

**Event Report: *Club du Bois***

**Date & Place: 8 January 2020 - European Parliament, Brussels**

**Participants from CEI-Bois:** Patrizio Antonicoli, Teodora Ilieva, Margherita Miceli

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of January the first meeting of the 2020 edition of the *Club du Bois* took place under the chairmanship of MEP Mrs Maria Noichl (S&D, Germany). The event, traditionally co-organised by CEI-Bois, EPF and EOS, aimed at presenting the woodworking sector to the Members of the European Parliament and to illustrate the priorities of the Industry for the term 2019-2024. At the end of the event, MEP Noichl officially handed over the Chairmanship to MEP Mrs Simona Bonafè (S&D, Italy).

The evening kept its promises offering the opportunity to consolidate bonds with re-elected Members of the Parliament and get in touch with those newly elected. The overall appearance was particularly good: around 50 people in total, including an historical attendance of **14** Members of the Parliament - from different geographical and political horizons - plus industry and media representatives.

The common thread in all speeches was the role of wood and of the wood Industry in reaching the environmental and economic goals set by the New European *Green Deal*. The welcome speech from MEP Noichl highlighted the good cooperation with the industry and the potential offered by wood in long-term uses such as construction.

Mr. Paolo Fantoni, Chairman of EPF, presented the main statistics regarding the panel sector, highlighting how the application of wood-based panels in construction will grow in importance in the forthcoming years. Moreover, the panel sector is already an excellent case study for circular economy, with 40% of particleboard today coming from recovered waste wood. Further harmonisation of the internal market and improved technical education on the use of wood were also identified as priorities.

Mr. Sampsa Auvinen, Chairman of EOS, described the role of sawmills as the essential element of connection between the forests and the manufacturing industry. Key figures were presented, as well as a brief analysis of the main risks and potential for growth in international markets. Raw material supply is the most urgent issue faced by the primary mechanical wood industry: a recent video of bark beetle outbreak was shown as an example of serious challenges that the industry needs to address.

Mr. Keith Fryer, CEI-Bois Board member, reminded the audience of the great economic importance of the sector as a whole, giving jobs to 1 million people and generating 144 billion turnover each year, as well as its role in offering products with low embodied carbon compared to steel and cement alternatives. The main priorities for CEI-Bois under the new term were presented: from availability of sustainable and legal raw materials, the promotion of circular bioeconomy and of the competitiveness of wooden construction, to free but fair trade, research and innovation and good social relations. The speech ended on a personal note: as a long-standing actor in the sector, Mr. Fryer described the daily struggles but also enormous satisfaction that derives from working in an industry with such potential for sustainable growth.

MEP Bonafè closed the event expressing her enthusiasm in accepting the new role of Chairwoman of the *Club du Bois*. Her political commitment of pursuing green growth in Europe was displayed already in her work on the Circular Economy package during the previous legislative term and remains unchanged. Wood has a good story to tell in this respect and she wished the *Club to Bois* to become THE place to listen to challenges and find solutions together.

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