



## MEETING MEMO

### 8<sup>th</sup> Expert Group Meeting of the European Wood Policy Platform (WoodPoP)

24 March 2026, 13.00 – 15.00 CEST

online

**Chair:** Mr Georg Rappold (Austria)

**Language:** English

**A total of 54 online participants from different governments, institutions and organisations attended the meeting**

Countries (16): Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Spain (Galicia), Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kingdom

International, regional and stakeholder organisations: Austrian Research Centre for Forests (BFW), Austrian Wood Industry Association, Built by Nature, European Confederation of Woodworking Industries (CEI-Bois), Czech Forestry Institute, European Forest Institute (EFI), European Organisation of the Sawmill Industry (EOS), European Panel Federation (EPF), European Parquet Federation (FEP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), The Forest & Climate Leaders' Partnership (FCLP), Forest-based Sector Technology Platform (FTP), Holzforschung Austria, High Level Groups EU, Holzcluster Steiermark GmbH, HOMO SILVESTRIS EUROPAE, InnoRenew CoE, International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), InnovaWood, Italia Foresta Legno Cluster Nazionale, Luxinnovation GIE, MassTimber@MSU, Thünen-Institut, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU) Vienna, University of Primorska, University of Sopron, University of Viterbo, Wood K Plus

#### **0. Opening of the meeting**

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and introducing the agenda.

#### **1. WoodPoP Updates and News**

##### ***Updates from the WoodPoP Secretariat by IUFRO***

Alexander Buck (IUFRO) reported on some changes to the WoodPoP Secretariat. First, Veronika Steinhofer-Juch has started her maternity leave by the end of January 2026 and with this, Visnja Koscak of Holzcluster Steiermark GmbH officially took over as Coordinator of the WoodPoP Secretariat as of February 2026. This arrangement was made possible with the support agreement signed between IUFRO and Holzcluster Steiermark GmbH on 29 January 2026, with Georg Rappold (BMLUK Austria/WoodPoP Chair) as witness.

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### **4th High Level Meeting in Izola – Looking back**

A video highlight of the 4th High Level Meeting in Izola, Slovenia, was shown, followed by a presentation of the Outcome Statement "The role of wood in Europe's clean, just and competitive transformation", which highlights wood's strategic importance for climate goals, economic resilience, sustainable construction, and a circular bioeconomy. The WoodPoP Chair encouraged participants to draw on the Outcome Statement in their national policy work and in other bilateral processes. Thanks were extended to the organisers, the Slovenian Ministry of Economy, Tourism and Sport and the University of Primorska/InnoRenew CoE, for hosting the event.

### **Progress and Outlook of Technical Working Groups by TWG Co-Leads**

#### **a. TWG Governance**

The latest activities involve online consultation with TWG members to create the WoodPoP evaluation questionnaire for the upcoming WoodPoP Policy Lab in Tulln, Austria and coordination of the WoodPoP stance on the EC public consultation on the revision of the State Aid General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER). Looking ahead, the TWG will consolidate the evaluation questionnaire results, continue work on the policy-science paper "Is There Enough Wood?", and begin drafting recommendations for WoodPoP's future strategic direction.

#### **b. TWG Building**

Finalising the policy brief following the successful Prologue V at the 2025 International Wood Construction Conference in Innsbruck. Thematic meetings will continue, covering persuasive soft measures for greater wood use in public construction and circular timber buildings. A subgroup on Eurocode 5, established in September 2025 and having met five times, is monitoring national funding initiatives in Austria and Finland and gathering support for a planned Europe-wide initiative.

#### **c. TWG Innovation & Research**

There are now three (3) Task Forces (TF), with the work of TF 4 determined to be fit for TWG Governance and Buildings and thus summarily dissolved. TF 2 is developing a 12–18-month roadmap on financing innovation, including the creation of a lightweight Innovation Finance Observatory and preparations for pilot financing instruments. TF 3 is intensifying efforts to influence FP10, encouraging members to register in the EC Expert Database and coordinating a structured contact network to support targeted engagement.

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#### **d. TWG Education and Vocational Training**

Preparation for the WoodPoP Student Award is ongoing, including the development of a workshop protocol and the co-creation of the award concept with students from several European countries. Work on updating the mapping of wood-related study programmes, supported by coordinated communication with programme administrators, is also ongoing. National and online student workshops are planned in the coming months, with a public vote on award ideas in August 2026 and a formal announcement at the High Level Meeting in November 2026.

#### **e. TWG Information & Communication**

Work is advancing on Dara Award preparations, including the overall communication plan, a coordinated social media campaign, and preparations for the inaugural Dara Award Ceremony in Prague on 26 November 2026. Collaboration with students on the trophy design was highlighted as a key achievement. Work will continue on communication materials, the Hall of Fame, and the launch of public voting.

## **2. WoodPoP Dara Award – Celebrating Sustainable Timber Construction**

### ***Update to the first edition of the Dara Award***

David Gil-Moreno (Ireland) presented the WoodPoP Dara Award as WoodPoP's initiative to bring together the Pan-European region – reflected by the award's logo, the Dara Knot – into recognising outstanding timber construction across the region. Lada Matoušková Prylová (Czech Forestry Institute) presented the winning student-designed trophy for the inaugural award ceremony and the timeline that led to the winning design. Out of the top six (6) student-designed trophies, the trophy designed by Julie Kratěnová after a voting round opened to the members of the TWG Information & Communication and the Dara Award Steering Group.

