Characteristics and Challenges of Forest Sector Communication in the EU

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Fragmentation of forest policy at the EU level and image problems of the forest industry have increased forest sector actors' interest for cooperation on and coordination of communication activities. Although internal communication in the forest sector at the European level is generally well developed both formally and informally, the desired strengthening of communication with other sectors and the public at large is perceived as difficult. In this pre-study 39 interviews were conducted with EU and UNECE/FAO officials, EU level Forest-based Industries and forestry sector federation representatives, and forest scientists working at the European level. The results indicate that EU level forest sector core actors' ideas on communication differ. Ideas range from strictly image improvement; being more successful at lobbying with other sectors and high-level policy-makers; up to building long-lasting relations and two-way communication processes with other sectors. This makes it difficult to come to coordinated action among forest sector actors. A more active exchange of information on best practices in forest communication between national as well as European level actors, and increased coordination of communication efforts is desired by industry, forest owners as well as policy-makers. However, clear ideas on how to improve, especially inter-sectoral, communication are largely lacking.

1 Introduction

1.1 Policy Background

With the rise of forest issues on the global agenda and the increasing relevance of other sectors, due to environmental and macro-economic interests

(Montalembert 1995, Hogl 2000), communication has become a key element in present-day forestry. Considering the fragmentation of policy networks, at national and most certainly also at European Union (EU) level, there is a clear need for inter-sectoral policy approaches. Fragmentation is particularly pronounced concerning forest

policy because of the wide distribution of competence within the European Commission (COM)* (Hogl 2000). Recently, efforts to coordinate forest policy at the European level have increased, i.e. the Forestry Strategy for the EU (COM 2005) and the EU Forest Action Plan (COM 2006). Recent policy statements also reflect the increased attention for improving forest related communication:

– United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) fourth session 2004 (Resolution 4/1: points 3 & 30);
– Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), fourth conference 2003 (Resolution 1: points 5 & 6);
– Council Resolution on a Forestry Strategy for the EU (Articles 2-f and 10) (Council 1999);
– Most recently the EU Forest Action Plan (COM 2006) states that: *coordination between policy areas in forest-related matters needs to be strengthened* (Key Action 14), and that *information exchange and communication needs to be improved* (Key Action 18).

Apart from these general recommendations, the EU Forest Action Plan suggests some specific actions. Amongst others, it emphasizes the need for the forest sector to improve communication, internally as well as externally with other sectors, e.g. agriculture and rural development, trade, environment, but also with various stakeholders, e.g. environmental non-governmental organizations (eNGOs), recreation and tourism organizations, construction industry federations etc. More specifically it recommends:

– Strengthening the role of the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) will positively contribute to fostering coordination and communication on forest-related issues between the Commission and the Member States.
– Joint meetings between the members of the SFC and the Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork will be organized, which should contribute to enhancing communication between the members of the SFC and relevant stakeholders.
– Coordination and communication on forest-related issues will be significantly improved by establishing focal points in the Commission services.

– Awareness of the general public on forestry issues should be increased. A communication strategy on forestry will be developed in furthering this strategic objective of the Action Plan. This will outline the main steps to be taken in improving information exchange and communication on sustainable forest management in the Community.

"Vision 2030: A Technology Platform Initiative by the European Forest-Based Sector" (2005) is a joint statement by the COM, the Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI), the Confederation of European Woodworking Industries (CEI-Bois) and the Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF). This document emphasizes that:

– To fully develop its products and services, the forest sector must improve its understanding of areas such as perception, social behavior and social changes.
– The sector needs to communicate to society the unique, sustainable and renewable nature of forests and forest-based products.

The importance of improving the forest sector's communication with society relates to the need for policy to be legitimated and accepted by society (Karvonen 2004). This need, as well as the increased strength of interest groups, have given the public more weight as an actor in discussions on forests (Buchy and Hoverman 2000, Weber and Christophersen 2002). A number of studies indicate that the public is deeply concerned about forests, including the still unsatisfactory situation of forest health and the perceived threat of forest biodiversity loss in many regions (Rametsteiner and Kraxner 2003*, Suda and Schaffner 2004) and a negative perception of forest-based industries (COM 2002, Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training 2003). For those reasons the COM, together with the European forest-based industries (FBI) and forestry sector federations, prepared the *Communications Strategy for Forest-based Industries in the EU* (Forest-based Industries Working Group on Communication 2004).

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* See Appendix I for a list of the used acronyms and abbreviations

* Rametsteiner and Kraxner (2003) summarizes 47 representative surveys from 16 European countries on the public's image on forests, forestry and forest-based industries

1.2 Background to the Study

The studies and policy documents mentioned above indicate that there is a communication problem. However, simplifying statements like: "there is a lack of communication" do not cover the full extent of the problem. First of all, a division can be made between internal (i.e. within the forest sector) and external (i.e. between forest sector actors and the rest of society) communication. Second, there is a quantity and quality aspect to the forest sector's current communication difficulties. Here, quantity refers to a lack of communication and quality refers to non-penetrating and inadequate communication channels.

In this study the EU level actors most involved in forest issues are called the *forest sector core*. This definition will be discussed in the following chapter. The general aim of this study is to increase understanding on how the actors in the forest sector core communicate with each other and how they perceive communication with actors from outside the forest sector core. A related goal is to identify bottle-necks in forest sector communication and possible ways to deal with these challenges. The specific questions dealt with in this paper are:

1. Who are the actors that are most involved in European level policy processes relevant for the forest sector? In other words, which actors together form the forest sector core?
2. What are the characteristics of and challenges in communication between these (core) actors? For example, what are the formal and informal structures, messages, and channels?
3. What are the characteristics and challenges of forest sector core actors' communication with actors outside the core? For example, what are the messages, channels, and target groups?
4. In what way are the communication challenges, as mentioned in the earlier discussed policy documents, addressed?

This study should be seen as a pre-survey to map out forest sector communication at the EU level, as perceived by forest sector core actors. This study also attempts to point out where further research is needed.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 The Forest Sector Core and the Forest Related Cluster

The EU FBI comprise five main sectors: wood-working (sawn wood, wooden panels, plywood, wooden boards, joinery industry, house-building and wooden furniture); pulp, paper and board production; paper and board converting and packaging; printing; and publishing. They are interlinked through their use of common raw materials and the employment of similar product recovery and recycling processes (COM 1999, TEEC 2002). The forestry sector (i.e. forest owners, foresters, forest entrepreneurs and forest workers) is an essential part of the forest-based industries. Recently, the forestry sector is even included in the definition of FBI sector (COM 2002). There are a large number of industrial organizations representing forestry and forest-based industries in Brussels. Furthermore each EU Member State (MS) has national organizations for different industry sectors. All these organizations put their emphasis on different issues. But they have one in common: all the industries face the same image problem (FBI Working Group on Communication 2004).

The EU FBI is also the focus of, and is mutually interdependent on, a Forest Industries Cluster. The cluster industries provide goods and services to, or purchase them from, the EU FBI. Additionally, the quality of the cluster industries influences the competitiveness of the EU FBI. The cluster industries cover sector-specific machinery and equipment, process control systems, chemicals, furniture and wooden construction elements for building purposes, and consulting dedicated to serve the FBI (FBI Working Group on Communication 2004).

