designing, facilitating and implementing regional, national and international projects. NERDA’s mission is to provide development opportunities that help strengthen economic growth and social development of the region. NERDA’s activities are focused on designing, preparing and implementing regional, national and international projects that contribute to the development of the region.

Contact person: Slavisa Stajkovic; e-mail: slavisa.stajkovic@nerda.ba
www.nerda.ba

Construction Institute Tuzla - GIT Tuzla has 26 years of experience in the main fields of its activities that include testing and certification of building materials, mainly all types of concrete and concrete products, gravels, cement, sands, plasters and bricks as well as construction joinery and wood for construction needs. GIT Tuzla, headed by Professor Ahmet Imamović, PhD, has a staff of 20, a modern well-equipped laboratory in compliance with BAS EN ISO/IEC 17025, and a Certification Body in compliance with BAS EN 45011.

Contact persons:
Senad Pasalić; e-mail: senad@zed.ba
Amir Kubat; e-mail: amir@zed.ba
www.zeda.ba

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Contact persons:
Senad Pasalić; e-mail: senad@zed.ba
Amir Kubat; e-mail: amir@zed.ba
www.zeda.ba
Guidelines for the development of the wood processing sector

In the framework of ID:WOOD project under Work Package 3 – Need Analysis and Development Strategies for the Wood Sector, the Project Partners supported by local experts carried out an in-depth analysis of the wood sector based on a shared methodology. Based on the analysis, three working groups of international experts have been set up to match the territorial specializations of partner territories. Based on the analysis, additional questionnaires and territorial visits of all partner territories, the working groups assessed the capacity of different support organizations (technology centres, clusters, regional development agencies) to service the sector and their needs in terms of human and technical resources, and delivered a development strategy at the technology centre level and a development strategy at the cluster level for each territory.

Summary

The surplus of forest resources in the wood sector in the SEE area represents significant potentials still to be exploited. The forestry-based value chain is not adequately connected and consequently the potentials of natural resources remain unexploited. The primary wood production industry and the wood manufacturing sector are not linked functionally, which means that several countries are simply exporters of their quality raw material while the national manufacturing sectors transform imported material or lower quality material. Despite the potential of the forest resources and a general strong tradition in the wood sector in most of the involved area, the wood based sector is rather fragmented, lacking an organic policy approach. There is also poor coordination between the different support actors and support actions.

The sustainable national sectorial policies should be developed in the whole SEE area to assure exploitation of forest resources through the Smart Specialization Strategy towards Bioeconomy.

The wood processing and furniture industry is based on mostly old technology and innovation capacity of SMEs is generally poor. Most of the companies do not have a department for research and development and innovation and lack the capacity to solve complex technical problems.

University of Belgrade–Faculty of Forestry

The University of Belgrade is one of the oldest higher education institutions in South East Europe, and the Faculty of Forestry is the oldest institution in the Balkans dealing with education and research in the field of Forestry and Wood Sciences. The program of scientific research work of the Department of Wood Processing at the Faculty of Forestry of the University of Belgrade is done in more than 30 disciplines. Scientific research work is performed in numerous laboratories appropriately equipped for certain areas, scientific centres and bureaus. The Department of Wood Processing has vast experience and possibilities in the fields of collecting and analyzing data from the wood industry and the market. Results of activities conducted by the Faculty are significant for increasing innovation and research in the wood sector (courses for wood designers etc., improvement of technology, researching new wood products, seminars, trainings for cluster managers). The international partnership is based on the cooperation between higher education institutions in Europe, individual professors and researchers, the exchange of students and professors, and the exchange of scientific results and publications.

Contact person: Goran Milić, e-mail: goran.milic@sfb.bg.ac.rs, office@sfb.bg.ac.rs
www.sfb.bg.ac.rs

The Agency for Wood in Serbia is an initiator of all activities in the field of innovation in the industry in Serbia: the founder and the first to preside over the SouthEast and Central European Network of Forest – Based Clusters (SCENet FB Clusters); bilateral projects with the Wood Industry Cluster of Slovenia; maintaining competition and receiving awards for the best solutions in the field of design in the wood industry; organizing professional courses in the field of work in the timber industry, organizing product presentations and technical procedures for domestic and foreign companies whose production programs are related to the timber industry; training and implementation of FSC, COC and other standards.