### ***Country participation, submissions, and milestones towards the award ceremony***

Tomas Krejzar (Czechia) presented that eighteen (18) countries are slated to participate in the upcoming WoodPoP Dara Award, and seventeen (17) jury members from different countries have been assembled to judge these submissions. The next steps towards the inaugural awarding ceremony's date were also presented.

## **3. WoodPoP Outcome Papers – Recent Outputs and Next Topics**

Following the 7th Expert Group Meeting, WoodPoP published four new outputs: the 4th High Level Meeting Outcome Statement, the policy brief Wood for Europe's Future: FP10 as the Engine of Decarbonisation and Competitiveness, the Contribution to the Advanced Materials Act Consultation, and the policy brief Wood Promotion as Driver of Europe's Green Transition. Outputs in progress include a TWG Building paper on the health and well-being

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of timber construction, a TWG Governance contribution to the EC public consultation on the GBER revision, and a policy-science paper, "Is there enough wood?" which is about wood resource availability.

In the discussion, Kris Wijnendaele (EFP) flagged EFP's two existing papers on the topic. It was then clarified that the planned paper would draw on existing studies. Tony Quinn (Ireland) suggested engaging standing committees on forestry, relevant DGs to raise awareness of WoodPoP's work, and offered to assist with contacts. Helga Puelzl (EFI) announced an upcoming EFI policy brief on scaling forest-based innovations in Europe, and Alexander Buck shared a comprehensive wood supply study coordinated by IUFRO.

#### **4. WoodPoP Evaluation & Policy Lab “The Evolution of WoodPoP”, 20 – 22 April 2026, Tulln, Austria**

Lisa Lehner (Austria) invited the participants of the upcoming WoodPoP Policy Lab, to be held on 20–22 April 2026 in Tulln, Austria. The event brings together WoodPoP Expert Group members and key stakeholders to collectively reflect on the platform's future direction. During the meeting, the WoodPoP evaluation questionnaire was officially rolled out, the outputs of which will directly inform discussions at the Policy Lab. She extended her thanks to those who had taken the time to comment on the earlier drafts of the evaluation form.

#### **5. WoodPoP Fund**

The Chair presented the WoodPoP Fund, established to enable contributions from both public and private partners. Contributions can be flexible, ranging from general support of the WoodPoP Secretariat to earmarked funding for specific work areas such as TWG activities, policy and technical briefs, and WoodPoP awards, including the Dara Award and the planned student award citing Switzerland's contribution to the Fund to support the work of TWG Innovation and Research. The participants were encouraged to spread the word and help strengthen WoodPoP's financial foundation.

#### **6. Updates on international developments and processes**

Lisa Lehner (Austria) gave a brief overview of the recently concluded COLI Global Summit on Advancing Sustainable Forest-based Bioeconomy Approaches, hosted by Austria in Vienna in February 2026. The summit produced two key outputs, the Vienna Call for Action and the Co-Chairs' Summary, which outline five collective priority actions for the sustainable forest-based bioeconomy and will feed into UNFF21 in New York and COFO28 in Rome. Session recordings and event highlights are available on the summit website.

#### **7. Updates from the Secretariat**

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The Secretariat presented WoodPoP's collaboration and communication platforms: the WoodPoP Cloud (Nextcloud), serving as a central repository for Platform materials; Microsoft Teams, where dedicated channels will be created for TWG sub-group work on technical and policy briefs; the WoodPoP homepage and LinkedIn page; and WoodFlash, the Platform's twice-yearly newsletter, currently in its 4th issue. Participants were encouraged to engage with and share these platforms to broaden the reach of WoodPoP's work.

## 8. AOB

It was reported that developments similar to those in Norway, where the steel and concrete sector filed a legal complaint against perceived market advantages for the wood-based sector, are now emerging in Switzerland. Furthermore, in Switzerland, it was observed that the wood-based sector currently holds only around 5.7% construction market share against the concrete and steel sectors. Participants noted that material neutrality is an increasingly prominent topic, particularly in Germany, and that competing industries with significant market presence and resources are themselves seeking subsidies, policy attention, and dedicated programmes as pushback. The discussion underscored the importance of WoodPoP's role in building a strong alliance of stakeholders capable of countering this pushback with a unified and well-resourced voice.

## 9. Next Steps and Upcoming Meetings:

- Meeting notes and presentations will be circulated via email, uploaded to the homepage, and WoodPoP Cloud.
- WoodPoP Policy Lab 'Evolution of WoodPoP' will take place on 20-22 April 2026, in Tulln, Austria. A hybrid Steering Group Meeting will take place on the last day (22 April 2026, 13:30 CEST). Invitations for both and a calendar invite for the latter will be circulated soon.
- The WoodPoP Contribution to the GBER consultation will be circulated near the end of April 2026
- The next Expert Group Meeting (9<sup>th</sup> EGM) will now be held on 15 September 2026, online, 10:00 – 12:00 CEST.
- Fifth HLM and Dara Award Ceremony, 26 November 2026, Prague, CZ
- Prologue V (Innovation), 2 December 2026, Innsbruck, AT

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