As one the purposes of this study is first to identify those actors that together form a core group involved in forest policy processes in the EU, it was decided to introduce two concepts that differ a bit from the ones discussed above. The definitions of these two concepts, named *forest sector core* and *forest related cluster*, are by the author, as there is no commonly agreed definition of the forestry- or forest sector as a whole
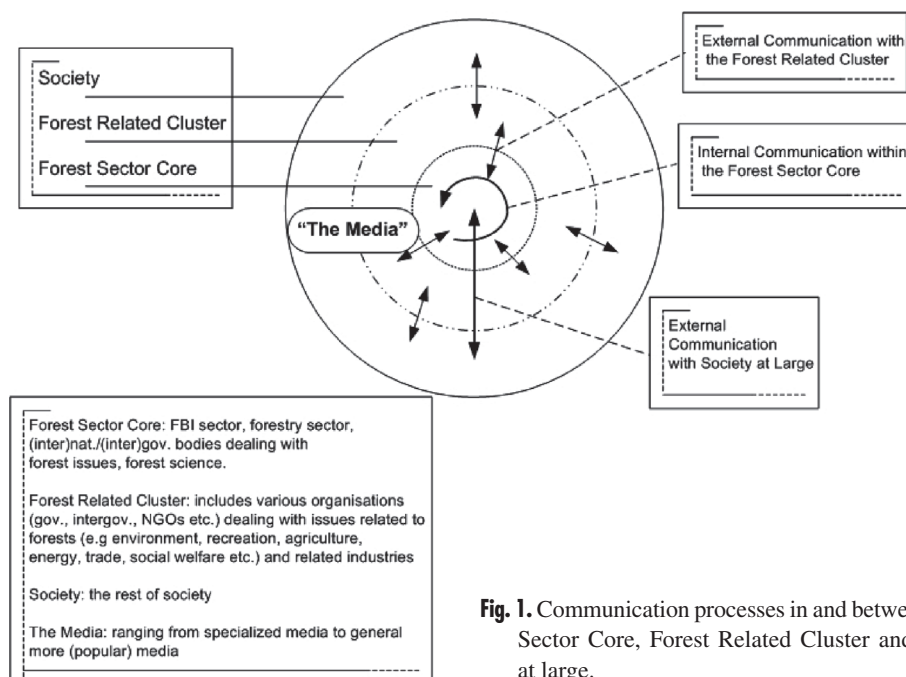
Fig. 1. Communication processes in and between Forest Sector Core, Forest Related Cluster and Society at large.

(FAO 2004). Based on the literature review (cf. Hellström 2004) three main groups of actors were defined (Fig. 1):

–   Forest Sector Core: a "core group" of people/ organizations that together determine to a large extent the course of forest policy processes at the European level. This group includes forest policy decision-makers*, FBI, the forestry sector, and forest science;
–   Forest Related Cluster: a wide array of policy decision-makers and interest representation organizations with an interest in forests, e.g. environmental, agricultural, development, trade, social welfare organisations, related industries etc.;
–   Society at large.

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* Concerning EU: The European Commission (the bureaucracy) is most relevant for this study, as it is the EU institution where more or less permanent groups of people working on forest issues can be found. Of course Council and European Parliament committees and working groups are also studied, especially in the analysis of formal communication structures.
    Concerning UNECE/FAO: the two relevant bodies, the UNECE Timber Committee (TC) and the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC), are governmental bodies that provide a forum for discussing policy issues and provide guidance and advice on policy directions, which actual policy makers and their advisers at the national level may or may not listen to. The Timber Branch (TB), then, is the secretariat to the TC and EFC, and their subsidiary bodies and provides the "evidence", in the form of studies, reports, statistics etc., on which this guidance and advice may be formulated.

2.2 Concepts on Communication Processes

Models of communication processes have at least four elements: source, message, medium, and receiver (Dretske 1999). In addition, there can be a source of disruption: e.g. selective exposure, selective perception, selective attention and selective acceptance. Finally, if a message has passed all these obstacles and the receiver agrees, we still cannot be sure that he will react as intended (Jones-Walters 2000). Closely related is Luhmann's (1975) discussion on "attention rules" and the "career of a topic", which accentuates that it is difficult to interest your target groups with your message.

Communication processes can be divided into one-way and two-way communication and into asymmetric and symmetric communication, in which one-way communication is always asymmetric, and two-way communication can be either asymmetric or symmetric. Asymmetry is defined as communication in which a one-way, linear causal effect is predicted and evaluated. Symmetrical communication stands for the use of bargaining, negotiating, and strategies of conflict resolution to bring about symbiotic changes in the

ideas, attitudes, and behavior of both the organization and its publics (Grunig 2001). Symmetrical communication also indicates that each participant in the communication process is equally able to influence the other (van Ruler 2004).

Communication as being a truly inter-active and double-sided (reciprocal) occurrence can best be understood as a process of social interaction between at least two people, which comprises both an action as well as a reaction (Merten 1999). According to Burkart (1995) only an exchange of interests completed in both directions can be seen as a true communicative process. Another aspect of communication is the way in which we understand, explain, feel about and react towards a given phenomenon. This is often called the creation of meaning (Rosengren 2000). For communication to succeed, the recipient should be able to connect the message to his existing frame of reference (i.e. connotations, notions of causality, attitudes and opinions) in order to be able to deliberate on the message contents-wise (Suda and Schaffner 2004, Van Woerkum et al. 1999). Thus, the degree of interactivity of communication depends on internal context and the external context. Internal context is mainly determined by the addressee's experience, knowledge and attitudes. External context is primarily defined by the specific situational and social setting (Pregernig 2000).

2.3 Different Levels of Communication

Rosengren (2000, p. 170) distinguishes a number of different levels of communication: intra-individual (within an individual) and inter-individual (between individuals) communication. These in turn are influenced by communication at the group, organizational, societal, and international level. Rosengren (2000, p. 105) defines a group as a social structure defined in terms of a relatively small number of individuals whose characteristics and interrelations constitute the structure of the group. An organization, on the other hand, may be regarded as: a social structure defined in terms of more or less interrelated positions, the individual incumbents of which have to play social roles more or less distinctly defined by the position in question. Organizations may thus be regarded a

special type of group, with formalized structures of communication, an explicitly defined goal, and a system of standardized procedures for decision-making for communication with the surroundings of the organization etc.

Two main forms of organizational communication are:

– Formally defined communication between individual incumbents of different positions; and,
– Informally defined communication between individuals qua individuals (although, by definition, of course, always being located at a specific position in the organization).

The latter form of communication is often called the "grapevine" (Rosengren 2000, p 116).

2.4 Communication and Networks

The division between groups and organizations is not absolute, as there are some intermediate forms of groupings situated between informal groups and formal organizations, so-called networks. Woolcock and Narayan (2000) discuss networks in the light of social capital. Social capital refers to the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively, based on trust and reciprocity, and a willingness to share information, ideas, and views, developed in an iterative process. Portes (1998) states that actors by virtue of membership of such an actor coalition/network are able to secure benefits (social capital). As the sharing of information is an essential part of the social capital of a network, communication is logically an integral part of networks. Annen (2003) states that the gains actors receive from their membership in a network are highest when the communication capacity within the network is high. As networks grow more and more extensive, in absolute and geographical sense, the success of a network depends highly on its ability to improve its communication technology, e.g. Internet. If a network cannot do this, its social capital declines.

Networks may also be explained in relation to policy network theory, as discussed by Glück and Humphreys (2002) in their paper on National Forest Programmes (NFPs). They state that the new mode of governance NFPs promote is based on policy networks; actors (public and private)

with differing material and immaterial resources pursue distinctive, but interdependent, interests. They coordinate their actions through interdependencies of resources and interests, and form linkages to exchange their resources (e.g. knowledge) in order to endorse a certain policy. The linkages between the policy actors constitute the structures and processes of a network. The policy network concept approaches policy processes from a dynamic and complex view that emphasizes a process shaped by multiple relations and reservoirs of knowledge. In this process the political context, the actors (networks, organizations and individuals), the message, and media all exert influence (Glück 1997).

