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FOROPA – Sustainable Networks for the Energetic Use of Lignocellulosic Biomass in South East Europe

Apart from water, wind and solar power, forest biomass is one of the most important sources of renewable energy in Central and South East Europe. While several well-established research and innovation networks exist for solar and wind energy, the use of forest biomass is limited to local or regional initiatives with low international integration. The transnational project FOROPA links together research entities, cluster organizations, state forests and private forest owner associations to introduce standards for a forest biomass-based supply chain management and to improve local supply chains.

FOROPA analyses the innovation needs of enterprises and commercial end users in the forest biomass supply chain, sets up transnational reference processes and demonstrates the transferability of these reference processes to intermediaries and entrepreneurs to innovate their businesses. Relevant regional and national forest entities are coordinated to foster innovation of all actors along the biomass utilization chain: private and state forests, logging and transport enterprises, primary wood processors, biomass traders and converters. A further project objective is the identification and closing of innovation gaps in the supply chain of the biomass products fire wood, wood chips (from roundwood and forest residues) and pellets. In 2014, a series of pilot applications involving local SMEs will provide a “proof of concept” for the introduction of innovations and the improvement of local biomass supply chains.

How does FOROPA work and which results can be expected?

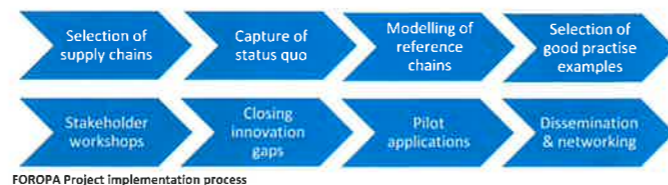
In 2013, the supply chains of fire wood, wood chips and pellets are analyzed and evaluated in depth. The status quo of the biomass supply chains is captured by guided interviews with relevant actors in each partner country. Based on the interviews and an economic analysis of cost drivers, the supply chains are mapped out to identify shortcomings and optimization potentials as well as good practice examples.

Main Results:

- Transnational framework and guidelines for the improvement of biomass supply chains
- Research agenda for biomass supply chain management
- International collaboration platform and knowledge repository
- Training and qualification strategies for entrepreneurs and educational institutes
- Demonstrations of pilot applications to decision makers and entrepreneurs

In the next step, good practice examples are selected and evaluated for transferability by each partner. Results are then presented to involved companies and stakeholders at regional workshops. In addition, international expert panels are organized to broaden the consortium’s knowledge base and to receive external feedback on the project results. Finally, the potential for innovating local biomass supply chains is demonstrated to local entrepreneurs and decision makers through the implementation of up to seven pilot applications.

The collaboration of universities, forest owner associations, cluster organizations, state forests and research institutions, together with the direct involvement of local SMEs is unique in the biomass sector and a distinctive feature of FOROPA. During the whole project a steady exchange of results and findings takes place in and between partnering countries: supply chains and good practice examples are discussed, compared and matched to jointly improve supply chains by closing innovation gaps.



FOROPA Facts

- **Project Coordinator:** Wood Cluster Styria (Holzcluster Steiermark GmbH).
- **Project Partners:** 13 partners from 10 countries including cluster organisations, research institutions, forest associations and state forests from Austria, Italy, Slovenia, Slovakia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, Greece, Switzerland and Ukraine
- **Program:** ETC South East European Programme co-financed by the European Union
- **Budget:** 1,72 mio. €
- **Project run-time:** 24 month, from 12/2012 to 11/2014

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FOROPA Partners: <http://www.foropa.eu/index.php/contact/partners>



Europe’s forests are important ‘source of wealth and jobs’

Forests and other wooded areas cover 40 per cent of the EU’s land space – Mediterranean dehesas and montados, the oak and beech forests of central Europe or the beautiful Lapland forests. As with European agriculture, there is a great diversity of natural forest types, forest covers, and forest ownership structures across the EU, but the wide range of potential benefits are common to all. Forests are among Europe’s most important renewable resources. They help to regulate the climate, provide raw materials and energy for us, food for wildlife, and offer areas of tranquility for us to escape from our urban lives. Forests are a key resource for improving quality of life and creating jobs, especially in rural areas. In other words, in addition to the more obvious economic resource they guarantee, they also provide and protect a huge range of ecosystem services for wider society.

The new EU forest strategy was adopted by the commission on 20 September 2013 after more than two years of consultations with member states and stakeholders. It gives a new framework to respond to the increasing demands put on forests and to the significant societal and political changes that have affected forests over the past 15 years.

Forests are key ecosystems, as well as a source of wealth and jobs in rural areas if they are managed in a proper way. Consequently, we have made clear that sustainable forest management is a key pillar of rural development and it is one of the principles of the new forest strategy. Sustainable forest management means using forests and forest land in a way and at a rate that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil relevant ecological, economic and social functions now and in the future without causing damage to other ecosystems. Moreover, we need to assure this at local, national and global level.

Following a new approach, our new strategy also goes ‘out of the forest’, addressing aspects of the ‘value chain’ which strongly influence forest management, namely resource efficiency – optimising the contribution of forests and the forest



“Sustainable forest management means using forests and forest land in a way and at a rate that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil relevant ecological, economic and social functions”

sector to rural development, growth and job creation – and global forest responsibility – promoting sus-

The EU’s new forest strategy will help support and develop one of Europe’s most vital sustainable resources, says **Dacian Cioloș**

tainable production and consumption of forest products. On this second point, the strategy underlines the role of the EU at the frontline of efforts to combat deforestation and forest degradation, as well as promoting sustainable forest management beyond our borders.

In the strategy, we have outlined an ambitious objective →