

# MEETING MEMO

## 6th Expert Group Meeting of the European Wood Policy Platform (woodPoP)

2 April 2025, 9.00 – 12.00 CEST

Zurich, Switzerland/online

Co-Chairs: Mr. Georg Rappold (AT), Alfred Kammerhofer (CH)

**A total of 49 participants, 25 in-person and 24 online, from different governments, institutions, and organisations attended the meeting:**

Countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland

International, regional, and stakeholder organisations: Association of Wood Processing Companies of the Slovak Republic, European Confederation of Woodworking Industries (CEI-Bois), European Organisation of the Sawmill Industry (EOS), European Forest Institute – Forest Policy Research Network (EFI-FPRN), European Panel Federation (EPF), European Parquet Federation (EPF), FederlegnoArredo, Forest Research Institute Baden-Württemberg, Forest Science and Technology of Catalonia (CTFC), FV Holzindustrie, Holzforschung Austria, High Level Groups EU, HOMO SILVESTRIS EUROPAE, InnoRenew CoE, InnovaWood, Luxinnovation GIE, Thünen-Institut, Swiss Wood Innovation Network (S-WIN), University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna (BOKU), University of Padova, University of Tuscia, WOOD.BE, and Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) – School of Management

Summary:

### 1. Opening of the Meeting

The Co-Chairs welcomed the participants to Zurich and thanked them for attending the 6<sup>th</sup> EGM. Alfred Kammerhofer referred to the successful meeting of the TWG Innovation (see separate memo and [on the WoodPoP homepage](#)) and the visit to the ERNE Group the day before. Georg Rappold pointed out that the endorsement of the Wood Policy Paper at the 3<sup>rd</sup> HLM in Brussels provided a joint understanding of the wood-based circular bioeconomy of Europe and guidance for all the TWGs for their work. It is reiterated that 2024 has been an important year, referencing the European elections and the new Commission. The wording has been aligned with the priorities of the incoming Commission, and the Competitiveness Compass is one example of such possible synergies. The current consultation on the Bioeconomy strategy is also an important entry point.

## 2. Update on the Wood Policy Paper

The item was introduced by the [video](#) from the Third High Level Meeting on 6 November that marked the endorsement of the Policy Paper.

The exchange of views highlighted the following main points and ideas:

- Translation of the Policy Paper:
  - The Paper is already available in French and Slovenian. Regards were expressed to Homo Silvestris Europae and the experts from the French Ministry of Agriculture and Food as well as to the Slovenian Ministry of Economy, Tourism and Sports and InnoRenew CoE.
  - The German translation is ongoing.
  - Italy, Finland, Czech Republic and Norway have expressed their intention to work on a translation as it facilitates outreach to their national audience.
  - It is recommended to have a technical expert check the translation before integration into the graphic design. A disclaimer on the English version being the original version should be added. The Secretariat is available to support WoodPoP Members in the process.
  
- Use of the Policy Paper:
  - Germany highlighted the need to link it with existing activities and concepts and brought forward the idea of organising a webinar to promote the Policy Paper and strengthen collaboration between the TWGs. The Czech Republic noted that it also serves as an important reference when developing and structuring national policies.
  - EPF pointed out that it would be helpful to develop 3-5 concrete ideas on what actions need to be taken and what changes this would imply in legislative terms to present in discussions with the European Commission.
  
- Introduction of References:
  - Holzforschung Austria referred to the ongoing work of including references to the Policy Paper. This is particularly important with regard to the definition of Sustainable Forest Management and the Principles and Objectives to make the Paper more robust. The TWG Innovation will wrap up this exercise until the summer. The references will then be added as endnotes on the Wood Policy Paper's section on the homepage.
  
- Strengthen engagement with EU Policymakers
  - Paper as well as digital copies of the Policy Paper will be sent to high level EU Commission and Parliament representatives, linking it to the EU Competitive Compass and inviting them to visit a flagship building in one of the EU member states.

- The Secretariat will prepare input on behalf of WoodPoP for the ongoing EU Bioeconomy consultation based on the language from the Policy Paper.

### 3. Updates and woodPoP Status Quo

#### 3.1 Updates from the Technical Working Groups (TWGs)

The floor was given to the co-leads of each Technical Working Group (TWG) to present their activities.

Luxembourg and Ireland were welcomed as co-leads to the TWG Innovation and Research and TWG Communication and Information, respectively.

##### 3.1.1. TWG Governance

The focus of the TWG Governance has been and continues to be on the Wood Policy Paper. A preview of the European Forest Institute study “Taking a bird’s eye-view of EU wood-based policy”, published on this day, was mentioned. The main planned activities reported have a strong focus on dissemination and outreach of the Wood Policy Paper. This involves sending a letter to high level EU Commission and Parliament representatives, complimenting the plan outlined under *2. Update on Wood Policy Paper – Strengthen engagement with EU Policymakers* in this memo; extracting key messages out of the WoodPoP Policy Paper with the TWG Communication; and advocating for the translation and availability of the Policy Paper in more European languages.