2.5 Target Groups of Communication

When analyzing any communication process, it is important to know/understand the sender, which channels are used to transmit which messages and why, and in which way the receiver reacts or not reacts. Probably therefore a lot of emphasis is placed on determining and analyzing target groups. However, before making a division of different types of target groups a more general distinction may be useful. Especially when studying organizations one can distinguish two main forms of communication: internal and external communication (see for example Derville 2005, Wehmeier 2006). Internal communication takes place within the organization (or in the case of federations even within a group of organizations), group or network. External communication then, broadly stated, is the communication between the organization, group, or network and the rest of the world. As regard external target groups for communication, Van Woerkum et al. (1999) identify the following types:

–   Conditional relation groups: e.g. the mother company or governing body;
–   Input relation groups: e.g. those groups providing money, knowledge, workforce;
–   Output relation groups: e.g. customers;
–   Relation groups with similar goals: cooperators or competitors;
–   Normative relation groups: those able to influence the image of an organization.

2.6 Styles of Communication

Jones-Walters (2000) states that most communication activities of organizations fall into one of four categories, founded on different reasons for communication:

–   "One-way" information distribution: advertising, promotion, publicity and propaganda (cf. asymmetric communication or instrumental communication);
–   Information provided as part of a dialogue, usually in reply to questions of the public (reactive);
–   Education: a long term process to transfer knowledge, but also attitudes and values, both to children and adults;
–   Dialogue with specific groups, sometimes as part of a formal consultation process, sometimes in an effort to find acceptable solutions to complex problems involving many different groups of people (cf. two-way symmetric communication and the discussion of communication in networks).

These styles of communication can be applied in varying extents, depending on the type of target group. Two often used characterizations of communication styles should be mentioned here, because of their relevance to communication in policy networks and with respect to organizational communication. Both of them can use a mix of the communication styles mentioned above.

One field in communication science is public relations (PR). Public relations is the management of communication between an organization and its publics (Grunig 1992, p. 6). Communication management includes overall planning, execution, and evaluation of an organization's communication with both external and internal publics – groups that affect the ability of an organization to meet its goals (Grunig 1992, p. 4). Many practitioners manage communication to influence relationships with key stakeholders. An important aspect of influencing relationships is the modification of images held. Thus, the act of "doing" PR is also defined as the use of communications techniques to build a positive public image (van Ruler and Vercic 2001). PR is often associated with one-way, instrumental styles of communication, although it can comprise various styles of communication, e.g. education.

Another important concept for this study, since

the forest sector core comprises both policy-makers and organizations representing various interests, is *lobbying*. Although lobbying research has its origins in PR theory in which lobbying is conceptualized as creating and maintaining relations with politicians, lobbying, in practice, consists of the means that are used to achieve a certain objective, a specific decision. Thus, lobbying can be defined as efforts to influence political decision-making (Jaatinen 1999).

Such a relationship, in which an organization tries to influence a policy-maker's decision, hints at an unequal (asymmetric) distribution of power. Unequal because the policy-maker has the power to influence the situation of the lobbying party by a single decision. This characteristic, in the author's opinion, distinguishes lobbying from truly symmetric two-way communication processes. For in two-way communication processes there is a more equal distribution of power, people engage in a learning process and joint fact-finding, and put effort into understanding each other's frame of reference etc. (cf. Merten 1999). On the other hand, one could also imagine that such two-way symmetric communication can develop once lobbying takes the form of more standardized relations. PR then may be used to assist in lobbying, e.g. in advocacy advertising, mobilizing grass-roots level, and shaping citizen opinion (Jaatinen 1999).

3 Methodology

3.1 The Analysis

A two-step method of analysis was used in this study. First, an internet and literature review of policy processes at the European level relevant for forests and forestry was conducted. This review served to map out the most relevant actors at the European level, and the formal structures that facilitate communication between them. Consequently, representatives from the identified actors were contacted. They were interviewed on the characteristics of and challenges in sector internal and sector external communication. In this study's analysis of communication processes two major processes are distinguished (Fig. 1):

– Internal communication: communication between forest sector core actors (or: the forest sector core network) at the European level. Although not specifically investigated in this paper, internal communication also includes communication within the own organization, communication between the FBI and forestry federations and their national member organizations, and communication between the European level forest sector core and national level forest policy-makers;
– External communication: communication between forest sector core actors and other relevant sectors and stakeholders (the forest related cluster), and society at large.

As only forest sector core actors were interviewed, the emphasis in this study is on internal communication. The statements made on external communication are by the interviewees, and thus represent a one-sided view, i.e. that of the forest sector core. Although it may seem obvious for some organizations whether or not they belong to the forest sector core, it might not be that straightforward for others, although these organizations can still be very influential in forest related policy processes. For the latter type of organizations the concentric model in Fig. 1, with a strong emphasis on forestry and forest industry, might seem inappropriate. This makes the distinction between internal and external communication subjective. In the initial set up of the study it did, however, increase clarity. Furthermore, the literature review indicated the usefulness of Fig. 1, including the definitions for core and related cluster, for describing the complex reality of European level decision-making. Analysis of the interview results will have to show if there really is a group of actors forming a European level forest sector core, although the border between core and related cluster might not always be very distinct.

3.2 The Interviews

Information on the characteristics and challenges of forest sector communication at the European level was acquired through 39 semi-structured expert interviews (for a detailed discussion of the use of expert interviews in forest policy research, see Krott and Suda (2001)). Appendix II provides

Table 1. Organizations from which representatives were interviewed.

Organizations	# interviewees
Directorate General for Enterprise & Industry (DG ENTR)	2
Directorate General for Environment (DG ENV)	1
Directorate General for Agriculture & Rural Development (DG AGRI)	2
UNECE/FAO Timber Branch	3
UNECE Timber Committee	1
FAO Forestry Commission	1
MCPFE Liaison Unit	2
UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists "Forest Communicators Network"	5
CEI-Bois (European Confederation of woodworking industries)	2
CEPI (Confederation of European Paper Industries)	2
CEPF (Confederation of European Forest Owners)	1
USSE (Union of Southern-European Silviculturists)	1
IUFRO (International Union of Forest Research Organizations)	2
EFI (European Forest Institute)	2
Other experts (i.e. national FBI federations; administrators at national governments; communication consultants for the FBI; experts on forest entrepreneurship, forest certification)	12

the interview guide used during the interviews. The interviews were conducted in person and lasting approximately one and a half hours each. Table 1 gives an overview of the organizations from which representatives were interviewed.

The initial interview candidates from the organizations in Table 1 were selected from the European Forest Institute's contact database. Suggestions made by the initial interviewees enabled the selection of further relevant interview candidates. The interview candidates were sent an introduction to the study, including the definitions used and the theoretical background, prior to the interviews and were also asked to comment on it. Theory (including Fig. 1) was adapted accordingly for this paper. In the next chapter the interview results are presented, using the most illustrative quotations (in italics) from the interviews to foreground the central issues identified. Such an approach is frequently used in studies on the interface between communication science and natural resource science (Aarts 1998).

4 Interview Results

4.1 Overview of Formal Communication Structures at the European Level

Unless stated otherwise, e.g. through a literature reference, all opinions expressed in this chapter are by the interviewees. In case opinions between the interviewees differed, this is mentioned by the statement: "Some interviewees stated…., whereas other interviewees…." or similar ways of describing diverging opinions. In most cases however interviewees shared the same opinions, as will be addressed by the statement: "Interviewees agreed….". In those case where only few of the interviewees addressed a certain topic, this is addressed by the statement: "Some interviewees…". The literature review and expert interviews identified a host of formal communication structures for forest sector core actors at the European level (see Tables 2 and 3): the EU framework of structures, the United Nations Economic Council for Europe (UNECE) and Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) framework of structures and the process of the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE).

Fig. 2 presents an overview of what the interviewees considered to be the most relevant actors and communication structures, which might aid to understand the interview results.

Table 2. Formal EU communication structures (partially based on COM 2005).