Contact person: Nataša Pantović; e-mail: office@agencijazadrvo.rs
www.agencijazadrvo.rs

III. ID:WOOD Best of

1. Guidelines for the development of the wood processing sector
Companies are usually able to control individual components of innovation with an emphasis on process and less on product innovation. SMEs management capacities and value added is generally low. Proper knowledge of requirements from the market in terms of mechanical and chemical safety and quality of products is lacking. The wood sector has good development potential but needs a structured technical long-term training system with the curricula updated to economy’s needs. There is a general lack of qualified workers and a comprehensive approach in the whole education chain is needed.

Most of the partner territories have wood technology centres or university laboratories. These knowledge poles are usually well equipped with quality human resources but have very poor relations with the industry and generally do not operate on a commercial basis and in commercial projects. Their knowledge about technical needs of the companies is low and the services they offer usually seldom match real technical support needs of the companies.

They need to further develop their capacity to become established institutions for testing and certification of wood products. Testing and certification should be promoted.

Wood technology centres and university labs should develop final user-oriented activities and specializations in a coordinated way at national and transnational levels in order to avoid unnecessary overlapping in infrastructural investments. The international network of technology centres and university labs should be as much as possible a complimentary network.

SMEs have significant gaps in terms of design, marketing and branding, and do not have the capacity neither to set development paths in these fields nor to understand their marketing positioning. Design is recognized to be a primary need, however, design culture is generally low and design management has yet to be understood. Relationships between design centres and the productive sector still need to be developed, and support frameworks need to be more organic.

Clustering is still weak. Policy frameworks are still inadequate to provide cluster organizations with the chance to play an effective role, and clustering culture among companies needs to be promoted. The institutional strengthening of cluster organizations and the attraction of foreign direct investment need to be developed.

Clusters also need greater support from local governments in order to enhance their institutional role, and on the other hand, revise the organizational procedure, services and promotion of clusters in order to become more attractive for SMEs and stakeholders.

2. Development of clusters' management capacities and fostering innovation skills

One of the main activities of the IDWOOD Project (WP4) is the development of clusters’ management capacities as well as fostering their innovation skills in order to contribute to the improvement of cluster management in South East Europe by promoting and developing clusters as one of the major tools for increasing competitiveness, innovation and internationalization of the regions.

The three organized cluster management courses (3 days each) were focused on the effectiveness of cluster work with SMEs using Austrian, Italian and Slovenian best practices. At the same time an input was given on how these processes could be implemented in the rest of the project partner regions. The additional benefit of the courses was the networking and a great chance to experience the exchange between international participants who share the same interests in cluster activities. The courses took place in Graz and Zeltweg, Austria, on 10 and 11 July 2013, in Pordenone, Italy, on 17 and 18 October 2013 and in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 6 and 7 November 2013.

The course in Austria aimed to contribute to the improvement of cluster management by promoting and developing clusters in South East Europe as one of the major tools for increasing competitiveness, innovation and internationalization of the regions. Best practices’ examples (Eco World Styria GmbH and Holzcluster Steiermark GmbH) were presented.

The course in Italy provided the strategic elements for brand development concepts pivotal for the development of SMEs. In particular, the process of brand development from the origin of the product up to the positioning in foreign markets was highlighted. Macro topics related to the development of export strategies for SMEs and the internationalization processes were presented.

The cluster manager course in Slovenia was focused on the design and innovation as a way of developing forest-based sectors in South East Europe. Slovenian experience with innovative wooden products and services was presented. During the course, a visit to the Month of Design exhibition was organized.

Courses for fostering innovation skills took place in Belgrade, Serbia, from 1 to 3 October 2013 and in Sibiu, Romania, from 22 to 24 October 2013.

The first innovation course in Serbia was focused on improving the capacity and knowledge of cluster technology centres and R&Ds, but also those of experts, decision makers and students, on topics related to innovative wooden products for buildings. Advantageous for the participants were the included visits to innovative companies.

The second innovation course in Romania was more specialized and technically oriented and tackled mainly practical aspects for innovative producing of safe, functional and simultaneously fine furniture. A thoroughgoing review of the materials, coating and adhesives was presented and the basis for the functional and safe design was highlighted. The focus was put on the history review, the globalization aspects and the expectations for new concepts and new materials.

