European Cooperation and Networking in Forest Communication

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Conducted at the European Forest Institute
Reasons for Increased Attention for Communication on Forests, Forestry and Forest Industry

- Image-problem of the forest industry (cf. Rametsteiner and Kraxner, 2003; DG ENTR, 2002)
- Disaggregated sector and fragmented policy at EU level enforce the need for cooperation on communication issues
- Policy relevance – UNFF4, MCPFE, EU For.Strat.
- Challenges identified at the Forest Academy Finland fora
The Project - Goals

- Analyzing existing structures of cooperation and networking in forest sector communication – “who is doing what?”
- Analyzing the way challenges are met and which gaps remain – “what is not being done?”
- Two levels: European and national (A, FIN, LV, GB)
Method

- Expert interviews and email questionnaire (European and national level – Austria, Finland, Latvia, UK)
- Questions on:
  - Goals, Messages, Targetgroups, Tools
  - Communication strategy vs. Ad Hoc activities
  - 1-Way vs 2-Way communication (PR vs. communication...)
  - Intra- vs. Intersectoral communication
  - National – International
  - Cooperation
## Classification of Cooperation and Networking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Between actors from different European countries</th>
<th>Between actors within each country</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>External</strong> communication</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>between forest sector and other sectors</td>
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Model developed by Hellström (2004)
Results of the expert interviews and questionnaire
The Forest Sector’s View

Forest Sector Core: forest industries, forest owners, (inter)nat./(inter)gov. bodies dealing with forest policy, forest science.

Forest Cluster: includes various organisations (gov., intergov., NGOs etc.) dealing with issues like environment, recreation, agriculture, energy etc.

Society: the rest of society
A Different Point of View
## Examples of Current Cooperation and Networking

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<td>Forest Academy Finland fora, FBI-Technology Platform, Forest Communicators Network</td>
<td>Forest Forum for Decision-Makers (FIN), Walddialog (A)</td>
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<td>Cooperation in promotional campaigns (e.g. Wood for Good, ProHolz) and sectoral platforms</td>
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Actual Communication Situation (I)
Actual Communication Situation (II)

UN Structures

FAO
Secretariat
Timber Branch

ECE

ILO

European Forestry Commission

COFO

Joint Experts Network to implement SFM

14 Joint Session & Bureaux Meetings

15 Timber Committee

13

17 Joint FAO/ECE WP on Forest Economics and Statistics

16 Teams of Specialists

18 Advisory Committee on Paper and Wood Products

19 Forest Communicators Network (FCN)

20 Team of Specialists on Forest Products Markets and Marketing

Partnerships

MCPFE
ITTO
EF
Various social, economic and environmental NGOs
The Committers

Who is responsible? And for what?

- Individual level – Companies (Forestry- and industry-)
- National level – Federations
- International – “Umbrella” Associations at the European level

What can/should be done at which level?
- PR, lobbying or joint two-way communication processes?
- When does cooperation provide added-value?
The Victims

Target Groups – getting attention (external communication)

- Policy-makers (high-level) from other sectors
- Youth – “Opportunities for Generations”
- Teachers – “Forest Learning Path”
- Architects and builders – “Wood Awards”
- Press – difficult to catch their interest
  - Needed: “hot topics” / controversies
- Forestry education – changing curricula
Old Boys Network

Interaction between actors in the (European level) "core" is strong:

- *The same people meet each other over and over at various meetings*
- *Everyone knows everyone in the sector*
Talking is silver, but what is doing then?

“Everyone is talking about the need to improve communication with society, but now it’s time to really start doing something”

……is an often heard remark……
Are our messages sexy enough?

Messages – *to hit bull’s eye*

- Strong policy framework for forestry at the European level is needed… but how to interest policy makers from other relevant sectors?
- Reaching “the uninterested public” – messages based on: “Why cut forest?”
- People decide based on images & emotion – not interested in “dry” facts
- Showing is better that telling
- Use images, slogans & teasers (based on facts) – not solely facts
Better well stolen, than bad invented

- Communication tools
  - PR, lobbying or joint two-way communication processes?
  - Importance of personal networks with people from other sectors.
  - What can we learn from cars, perfumes, and beer? – e.g. their use of communication professionals and strategies.
  - Write *communication* in EU documents -> crank up movement in member-states’ efforts in forest communication.
Relations

- Relation forest industry – eNGOs: hesitant
- Relation forest industry – forest science
  - *Do the individual companies know what forest science is doing, and what might benefit them?*
  - *Is forest science actively doing something to catch the attention of the industry?*
Conclusions (I) – general

What is it the forest sector really wants to achieve with communication?
1. Just to boost its image with the public?
2. To be successful at policy lobbying?
3. To really build relationships and two-way communication processes with other sectors and interest groups?
Conclusions (II) – national level

- Intersectoral communication between forest sector and other sectors is normally better developed at the national level
- New EU Member States – effort in sector-internal as well as external communication is needed
- In some countries the sector’s image is a problem, in other countries it is not – differences in communication needs
Conclusions (III) – European level

- Large scale promotional activities are just starting and in spite of some cooperation between countries (e.g. "wood for good" and "ProHolz"), no European wide 'platform' is foreseen on the short term.
- Communication between national forest sectors is also not very well developed.
- Cooperation initiatives FBI – identification of target groups (youth, media, architects, universities) and consequent activities to set up a framework to reach them is a good first step (in spite of limited budget).
Conclusions (IV) – European level

- A move from reactive to proactive communication – come with the news before someone else does – is taking place.
- But..... is the public really interested?
- Cooperation and networking are the only way for the sector to strengthen the impact of its communication – combined expertise, resources, pool of contacts etc.
- But, cooperation requires strong mandates
  - a matter of perceived loss of control?
- And, a network is as strong as its weakest link:
  - networks need active members, and above all an active secretariat.
Recommendations (I)

- Reach the most important target groups – youth/schools, the media, architects/builders – (adoption of innovation / opinion leader strategy) through "telling by showing" and not by yet another brochure;
- After having set up a Technology Platform, it is now time to direct effort and resources to set up a cross-sectoral forum with other major stakeholders and, especially, high level policy makers;
Recommendations (II)

- Allocate funds and a strong mandate for a joint body, bringing together EU- and national level forest sector actors in order to facilitate cooperation in cross-sectoral communication;
- Further increase cooperation between national forest sectors in order to learn from each other's experiences and best practices in communicating with society;
- Become aware that communication is essential for an organization’s profile and existence – truly integrate communication in the organizational strategy.
Thank you for your attention