1. Advisory Committee on Community Policy Regarding Forestry and Forest Based Industries (DG ENTR and CEPI, CEPF, CEI-BOIS, CITPA (International Confederation of Paper and Board Converters in Europe), INTERGRAF (International Confederation for Printing and Allied Industries), FEFCO (European Federation of Corrugated Board Manufacturers)), which can be seen as the most important regular meeting in FBI circles. Besides the monthly meeting there is also a larger meeting organized 3 to 4 times per year at the Commission, with more participants.
2. Forest-based and Related Industries Communication Working Group (COM – DG ENTR) with CEPI, CEPF, CEI-BOIS as the major actors).
3. "Core Group" (informal meeting between CEPI, CEPF, CEI-BOIS), meets at least once per month to discuss/find joint positions in further negotiations with the COM.
4. Inter-service Group on Forests: meeting between DG AGRI with other relevant DGs for strengthening coordination on forest related issues.
5. Standing Forestry Committee – one of the Committees of the European Commission, DG AGRI. It comprises the representatives of the governments of the EU Member States.
6. Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork of the Standing Forestry Committee of the European Commission. Represents different fields of forestry and stakeholders, such as industry, research, forest owners and environmental organizations.
7. Working Party on Forestry (Council Working Group). Organized by the Council for heads of forestry of the Member States.
8. European Parliament Inter-group on Sustainable Development, subgroup on Forestry.
9. Meeting of Forestry Directors (MS heads of forest administration etc.) organized normally once per EU Presidency by the Presidency (once every 6 months).
10. Forest-Based Sector Technology Platform, a cooperative structure between COM and FBI and forest owner federations, aimed at directing research priorities.
11. Forest-based Industry Forum (all major FBI representing associations together with the relevant DGs, organized once per year)

Table 3. Formal UNECE/FAO communication structures.

12. UNECE Timber Committee (TC)
13. FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC)
14. Joint Sessions of TC and EFC.
15. Bureaux meeting (organized by the UNECE/FAO Timber Branch)
16. Joint FAO/UNECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics
17. Joint FAO/UNECE/ILO (ILO = International Labor Organization) experts network to implement sustainable forest management
18. FAO Advisory Committee on Paper and Forest Products
19. Team of Public Relations Specialists in the Forest and Forest Industries Sector
20. Team of Specialists on Forest Products Markets and Marketing
21. Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training

4.2 Sector Internal Communication

Interviewees evaluated forest sector internal communication at the EU level between the most relevant Directorates General: DG Enterprise & Industry (ENTR), DG Agriculture & Rural Development (AGRI), and Environment (ENV)* as well-organized. They were also satisfied to have frequent meetings; formally, e.g. through

* Other DGs may also have some relevance concerning forest issues. For example, EuropeAid and DG Development are, among others, concerned with forests in developing countries, and thus have some relevance e.g. concerning forest conflict management. NB: Regulation 2494/2000 on the EU's programme "Tropical forests and other forests in developing countries" has expired in December 2006. New programming documents are likely to be adopted and take effect in June 2007. DG External Trade also has relevance due to its involvement in the Doha round negotiations and FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade).
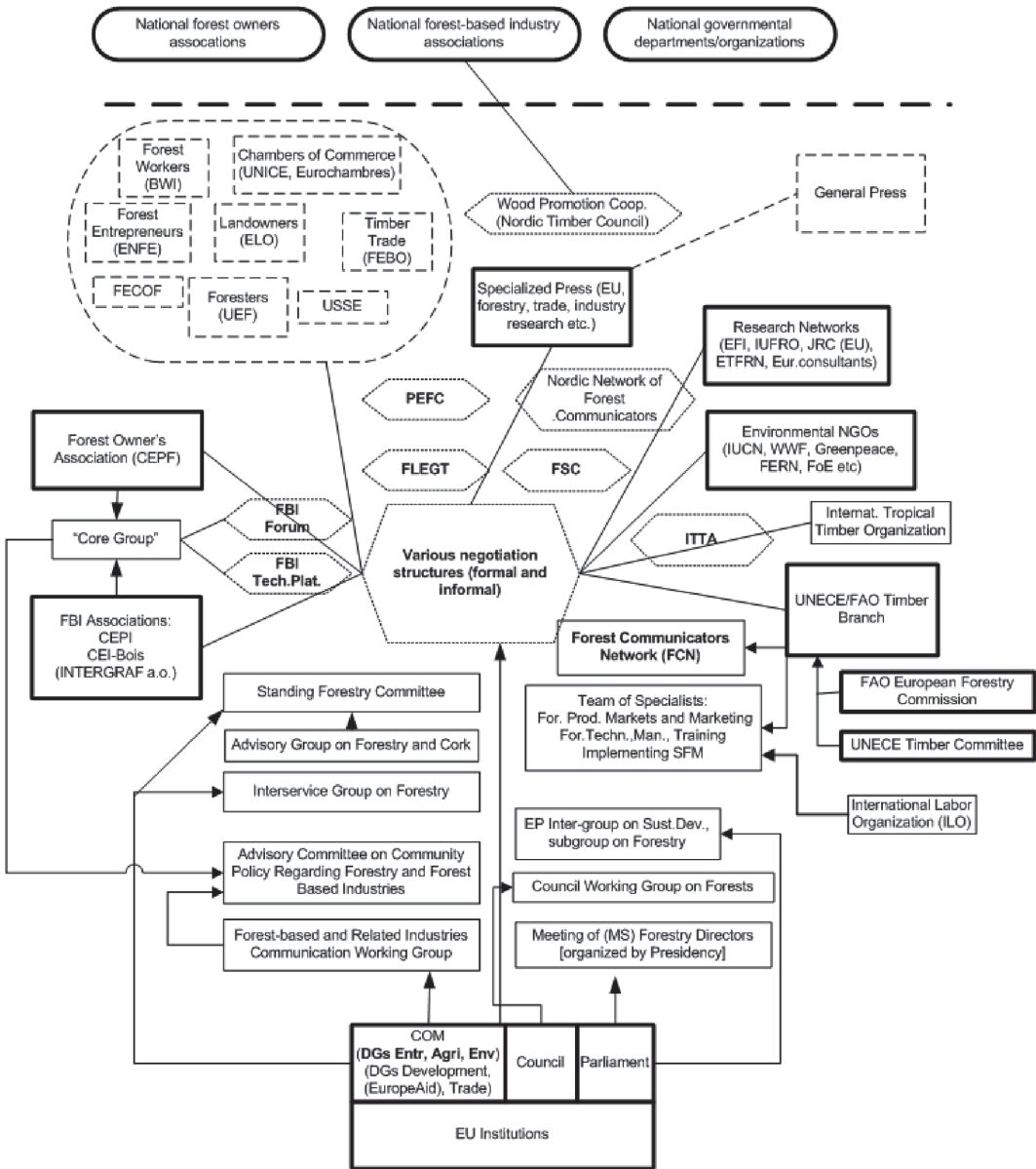
Fig. 2. Overview of most relevant Forest Sector Core actors and formal internal communication structures (See Appendix I for an overview of the acronyms used).

the Inter-service Group on Forests (no. 4 in Table 2), as well as informally, e.g. personal contacts between COM officials. The main goal of this communication was said to be the coordination of forest policy issues at the relevant DGs. One of the challenges for coordination is the fact that DG ENV covers a wide range of policy topics (e.g.

climate change, international issues, land use, nature and biodiversity, sustainable development) all in which forests have a part.

Interviewees also perceived the formal and informal communication between the FBI federations (especially CEPI, CEI-Bois), forest owners' federation CEPF, and the COM (especially DG

ENTR) to be satisfactory with respect to the number of meetings and the discussions in those meetings. The main purpose of this communication was said to be the mutual exchange of ideas on policy directions and possibilities for cooperation on external communication. The interviewees evaluated this communication as a truly two-way dialogue and stated that there is a strong mutual understanding of each other's interests and limitations.