The five courses attracted about 300 participants who expressed their approval and recommendations in feedback questionnaires.
3. Competitiveness development projects

Competitiveness development projects are projects dealing with problems of common interest in local SMEs population in the partner territories. The following projects were developed:

Austria: Dimensioning of connecting elements for CLT-constructions

**Expected results:** The aim of the project is the development of different tools, design proposals and detailed solutions for connecting elements for CLT-constructions. With the help of multi-level materials and tools, the whole process of the dimensioning of connecting elements should be more simplified, which would enable easier, faster and more efficient work for experts like architects, planners and carpenters. The materials should be company-neutral.

The project is carried out in cooperation between “Holzinnovationszentrum GmbH” together with “Holzcluster Steiermark GmbH”, and “Holzbauforschungs GmbH” in Graz (Univ.-Prof. Dipl.-Ing. Dr. techn. Gerhard Schickhofer), CLT producers and structural engineers in Styria. One of the project partners is also Prof. Dipl. Ing. Volker Schiermeyer.

Further ideas and steps: Further education on the topic cross-laminated timber (CLT) and design (including connecting means) for structural engineers/wood construction companies/contractors; Training on CLT at several levels (Basic, Advanced I & II).

Business support organizations: Bulgarian Furniture Cluster–organizes meetings with furniture enterprises managers, mobilizes support for pilot projects, organizes trainings. Agency for Sustainable Development and Euro Integration - Ecoregions–promotes the concept, develops project proposals.

**Expected results:** Reconfiguration of the furniture enterprises for achieving the competitiveness based on different types of cooperation.

Croatia: Promotion of wood as an eco material and market development

**Participating organization and their role:** Knowledge pole Faculty of Forestry, University of Zagreb–project development, creation and implementation of project activities, organizing of project teams, working with designers and architects on creating new wood product designs; Competent Institutions, related Faculties.

**Business support organizations:** Croatian wood cluster–representation of good practice examples and experiences from the “Wood is a first / Wood’s first” project, presentation of reasons for the use of wood as a material through different ways of public promotion, organization of workshops, lobbying, networking of architects and designers with wood product producers. Local Development Agency PINS and Development Agency HRAST–organization of meetings with professional institutions and producers, organization of workshops and public forums aimed at increasing the use of wood as a material, working with companies from the wood processing industry, implementation of activities for creating brand and project promotion.

**Expected results:** Raising awareness of wood as an ecological product in all aspects of life and thus creating a market which is friendly-orientated towards wood products; developing of design processes for new products; creating the Croatian wood product brand.

Hungary: Creation of a living connection between people and the wood industry, making people aware that wood is an environmentally friendly and renewable raw material

**Participating organizations:** Knowledge pole: University of West Hungary

**Business support organizations:** the Pannon Wood- and Furniture Industry Cluster and Zala County Foundation for Enterprise Promotion–they are the representatives of the business enterprises.

**Expected results:** The Competitiveness Development Project has been prepared on the basis of research and development strategies elaborated so far, the most frequent problems of SMEs. The Competitiveness Development Project demonstrates why, and mainly in which areas we need to employ wood-related PR activities, and it also shows the techniques which could lead to long-lasting and efficient results.

Italy: Promotion of the development of skills and capacity in the field of design

**Participating organizations:** Polo Tecnologico Pordenone, Informest, Catas and ISIA Roma Design

**Business support organizations:** Bulgarian Furniture Cluster–organizes meetings with furniture enterprises managers, mobilizes support for pilot projects, organizes trainings. Agency for Sustainable Development and Euro Integration - Ecoregions–promotes the concept, develops project proposals.

**Expected results:** Reconfiguration of the furniture enterprises for achieving the competitiveness based on different types of cooperation.
Expected results: The Competitiveness Development Project aims to promote the development of skills and capacities in the field of design in the light of recent changes within the concept of space, architecture and the way of “living” everyday objects. The focus of the Competitive Development Project will take place during the Design Week and will consist of a dissemination activity on the above outlined design themes; it then becomes a chance for the world of design to change its perspective and to adapt to the new concept of space, architecture and the way of “living” everyday objects.

Romania: Professional training—the key element for the development of a more competitive wood business sector
Participating organizations: Knowledge pole: Transylvania University of Brasov–Faculty of wood engineering
Business support organization: The Regional Development Agency Centru
Expected results: The Competitiveness Development Project has reported one of the most common problems of SMEs working in the wood sector as the main theme during the ID:WOOD workshops and seminars—the lack of qualified personnel employed in this field. Starting from this problem, the regional Knowledge Pole has developed an integrated model for adequate train-
ing of wood industry professionals. This educational model covers all training levels: vocational training, university level and qualification programs, and offers a more flexible approach and ensures the adaptation of training contents to the needs of the companies. One of the crucial conditions for the efficient functioning of this training model is the involvement of wood clusters, which will represent the communication bridge between companies and training providers.