For Policy Paper outreach, planned activities reported are participation in EU stakeholder consultations such as that of the EU Bioeconomy strategy and presentation of the said paper at the Global Webinar Series on Sustainable Forest-Based Bioeconomy around the first quarter of 2025. Other planned activities reported were complimenting inputs for the 4<sup>th</sup> High Level Meeting on strengthening transdisciplinary approaches and the creation of a Wood Fund to support the various mid-term activities of WoodPoP, particularly in the preparation of the WoodPoP award.

##### 3.1.2 TWG Building

The TWG Building reported on its knowledge-sharing sessions. There were 3 from last year: first, on the latest developments and standards related to the Carbon Account and Storage in and on timber buildings; second, on the latest developments related to Health & Wellbeing and its relation to timber buildings; and third, on timber building insurance. For this year, the Annual Planning Meeting and a knowledge-sharing session on Timber Building Systems were reported.

Planned activities include an upcoming study on existing programs supporting the public procurement of timber construction, further knowledge-sharing sessions on EU regulations and policy initiatives related to timber construction and the Prologue on “Health & Wellbeing

in Timber Building” at the International Holzbau Forum in Innsbruck, Austria on 4 December 2025 and how inputs and conclusions from such sessions could be further used in support of the work of WoodPoP.

### **3.1.3 TWG Innovation and Research**

The TWG Innovation and Research presented that they have two key issues/topics for 2025: bridging the valley of death in innovation and finding alternatives for financing, particularly private funds and investment banks. These key topics were distilled from the group’s working document that began last year and was circulated to the TWG members around the second week of March. The same working document was used as the basis for the recently conducted workshop.

A short overview of the European Research and Innovation Landscape in the Wood Sector was presented. This was connected to topics covered in the workshop, such as the funding possibilities under Horizon Europe, the important steps that need to be covered and how to organize the wood-based sector to craft good proposals to take part in it, and the Timber Finance’s study on the possibility of the wood building sector’s entry into the finance markets. Other topics covered by the workshop, such as new business models, especially those that involve novel wood-based products, processes, and materials, were highlighted, as well as the challenges faced by these wood-based SMEs and the need to have strategies for them to overcome these challenges and foster SME-friendly business conditions.

It was reported that the results of the recently conducted workshop will be used to develop an Innovation Guide.

Finally, this Technical Working Group will finalise the work on the references to the Policy Paper (see item 2).

### **3.1.4 TWG Education and Vocational Training**

The TWG Education and Vocational Training highlighted the successful Prologue “Perspectives of the New European Bauhaus Academy on education and training in the timber construction sector” at the International Holzbau Forum in Innsbruck last 04 December 2024. They reported 5 meetings at the tail end of last year that were all about planning, fine-tuning, and increasing the visibility of their Prologue. For this year, there were 3 meetings focused on the TWG’s Policy Brief on training, upskilling and reskilling the wood-based sector’s workforce within an ever-changing knowledge and skills landscape.

An overview of the Policy Brief was presented, highlighting that while the European wood-based sector, with its 8 million employees, is a key player in rural development and a key catalyst in the transition towards a more innovative, inclusive, and sustainable society, it faces challenges such as the need for skilled labour. Action areas that were presented all emphasize the need for training, upskilling, and reskilling of the wood-based sector’s workforce. The Policy Brief will be shared with the Expert Group for written comments.

### **3.1.5 TWG Communication and Information**

The TWG Communication reported 3 meetings featuring discussions about the WoodPoP award and informational materials on each WoodPoP country that promote WoodPoP as a whole and sustainable wood utilisation and a Steering Group for the award and sub-group of the TWG that involved drafting the concept note of the WoodPoP Award and discussions on the details of the Award. The proposed timeline for the WoodPoP Award was also presented.

The group highlighted that the submission for ideas on the name of the WoodPoP award is ongoing. Ideas can be submitted under the following link: [WoodPoP Prize Name](#)

Planned activities include the continuation of preparations for the Award within the Steering Group and with the other TWGs, defining prerequisites of proposals for nomination and criteria of jury evaluation with TWG Building, sending an official letter to all WoodPoP member states containing the call for nomination and information about the Award, and continuing the development of the informational materials. A students' version of the Award will be organised at a later date.

Questions raised:

- Scope and Target of the Wood Prize: It was highlighted that the prize should a) give increased visibility to WoodPoP as an initiative as well as b) encourage the increased use of wood within the construction sector. Discussions with other Prizes are ongoing to avoid duplication.