The sector's most relevant think-tank on communication issues was said to be the FBI Working Group on Communication (no. 2, Table 2). The FBI and forest owner federations that together form the "core group" (no. 3, Table 2) convene at least once a month to determine common positions. Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, and 11 (Table 2) were regarded as the most important communication structures at the EU level for FBI and forest owner federations. The other structures are more oriented towards the input of Member States' representatives. Especially numbers 7 and 9 (Table 2) and numbers 12 and 13 (Table 3) were seen as good examples of strengthening contact between national level forest policy makers and between European level and national level policy-makers. It has to be noted that some interviewees did not consider national actors to truly belong to the EU forest sector core, because of their focus on national interests and also because of their "distance to the Brussels arena".

Communication between national FBI and forestry sector associations and EU level actors was said to run mainly via their EU umbrella federations: CEPI, CEI-Bois, CEPF, and the European Network of Forest Entrepreneurs (ENFE).

The survey indicated that communication between COM and UNECE/FAO institutions and between FBI/forest owners' federations and UNECE/FAO institutions is less developed in a formal sense. Structures at the UNECE/FAO level show only limited direct involvement of EU institutions and FBI and related federations (see Fig 2). However, a formal link between EU and UNECE/FAO is formed by their cooperation in EUROSTAT (Statistical Office of the European Communities). As a side-note, interviewees indicated that the various UNECE/FAO structures (numbers 16 to 21 in Table 3) provided good opportunities for EU and UNECE/FAO officials,

European FBI and forest owner federations, as well as national forest sector core representatives to meet and exchange information.

With regard to the exchange of information on actual communication practices, the Forest Communicators Network (number 19, Table 3) with over 200 members from Europe and North-America, was regarded as the most valuable initiative. Another important initiative regarding sector internal networking activities was said to be the Forest Academy Finland, where top-level forest decision-makers from new EU Member States and EU officials met. Perhaps the largest formal European communication structure concerning forest policy is the MCPFE. Around 40 European countries and the European Community are represented in the MCPFE process, and non-European countries and international organizations participate as observers. The MCPFE provides thus not only a policy forum for Ministers responsible for forests, but also allows non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations to contribute with their knowledge and ideas.

Besides the various FBI federations at the European level also other forest sector actor networks were said to play a role in the European forest policy arena, e.g. ENFE, the Union of European Foresters (UEF), the Union of Southern European Silviculturists (USSE), Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI), the European Timber Trade Association (FEBO), and the European Federation of Local Forest Authorities (FECOF). Still, the formal communication structures listed in Table 2 leave the impression that CEPI, CEI-Bois and CEPF are most strongly positioned in the EU forest policy arena. Forest entrepreneurs' and forest workers' federations are active in structure 6 (Table 2). For the rest they were found to be more active in labor and global/European trade union forums, such as the European Social Forum. They presumably also exert some influence on forest policy processes through their linkage with the International Labor Organization (ILO), e.g. through structures 17 and 21 (Table 3).

Certification initiatives PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes) and FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) were generally said to provide valuable platforms for sector internal communication, in spite of the fact that

forest owners, FBI and eNGOs might have differing opinions on certification.

Communication within the forest research community was generally perceived to be well-organized, e.g. through network organizations like the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), the European Forest Institute (EFI), and the European Tropical Forest Research Network (ETFRN), cooperation in EU funded research projects, and networks of experts like the Nordic-Baltic Network of Forest Communicators. Yet, in spite of the fact that personal contact between representatives of FBI, COM and the forest research community was evaluated as satisfactory frequent, some interviewees identified the formal communication between FBI, COM and the forest research community as a weak spot in sector internal communication. In addition, several interviewees indicated that FBI and forest research should ask themselves:

"*Do individual industries know of research work done by forest research institutes, which could benefit them? Is forest research actively doing something to get its work to become noticed by FBI?*"

The statements above are in line with what other interviewees mentioned, namely that they found it desirable to improve understanding and exchange of information between research and industry. Thereby the communicative power of the forest sector as a whole towards other sectors and society would also be strengthened. Interviewees did state that communication is increasing, e.g. through the involvement of FBI federations in the Integrated Projects under the 6th Framework Programme. Probably the most extensive initiative with respect to the relationship between FBI, COM and forest research was said to be the recently introduced Forest-based Sector Technology Platform, which was instigated by the major European FBI and forest owner federations. The platform was launched at the Forest Based Industry Forum in 2005 and involves the forest research community through the development of a Strategic Research Agenda.

4.3 Communication with Other (External) Target Groups

European level forest sector core actors identify the following external target-groups as most relevant:

– Policy-makers (the European Parliament and Council)
– High-level bureaucrats within the EU and UNECE/FAO framework;
– Relevant European level stakeholder organizations (e.g. related industries' federations, architects' and builders' federations etc.);
– Youth (through teachers and schools);
– European level specialized media (e.g. professional journals, EU journals).

It should be noted that the perceived responsibilities between the actors differ. DG ENTR has a communication strategy, which it has drawn up together with the FBI and forest owner federations. DG ENTR sees itself as a facilitator for communication activities of the FBI federations. Furthermore DG ENTR stimulates the development of a framework for national forest sector actors to operate in, in order to coordinate and strengthen communication with the forest sector's stakeholders and the public at large. DG AGRI and ENV do not have specific communication strategies on forests or forestry, but they do communicate with external target groups on subjects they have the mandate for, such as environmental legislation (DG ENV) and sustainable forest management (DG AGRI and ENV).

The UNECE/FAO Timber Branch sees it as its main goal to position itself as a regional leader in the international timber and forestry community and achieve wide recognition for the value and use of its products, expertise and services. The exchange of information through its Teams of Specialists in which many forest sector representatives are involved can be seen as such a service.

The FBI and forest owner federations see it as their main responsibility to communicate the interests of the forest sector to relevant sectors and policy-makers at the European level. Furthermore they aim to improve the image of the forest sector through promotional activities. Currently the FBI and forest owner federations are plan-

ning the development of an overall strategy for communicating with society, to be taken up by national forest sector actors. DG ENTR assists them in this.

A couple of factors, however, seem to make it difficult to strengthen external communication. Firstly, interviewees at the COM commented on the small number of people working on forest issues at the COM:

"… *30 people in a COM with 25,000 people, for 160 million hectares of forest in the EU 25, for 15 million private forest owners, and for 4 million people working in forest related industries.*"

They indicated that it demands a great deal of effort for this small group to maintain contact with the other relevant policy areas within the COM:

"*There are only so many meetings you can attend per week.*"

Secondly, most interviewees mentioned that it is difficult to:

"… *reach other decision-makers and the media and to get them interested in forest issues.*"

Interviewees also indicated that it is especially difficult to reach Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).

"*In the light of the foreseen increasing importance of the European Parliament, MEPs are an important target group, but the forest sector is only one among many sectors trying to get their attention…*"

Although informal contact with MEPs exists, communication normally runs via forest sector input in formal documents like "Communications from the Commission to the Council and the Parliament" and vision documents like "Vision 2030: A Technology Platform Initiative by the European Forest-Based Sector". European level FBI and forest owner federations are making an effort to reach MEPs. European level federations, for example, ask their national member federations to establish contact with their own MEPs. According to other interviewees especially "original, informal and surprising" ways seem to have

some result, e.g. the presentation of Christmas trees to MEPs by CEPF representatives to raise attention for forest issues.