Serbia: Sawmilling and drying of beech timber for furniture production: yield and economic aspects
Participating organizations and their role: Knowledge pole: University of Belgrade, Faculty of Forestry–carries out the project developed on the basis of the results of previous needs and sectoral analysis.
Business support organizations: The Wood Industry Cluster organizes meetings with sawmills’ managers, gathers the prob-
lems expressed by SMEs. The Agency for Wood promotes the concept and results among members.
Expected results: Improved knowledge in the fields of sawmilling and drying of beech timber; higher yield of beech timber; higher quality of products.

Slovenia: Strengthening the Slovenian knowledge pole network in the wood sector to provide efficient support to SMEs
The participating organizations: UL BF, Department for Wood Science and Technology, UL BF, Department of Forestry and Renewable Forest Resources, Slovenian Forestry Institute, Pulp and Paper Institute, Faculty of Design, Forestry Association at COIS, Wood Processing and Furniture Association at COIS, Paper and Paper Converting Industry Association at COIS and Wood Industry Cluster–will collaborate in network activities in order to build-up and strengthen the competencies for direct support services for SMEs (advising, testing, guiding, research, commercialization of research results, participation in European RTD projects, promoting the wood, training, collecting information, benchmarking, analysis, supporting internationalization, etc.).
Expected results: Developed and well-communicated services for wood SMEs; active support for wood sector development; participation in projects and transfer of knowledge.

IV. ID:WOOD Action Plan for Sustainability
Sustainability is one of the keywords of the WPS Transnational Knowledge Clustering. Sustainability not just of the project activities but also of the Partnership itself. The ID:WOOD Partnership gathers most of the relevant actors of the wood sector in the project area and represents a strong asset for the regional wood sector. Thus, the Partnership should act as a stable network to further coordinate common activities and foster the necessary knowledge flow.

Sustainability was the goal and the Strategic Programming Laboratory was the means developed within ID:WOOD. The Laboratory’s aim was to analyze the principles and rules of the EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 and to form a shared vision of the most suitable approaches to address the assessed gaps. All ID:WOOD Project Partners and Participating territories have appointed their experts to the Laboratory and have contributed to “programming talks” in order to identify specific needs and common actions.

The result of the assessment activities outlined by international and local experts throughout the project, as well as of the Laboratory, is the Network Action Plan. The Network Action Plan, subscribed by the Project Partners at the final conference, represents the commitment document to grant sustainability to project activities and to the Partnership. Declaratory in its form, the Action plan is the operative basis of the ID:WOOD Partnership that turns to a Network to develop ID:WOOD spin-off activities.

The Action Plan is based upon a list of problems that could well be considered transversal in all the involved territories, both at the support organization and the productive sector level. In particular, most common problems are: the forestry based value chains are not adequately connected internally as the primary production industry and the wood manufacturing sector are not linked functionally; the wood processing and furniture industry is still mostly based on old technology and the innovation capacity of SMEs is generally poor; SMEs lack management capacities and knowledge about requirements from the market in terms of safety and quality of the products; there is a general lack of qualified workers as the training system curricula are sel-
don tuned to economy’s needs; wood technology centres or university laboratories are usually well equipped and have quality human resources but are poorly linked with industry; wood tech centres and university labs need to develop stronger links at the transnational level; design is recognized to be a primary need but design culture is generally low and design management has yet to be understood; relations between design centres and the productive sector are poor; clustering is still weak and policy frameworks are still inadequate to provide cluster organizations with the chance to play an effective role.