### **3.2. Updates from the WoodPoP Secretariat**

The Secretariat thanked the TWGs co-leads for their excellent work over the last months. Veronika Steinhofer-Juch presented the new functionalities of the WoodPoP Cloud and encouraged everyone to consult the dedicated [User Guide](#). Other updates were about developments on the homepage '[woodpop.eu](#)', [the WoodPoP LinkedIn](#), and the biannual WoodPoP newsletter, WoodFlash.

### **3.3 Debrief on the Wood Policy and Innovation Conference, 7 November 2024**

Uwe Kies, Secretary General of InnovaWood and Veronika Steinhofer-Juch of the WoodPoP Secretariat presented a short overview on the conference 'Europe's wood sector as a driver for the green and digital transition of the built environment' that was jointly organised by Wood4Bauhaus, EFI BioRegions, WoodPoP and Holzcluster Steiermark. The conference was attended by over 160 experts from the European Commission, national and regional experts, industry and stakeholder organisations. WoodPoP organised one of the parallel sessions in the afternoon on governance, and Georg Rappold introduced the Policy Paper at the conclusion of the morning session.

All presentations are online via the link in the programme at the bottom of the conference page [here](#).

### 3.4 Joint reflection on the next steps for WoodPoP

Petri Heino and Andreas Kleinschmit von Lengefeld introduced their ideas on the next steps for WoodPoP. Compromising of 5 key areas, it includes a) improving operational structure by clarifying roles within WoodPoP and establishing close cooperation between the TWGs, b) developing communication strategies on engaging EU institutions and streamlining information flow between members of the Platform, c) discussing avenues for engagement (e.g. meetings, conferences) to enhance cooperation and outreach, d) ensuring active stakeholder engagement for all members of the Platform, and e) a proposal of a roadmap, clear deliverables and frameworks to ensure long-term impact.

One of the ideas for follow-up was the organization of a Policy Lab in Austria in 2026.

#### 4 Presentation of the study “A bird’s eye view of EU forest policy and wood in construction”

Filip Aggestam, Science and Technical Officer for the Convention on Wetlands and Guest Research at the EFI-FPRN, presented the EFI Study highlighting that EU forest policy, a mosaic of strategic, regulatory and economic tools, needs stronger integration, especially with the construction sector, to fully leverage wood’s carbon storage potential and align industrial development, sustainability goals, and climate mitigation as the key take-away. The policy gaps and recommendations mentioned the need for better policy coherence across sectors, highlighting the underrepresentation of Harvested Wood Products (HWPs) in broader climate strategies and the need to improve monitoring and cross-sectoral coordination.

More information and download link here: [New EFI publication takes a bird’s eye view of EU wood-based policy | European Forest Institute](#)

#### 5 Updates on international developments and processes

Raphaella Hellmayr, Policy officer at the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions, and Water Management presented the Country&Organisation-Led Initiative on sustainable forest-based bioeconomy (COLI), led by Austria (chair), Australia, Finland, Japan, Türkiye, FAO, and IUFRO. COLI aims to promote sustainable wood use and foster a global dialogue on forest-based bioeconomy in response to climate change through knowledge exchange, policy dialogue, and the creation of an enabling environment for sustainable practices. Activities include, among others, [a webinar series](#) (ongoing, led by FAO), bi- and multilateral conferences<sup>1</sup>, a science-led think tank, and a side-event at the UNFF in May 2025. The initiative will culminate in a three-day summit on 23 – 25 February 2026 in Vienna, Austria.

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<sup>1</sup> Wood Vibes – health, well-being and sound – September 2025 in Tokyo  
WOODRise, 22-25 September 2025 in Vancouver, Canada  
World Conference on Timber Engineering 2025, 22 -26 June in Brisbane, Australia

## 6 Preparation of the next High Level Meeting, 15 October 2025, Izola, Slovenia

Andreja Kutnar, Director of InnoRenew CoE, shared an update on the programme for the next High Level Meeting, which will take place on 15 October 2025 in Slovenia. The meeting will focus on strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration between ministries to strengthen the wood-based sector as well as on the role of skills and training. A visit to the Port of Koper (wood terminal) and the cultural heritage building to be renovated under NEB values is also planned for 14 October. The presentation also included practical recommendations on travel and accommodation.

### Next Steps and Upcoming Meetings

- Meeting Documents and presentations are available on the [WoodPop homepage](#) and cloud.
- The latest version of the Policy Brief 'Wood-based sector requires skilled workforce to propel Europe towards sustainable future' is available for written comments until 25 April 2025. It will then be finalised with graphic elements.
- One of the priorities of the coming months will be the set-up of a Wood Fund to support the work of the initiative, including the preparation and organisation of the Wood Prize.
- The next EGM will take place online mid-September.
- High Level Meeting on 15 October 2025 in Izola, Slovenia (venue: InnoRenew CoE building)
- Prologue V on "Wood, Health and Wellbeing" at the International Wood Construction Forum on 04 December 2025 in Innsbruck, Austria