Other target groups the forest sector core tries to reach are major users of wood (builders and architects), children/teachers, professional forestry education, and the media (specialized and general). One way to do so is through cooperation between DG ENTR and the FBI federations on designing targeted communication programs, e.g. "Wood & Paper, Opportunities for Generations" [www.f-bi.org]. In this program best practices in youth communication across Europe are collected and given an EU logo. The general opinion was that by reaching specific target groups or opinion leaders within these groups one will also reach other groups in society. The actual responsibility for communication with society at large lies however at the national level. European level actors see it as their task to aid the national level by providing a framework for action and to strengthen cooperation between national initiatives. The number of such national promotional campaigns has strongly increased in the past few years (Indufor 2004).

Although relations between the FBI sector, the COM and the UNECE/FAO on the one hand, and the specialized and/or internal media (e.g. EU media, FAO media) were said to be good, yet mainly confined to publishing press releases, the relation with the mass-media should be strengthened considerably according to most interviewees:

"…*strengthening ties with the general media is essential for communicating with society at large.*"

A good example can be found in the achievements of the MCPFE liaison-unit, which employed a PR professional to foster media relations, resulting in relatively extensive media coverage of the MCPFE conference in 2003. Another good examples stems from the national level where national FBI federations (sometimes in cooperation with their European umbrella federations) have successfully invited foreign journalists from major import markets to visit forests and sawmills and thus telling them the "forestry story" by showing.

As regard the relation between eNGOs and

FBI and forestry federations, it was said that cooperation on project basis occasionally takes place, e.g. on issues concerning sustainable forest management and certification. Results of such cooperation are then communicated to the public. Interviewees agreed to some extent that such cooperation, i.e. being liaised with eNGOs, can influence the sector's image positively. However, it was stressed that both groups have their own interests and goals, which often are incompatible. Furthermore, European level FBI federations need a mandate from their national members for such cooperation. Interviewees, however, stressed that informally the relationship between FBI, COM and eNGO representatives can be very good.

4.4 Messages and Means of Communication

The following key messages for improving the forest sector's image were identified during the interviews:

– Using wood is the most natural way of removing carbon dioxide from the air
– Wood and paper are used in a vast range of everyday consumer goods that contribute to our quality of life
– Wood is one of the only truly renewable raw materials in the world
– Forests provide peace and quiet for the public to enjoy
– Forest area in Europe is increasing not decreasing
– Forest-based industries in Europe are innovative, sustainable, and provide employment.

Yet, it was said that the sector has trouble getting these messages across. Some seem to be too difficult for large audiences to understand, e.g. the concept of sustainable forest management. Other messages do not seem to interest the public. And sometimes the sector even feels that the public rather believes eNGOs than the forest sector. It was indicated that the forest sector core now begins to understand that the majority of people are not interested in facts and figures, but that more attractive media such as visual methods evoking positive emotions and stories people can relate to, are needed to reach the masses. A good example in this respect was said to be the Nordic

Family Forestry concept, which uses images most people can relate to. When asked about the way eNGOs communicate their messages to the public, interviewees stated:

"*We can certainly learn a lot from eNGOs' communication strategies.*"
"*At times, the force of eNGOs' communication is overwhelming … our message just gets lost*".

Interviewees indicated that the forest sector's communication methods are more pro-active nowadays. This movement towards more pro-active communication is also reflected in the communication strategies most forest sector core actors have drawn up nowadays.

Large-scale cooperation on actual campaigns only exist at the national level. For example in the UK (Wood for Good [www.woodforgood.com], and Wood Awards [www.woodawards.com]) and France (le bois c'est essential) where the Nordic Timber Council and national forest sectors in the UK and France have started cooperation some years ago. However, some interviewees indicated that European level FBI federations need to put more effort into committing their national members to improve communication with society in other countries as well. Furthermore, interviewees indicated that, in spite of the commonly expressed need for more coordination:

"*A European framework, which could aid coordination of such activities, is lacking.*"

According to the interviewees any cooperation initiative between forest sector core actors, should start with finding joint messages, which the FBI "core group" (Number 3, Table 2) has been doing in its joint vision documents and in its joint communication strategy with DG ENTR.

As mentioned above, the messages are commonly agreed upon. However, opinions and priorities differ with regard to the method of communication and to some extent also with regard to specific target groups. Currently, most ideas on methods of communication still converge in the sense that most activities and strategies are instrumental. The interviewees indicated that they are simply used to this style. They find it easy to use a mix of standard, one-way communication

tools such as brochures, newsletters, websites, advertisements etc. A change of attitude towards communication methods is however taking place, as some actors expressed the need to strengthen communication with Members of the European Parliament, i.e. to find ways to intensify lobbying activities. Others stated they want to focus more on starting actual dialogues with other sectors or narrowly defined groups of stakeholders, e.g. institutes for forestry education, builder and architect associations. The actual implementation of these ideas is still largely in the planning phase.

5 Discussion

5.1 Limitations of the Study

The study presented in this paper should be seen as a pre-study towards forest sector communication in the European Union. In order to analyze communication processes among all actors possibly relevant to forest issues a much larger study would have to be set up, which would cost more time and resources. To study all forest related communication towards society at large would logically require an even larger set-up. This study serves as a first step in assessing forest sector communication at the EU level. For that reason this study focuses on the relevant DGs at the European Commission, the relevant actors at the UNECE/FAO, the FBI and forestry sector federations at the European level, and the European research community.

The author acknowledges the need for further study, especially with regard to the communication with/of related sectors, e.g. agriculture, environment, development, trade, recreation etc. Another interesting topic for further study would be the communication with/of societal interest groups such as eNGOs. Other interesting topics for further study include the communication between the European and national levels, or the communication with/of MEPs.

Another limitation of the study is that it does not provide a detailed analysis of other possibly relevant DGs at the COM, such as DG Development, DG Trade and EuropeAid[*]. Although the international, i.e. outside the EU, activities[*] of

these DGs are relevant for the EU forest sector, a compromise regarding the scope of the study had to be made. Therefore no in-depth analysis was carried out on DGs other than DGs ENV, ENTR, and AGRI. It has to be mentioned that interviewees from the COM mentioned that DGs ENV, ENTR, and AGRI represent the majority of people concerned with forest issues within the COM.

As a final note concerning the interviews carried out: several of the actors presented in Fig. 2 were not available for interviewing, which is the reason why not all organizations from Fig. 2 are present in detail in the results chapter. The general statements made on these organizations are based on interviews with the other interviewees, hence subjective, but expert opinions nonetheless.

5.2 Sector Internal Communication

At the European level the forest sector core seems to comprise a group of people working at the COM, i.e. forest units at the DGs ENTR, AGRI and ENV; UNECE/FAO Timber Branch; and the European level FBI- and forest owners/entrepreneurs federations. Communication between actors within the European forest sector core can be seen as true two-way communication (as defined by Merten 1999), for it appeared from the interviews that the relation between policy-makers in administration and interest representation federations seems to be symmetric in nature. Meaning that power does not play a major role and that all actors are more or less equally able to influence each other in the communication process (as defined by Grunig 2001).

The actors have an actual and mutual exchange of interests and feel the same about most issues, e.g. that communication with other sectors should be strengthened and that the image of the forest sector needs to be improved. The actors also mostly act in concert, e.g. they cooperate on shared policy statements and communication strategies. To a considerable extent they share a frame of reference, e.g. that forests, forestry and forest-based industry are vital to Europe from a

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[*] See footnote on page 9

social, ecological and economic point of view. These characteristics distinguish them from other sectors or other policy networks at the European level. In the author's opinion this indicates that the European forest sector core can be regarded as a policy network as described by Glück and Humphreys (2002). It also indicates that a network is place that enables the forest sector core actors to act collectively, and that there is a willingness to share information, ideas, and views, developed in an iterative process – social capital as defined by Woolcock and Narayan (2000).