Based on a targeted approach, ID:WOOD partners have identified two specific thematic areas to be targeted within the new common initiatives to develop the wood sector potentials: technology transfer and design. Through the Strategic Program-
ing Laboratory, the ID:WOOD partners were able to share not only the needs but also methodological approaches. Fur-
thermore, with the Action Plan, the partners commit to support the ID:WOOD Network in designing new project proposals, keep an active approach towards the Network exchanging information and experiences, inform the Network members about financing opportunities, provide support to the Network in the phases of project design, and inform the Network about inter-
national conferences and workshops related to the sector.
Igor Milavec, Director, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, Wood Processing and Furniture Industry, Slovenia

The ID:WOOD project belongs to a group of the most useful projects for the associations of wood and furniture companies and their members. It allows a wide exchange of information and good practice among the wood processing support institutions. This insight into the theoretical and practical knowledge of other organizations opens up new possibilities of transforming the companies’ operation as well as creating new services in favour of businesses that are part of the support institutions involved in the project. The project also permits the exchange of views with experts from other countries in case specific issues exceed the national framework. Project partners’ cooperation with industry institutions and the government encourages the formation of new support mechanisms in each country. This, however, increases the chances of further acceleration of the wood-processing industry restructuring in this part of Europe.

Natalija Medica, Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, Directorate for Industry and Technology, Slovenia

The work within the scope of the ID:WOOD project has again proved that more cooperation and coordination is needed among all the players in the Slovenian wood value chain. The transfer of knowledge and work on both technological and non-technical processes in companies is an area where Slovenian companies still lag behind their competitors. We agree with all the recommendations and activities, however would like to emphasize that the industry itself should facilitate them. The public sector, with its measures and with the creation of the right environment can of course contribute to this process.

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Dilyana Stoyanova, Project Manager, Bulgarian Furniture Cluster, Bulgaria

ID:WOOD is not just another project supported by the SEE programme. This is a project that will leave a footprint in the wood processing and furniture industry in Europe. The activities were very result-oriented, the workshops – interactive and useful in content. On behalf of the Bulgarian Furniture Cluster, I was particularly involved in the Innovation Course in Belgrade (October 1–3, 2013) and the Tech Course Wood and Furniture in Sibiu (October 22–24, 2013). Both contributed to my professional development and were a prerequisite for wide cooperation and networking. I would like to express my gratitude to all the organizers for the experience!

Carlo Piemonte, ASDI sedia, Italy

The mission of the Italian chair district is to promote the local manufacturers and create a platform of synergies among SMEs and buyers all over the world. Quality of products, design and products made in Italy are a component that better represents our main strengths recognized in domestic and foreign markets. During the ID:WOOD project stages we participated as stakeholders in many meetings organized by Polo Tecnologico and we appreciated the networking activities done with the project members that gave us the opportunity to get to know the SEE cluster better and to establish mutual cooperation.

Simone Franzo, UNIVERSITY Consortium of Pordenone, Italy

Within the framework of our activities during the ID:WOOD project stages we participated at conferences and meetings organized by Polo Tecnologico to strengthen our cooperation with ID:WOOD project partners with the aim to establish a bridge of mutual cooperation between universities. We express our gratitude for the opportunity that was given to us by the Technological Pole to network our training and to expand our knowledge within the countries of southeastern Europe.

Muhamed Omerović, LLC Iso Wood, Gračanica, Bosnia and Herzegovina – www.isowood.ba

We are very glad to participate through NERDA in the ID:WOOD project which recognized the main issues of the SEE wood sector: underdevelopment although at different levels.

Svetlan Savić, private sawmill LLC “6. maj”, Milići, Bosnia and Herzegovina

We are very satisfied with our cooperation and participation in the ID:WOOD project, especially its SME oriented components.

Lead partner
Slovenian Forestry Institute, Slovenia / www.gozdis.si

Project partners
INFORMEST, Italy / www.informest.it
Wood Industry Cluster, Slovenia / www.lesarski-grozd.si
Technological Pole of Pordenone, Italy / www.polo.pn.it
Wood Cluster Styria, Austria / www.holzcluster-steiermark.at
Regional Development Agency Centru, Romania / www.adrcentru.ro
Agency for Sustainable Development and Eurointegration – ECOREGIONS, Bulgaria / www.asde-bg.org
Zala County Foundation for Enterprise Promotion, Hungary / www.zmva.hu
Local Development Agency PINS, Croatia / www.pins-skrad.hr
Development Association NERDA, Bosnia and Herzegovina / www.nerda.ba
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Forestry, Serbia / www.sfb.bg.ac.rs

Strategic partners
Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region – RAFVG, Italy / www.regione.fvg.it
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Slovenia / www.mkgp.gov.si
Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, Slovenia / www.mgrt.gov.si
Tuzla Canton, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Bosnia and Herzegovina / www.vladatk.kim.ba