Concerning lobbying activities at the EU level, it appeared that lobbying efforts have taken the form of more standardized relations (cf. Jaatinen 1999), as the contact between people working on forest issues at the COM and forest sector interest representation federations is perceived by all actors as good. According to the interviewees strong personal networks have developed and they perceive formal (see Table 2) and informal communication as satisfactory. This statement is in line with Annen's (2003) discussion of the dependence of the extent of social capital in a network and the strength/frequency of communication within that network.

Although the EU Forest Action Plan (2006) emphasizes that communication with Member States should be intensified and some interviewees considered MS representatives to be *too far from Brussels* to belong to the steady EU level forest sector core, their influence should not be underestimated. The expert-meetings leading up to each MCPFE can be seen as valuable communication forums for national forest sector actors, i.e. policy-makers, interest representation and research. The same could hold true for the input of national governmental representatives in the UNECE Timber Committee and FAO European Forestry Commission, as they provide a forum for discussing policy issues and provide guidance and advice on policy directions.

The relation of FBI and forest owner federations with UNECE/FAO, as well as of the COM with UNECE/FAO, is not very closely structured formally. On the other hand, existing UNECE/FAO structures like Teams of Specialists and Working Parties facilitate networking among EU officials, UNECE/FAO officials, European level FBI and forest owner federations, forest science, as well as national level forest sectors. A good example here is the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists "Forest Communicators Network". Apparently the personal membership of such networks provides enough benefits, or social capital (see Portes 1998), for actors to further their own goals. Maybe it provides them the link between EU and UNECE/FAO structures that seems to be somewhat lacking, formally.

5.3 Communication with Other (External) Target Groups

The interview results show, as also indicated in the introduction, that the fragmentation of forest policy at the EU level and the image problem (Rametsteiner and Kraxner 2003; Suda and Schaffner 2004) of the forest-based industry have clearly increased the forest sector's attention for strengthening its internal as well as external communication (COM 2005, COM 2006, TEEC 2004). For a long time the forest sector's external communication has mainly been reactive and instrumental, e.g. while trying to counter eNGOs' statements that affect the sector's image with the public (Suda and Schaffner 2004). Moreover, interviewees even indicated that the forest sector has sometimes felt pressed into a corner by the communicative power of eNGOs.

Joint policy statements (Forest-Based Sector Technology Platform 2005) as well as several studies now indicate that the forest sector is realizing the necessity of communicating pro-actively (Anderson et al. 1998), reciprocally (i.e. two-way) and to meet societal demand by listening as well as speaking to society (Karvonen 2004). A review of the available communication strategies (Forest-based Industries Working Group on Communication 2004, UNECE/FAO Timber Branch 2005), policy statements (Forest-Based Sector Technology Platform 2005) and vision documents by European FBI federations (e.g. CEI-Bois' Roadmap 2010) learned that European level forest sector core actors are changing their view on communication.

The forest sector core actors have identified the need to improve coordination of forest policy issues through strengthening communication with other relevant sectors. They also aim at increasing

the public's understanding of the forest sector, and to come to a framework which would aid national level actors in their communication with society. The expert interviews confirmed these developments. However, for a large part the actions pertained by these statements are still to be implemented.

Inter-sectoral, symmetric (see Grunig 2001), two-way communication structures (see Burkart 1995), where decision-makers and interest groups from various sectors discuss forest issues were only found at the national level. The best examples of such structures are the Forest Forum for Decision-Makers in Finland and the Austrian Forest Dialogue (Janse 2005). In addition, the European forest sector core actors' notions of the concept of communication or the actual role they can fulfill concerning communication taking place at national or even local levels differed. So in spite of the fact that the actors agreed on the overall goals to be reached by improving communication, the implementation and the ideas on improved communication differed. This makes it difficult to say what the forest sector core as a whole sees as its prime approach to communication.

Some of the actors seemed to focus on one-way instrumental communication campaigns to improve the image of the forest sector. Other actors emphasized the need to strengthen communication with MEPs, i.e. to find ways to intensify lobbying activities. Some also wanted to focus more on starting actual dialogues with other sectors or narrowly defined groups of stakeholders ("tailored communication", cf. Van Woerkum et al. 1999). Examples of such identified target groups are: youth as input relation group; architects and builders as output relation group; and the media as normative relation group.

As mentioned earlier, the start up of communication with other sectors are perceived as difficult at the European level. One of the reasons hinted at in the interviews was the lack of time for the relatively small group of forest sector core actors to go to all relevant meetings and thereby trying to strengthen contact with other sectors' representatives. Other reasons could be the perceived degree of low (economic) importance of the forest sector or a general disinterest in forest issues. For example, as regard lobbying activities, the main targets of the forest sector core are

conditional relation groups (see Van Woerkum et al. 1999), like MEPs and high-level policy-makers from other sectors. The difficulties in reaching them might indicate a lobbying fatigue (as described by Jaatinen 1999). Possible reasons why other sectors are not very interested in engaging in long-term communication with forest sector actors might also be explained by the concepts of internal and external context (see Merten 1999, Pregernig 2000).

Internal context could indicate that target persons in other sectors at the European level do not consider the forest sector as important. National level studies show that if the forest sector has a relatively strong economic position in a country, also the inter-sectoral dialogue is better developed, e.g. in Finland and Austria (Janse 2005). In those cases also the forest advocacy coalition is relatively strong, e.g. in Austria (Hogl 2000). External context could refer to the, until recently, non-existence of a clear European forest policy framework (Chaytor 2001), resulting in weak situational settings for negotiating forest issues. This has however, started to change with the processes leading to the Forestry Strategy for the EU, and the EU Forest Action Plan.

5.4 Messages and Means of Communication

In its desire to strengthen its communication with other sectors, policy-makers and the public at large, the choice of proper communication channels seems to trouble the European forest sector core. Although forest sector core actors believe they have a good story to tell about forests, forestry and forest industry, they perceive it as difficult to reach the public at large. This is difficult to judge as the effect of PR campaigns are not easy to assess and, if possible at all, there will always be a time-lag between the launch of a campaign and noticeable change of opinion. This difficulty was also mentioned in the report "Europeans and their Forests" by Rametsteiner and Kraxner (2003).

The perceived difficulty in reaching policy-makers and representatives from other sectors could be caused by the competition between the wide range of interest representation organizations claiming attention from policy-makers and

each other. Communication theory gives a few useful insights in this respect. Target groups, for instance, are not always able to receive and understand a message or are simply not interested, which Jones-Walters (2000) calls the disruption of messages. In other cases the forest sector is not always regarded as a trustworthy messenger (Rametsteiner and Kraxner 2003).

From a communication science point of view, in order for messages to be picked up, they have to fit in the receiver's frame of reference (Van Woerkum 1999). Messages should also comply with certain attention rules in order to be interesting (Luhmann 1975), such as crisis or conflict situations. In its current instrumental style of one-way communication, such as the recently introduced brochure "The truth about the Forest-Based Sector", the forest sector may not realize that spreading information is not automatically followed by reception, let alone understanding or a change of attitude.

Mutual understanding and long-term attitude change can normally only be achieved if a truly symmetric two-way communication process is in place (Burkart 1995, Aarts and Van Woerkum 2000, Grunig 2001, Van Ruler 2004). Logically, this type of process has limitations. Firstly, the number of participants should remain small in order for a meeting to remain effective. Size limitation hints at the importance of identifying opinion-leaders from the most important target groups (Rogers 1995). Secondly, the selection of relevant and high-level key participants is essential, because it influences the willingness of other actors to participate as well as the to be expected coverage in the media (DeYoung 1988). Although forest sector core actors are making an effort to engage contact, e.g. by inviting policy-makers from other sectors or MEPs to meetings on forest issues, it is however difficult to get them interested.

6 Conclusions

Forest sector internal communication at the EU level is well-developed, in the sense that a relatively small group of European level policy-makers, FBI and forestry sector representatives, and researchers know each other well. They share a set of common goals and communicate with each other in a host of formal structures, e.g. within the frame of the EU, UNECE/FAO, MCPFE, research projects. Moreover, also informal communication structures are well-developed through extensive personal networks.

Although it appears from this study that the EU forest sector core is a relatively steady policy network, it should not be forgotten that the core comprises different actors. It is therefore a valid question to ask if core actors' communication goals can be united, if cooperation in communication provides added value to the individual actors, and what the form of such European level cooperation should be? Considering the forest sector's increasing attention for communication it should not forget to keep asking itself what it really wants to achieve with communication. Is it just the desire to boost the image of the whole forest sector with the public? Is it to be more successful in lobbying at the European level in order to come to a stronger policy framework for forest issues? Or does the forest sector really want to engage in symmetric two-way communication processes with other sectors and stakeholders, in order to secure mutual understanding and long-lasting relationships?

Looking at the focus of the major part of the European level forest sector actors' external communication it seems that instrumental, one-way communication still has priority. Truly symmetric, two-way communication with other sectors in a formal form is desired by most forest sector core actors, but virtually non-existent. It appeared to be difficult for the forest sector core to reach high-level decision-makers from other sectors at the European level and MEPs. Furthermore, even in its current instrumental, distributive style of communication the actors do not fully use their own strengths, in the sense that forests can be used to "tell the story for the sector" – showing by telling, evoking positive emotions etc.

Although forest sector core actors believe they have a good story to tell about forests, forestry and forest industry, and agree upon the messages they want to convey, they perceive it as difficult to reach the public at large. Communication theory provides some insights into this difficulty, to name just a few: messages are still too difficult (language-wise) for the target groups to "access" them or fit them into their frame of reference. It could also be a matter of competition: there is so much information being spread that the messages from the forest sector are simply not being picked out from the mass of other messages. A reason for that may be that the messages do not comply with basic attention rules, such as controversy. Consequently, there clearly exists a need for the exchange of best practices in communicating with other sectors and society at large.

At the European level and between national forest sectors such exchange of information is now strengthening gradually, e.g. through networking initiatives like the UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators Network. Actual cooperation on project basis, such as large-scale national promotional activities, is still largely in the starting phase. Apart from some bilateral cooperation, no strong European wide framework or coordination exists for such activities, in spite of a clearly expressed need. Related to this is the question of responsibility; it was not always clear what the possibilities for European level forest sector actors were concerning actual communication with the public at large. The core actors want to improve public understanding of the forest sector, but they see their role more in the coordination of national initiatives across Europe. It has to be mentioned, however, that European FBI and forest owner federations and policy-makers (especially DG ENTR) have started to work on improving their communication strategies. They have identified important target groups, e.g. schools, architects, builders. They support strategies to reach these target groups and they have initiated activities to come to a framework for national/local actors to act in.

A positive development is that the forest sector is increasingly moving from a reactive communication style towards a more pro-active style, at least in their communication strategies. The difficulty here is, however, that it can be difficult to interest the general media and the public for "good-news" stories. Recent policy documents such as the EU Forest Action Plan express the need to interest, reach and truly communicate with other sectors (and especially high-level policy-makers from other sectors) and the public at large. To find a way to address these needs is a major challenge for the years to come.

As this study should be seen as a pre-survey of forest sector communication at the European level, more elaborate study on this subject is needed. Such studies should take into account a wider scope of actors such as eNGOs, other DGs at the COM, and other interest representation federations at the EU level.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix I. Abbreviations and acronyms.

BWI	= Builders and Wood Workers' International
CEI-Bois	= Confederation of European Woodworking Industries
CEPF	= Confederation of European Forest Owners
CEPI	= Confederation of European Paper Industries
CITPA	= International Confederation of Paper and Board Converters in Europe
COM	= Commission of the European Communities
DG	= Directorate General of the Commission of the European Communities
DG AGRI	= Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development
DG DEV	= Directorate General for
DG ENTR	= Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry
DG ENV	= Directorate General for Environment
DG TRADE	= Directorate General for External Trade
EFI	= European Forest Institute
ELO	= European Landowners Organization
ENFE	= European Network of Forest Entrepreneurs
eNGO	= environmental Non-governmental Organization
EP	= European Parliament
ETFRN	= European Tropical Forest Research Network
EU	= European Union
EuropeAid	= EuropeAid Cooperation Office
EUROSTAT	= Statistical Office of the European Communities
FAO	= Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FBI	= Forest-based Industries
FEBO	= European Timber Trade Association
FECOF	= European Federation of Local Forest Authorities
FEFCO	= European Federation of Corrugated Board Manufacturers
FLEGT	= Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
FSC	= Forest Stewardship Council
ILO	= International Labor Organization
INTERGRAF	= International Confederation for Printing and Allied Industries
ITTA	= International Tropical Timber Agreement
ITTO	= International Tropical Timber Organization
IUFRO	= International Union of Forest Research Organizations
JRC	= Joint Research Centre
MCPFE	= Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe
MEP	= Member of the European Parliament
MS	= Member State(s)
NFP	= National Forest Programme
PEFC	= Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes
PR	= Public Relations
SFC	= Standing Forestry Committee
SFM	= Sustainable Forest Management
UEF	= Union of European Foresters
UNECE	= United Nations Economic Council for Europe
USSE	= Union of Southern European Silviculturists

Appendix II. Guide to interview "Characteristics and Challenges of Forest Sector Communication in the EU"

Motives and strategy
1. On whose behalf do you communicate and what are your motives for communicating?
2. Do you have a written communication strategy (if so, could you perhaps attach it to your answer?)? If not, could you tell something about your communication actions (ad hoc or systematic; amount of resources directed to communication activities; 1-way or 2-way communication, or both)?

Target groups
If we try to visualize the forestry sector and its surroundings, the following picture can be drawn (see Fig. 1). A central circle containing the forestry core (forest-based industry, forestry sector (incl. forest owners, entrepreneurs, workers), (inter)national bodies dealing with forest policy, state forestry administrations, forest science) is surrounded by (or fall into) a larger circle containing a wide array of interest groups, and (inter)national organizations with an interest in forests (e.g. environmental, agricultural, recreation organisations), which in turn also falls within the largest circle: society at large.

3. Could you please list with whom (which target groups A) within the forest sector core, B) in the forest cluster, and C) in society at large) you are communicating, and please indicate their importance to you (1 = least important, 10 is most important)?
4. Could you name the formal communication structures within the EU and within the UNECE/FAO most important to you?
5. What role does cross-sectoral communication have in your organisation's strategy – how is it formulated in your strategy statements?
6. With which groups do you have a good communication, and why? And with which groups you would like to improve your communication, and why is that needed?

Communication content
7. Could you please indicate how much effort you spend on/how important you consider the following aspects of communication:
    A. Long-term communication for increasing the level of knowledge in forest issues, without a strong lobbying attempt for actual issues.
    B. Short-term communication about actual issues (e.g. campaigns)
8. What is it that you want to communicate, what are your messages?
    a. Inside the forest sector core
    b. Outside the forest sector core

General effectiveness
9. Do you evaluate your communication activities? If so, please describe the method of your evaluation, and how you would then evaluate the success of your communication strategy – in terms of the targets you have reached, and targets you have not fully reached (yet)?
10. What do you think still can be improved in your communication strategy?

Network
When keeping in mind the distinction between communication on behalf of the interest of the organisation itself, and communication on behalf of the whole forest sector (e.g. communication networks):

11. What communication do you want to practice yourself, and together with others?
12. What type of co-operation is needed? (e.g. With whom? On what issues? On what level (regional, national, European, global))?
13. What difficulties have you experienced in co-operation and networking in communication issues?
14. Do you think that communication is sufficiently addressed in forest policy strategies (e.g. in NFPs)?