

## PRESS RELEASE

### THE EUROPEAN WOODWORKING INDUSTRY APPLAUDS THE EU COMMISSION'S COMPETITIVENESS COMPASS AND CALLS FOR ENHANCED SUPPORT FOR THE WOOD SECTOR

***BRUSSELS, 29 January 2025 - The European woodworking industry welcomes the European Commission's commitment to fostering economic growth and competitiveness as outlined in the newly launched Competitiveness Compass. This initiative signals a critical step forward in strengthening the EU's global economic leadership, ensuring sustainable practices, and unlocking the potential of the growing green economy.***

Recognising the pressing need to reduce administrative burdens, our industry calls for swift and decisive measures to simplify regulations across the EU. Cutting red tape will not only improve operational efficiency for our businesses, mainly composed of SMEs, but also enable the woodworking sector to scale up innovations and help drive the development of the bioeconomy in alignment with the EU's climate and sustainable housing goals.

Employing close to 1 million people in 160,000 companies, our industry helps keep employment within Europe by fostering excellence in the European manufacturing ecosystem. Labour shortages are however a challenge, partly because of a lack of skilled workers and partly from a mismatch between the competencies required by companies and those provided on the vocational and educational training (VET) side. In line with the "Competitiveness compass", our industry calls for support for those companies working to skill and upskill their employees as this approach is essential for fostering a skilled, adaptable, and competitive workforce that can thrive in today's dynamic business environment.

#### **CALLS FOR ACTION**

1. **Simplify Regulations:** Reduce complexities to foster growth and innovation and tackle the existing single market barriers.
2. **Prioritise the use of Wood in the Bioeconomy:** Advocate for sustainable wood use in construction, packaging, and everyday products.
3. **Develop the Workforce:** Support lifelong learning and establish career pathways for a skilled, adaptable workforce.
4. **Ensure Raw Material Supply:** Strengthen sustainable wood sourcing and enhance material recovery, reuse, and recycling through improved standards, urban waste sorting, and partnerships.

*"Woodworking is not just an industry — it is a driver of Europe's green transformation,"* said Sampsa Auvinen, CEI-Bois President. *"To harness its full potential, we need policies that prioritise innovation, investment, and a reliable & sustainable supply of wood resources."*

## The European Wood Sector: At the heart of Europe's Bioeconomy

The woodworking industry urges the European Commission to place the wood sector at the core of the EU's bioeconomy strategy. As a renewable and climate-friendly resource, wood plays a pivotal role in transitioning to a sustainable, circular economy. The sector's contributions to reducing carbon emissions, fostering rural development, and supporting green jobs make it essential in achieving the EU's environmental and economic objectives.

The sustainable bioeconomy is the renewable segment of the circular economy. As a renewable, reusable, and recyclable material, wood can help facilitate such a circular economy. Given that wood is a renewable resource it has an important role to play in replacing and substituting for non-renewable materials. According to EUROSTAT, in 2022, *"the EU had an estimated 160 million hectares of forests - this means that forests cover 39% of the EU's land area. **This represents an increase of about 8.3 million hectares or 5.5% since 2000 and 2.6 million hectares or 1.7% since 2010. In total, an estimated 66% of the net sustainable annual increment of wood in EU forests was harvested in 2022 i.e a further third could have been removed and the felling rate would still have remained with the sustainability boundary.**"*

Also, recovered wood has the potential for reuse for the same purpose, repurposed with minimum modification into new products, or fully recycled. All three options extend recovered wood's lifecycle, minimise waste, and also prolong the time the carbon is stored. Moreover, as an essential solution to the current housing crisis - increasing the use of industrial off-site wood construction to produce modular homes in factories - can also contribute significantly to waste reduction in the construction industry.

### A Call for Collaborative Action

The European woodworking industry emphasises the importance of a united effort between policymakers, businesses, and stakeholders to:

- Reduce regulatory complexities that hinder growth and innovation in Europe
- Facilitate lifelong learning and workforce development while establishing sector-specific career pathway frameworks
- Tackle single-market barriers to ensure EU law is applied consistently across the EU
- Champion the sustainable use of wood in construction, packaging, furniture, and everyday products while ensuring wood is at the heart of the bioeconomy
- Facilitate a reliable supply of raw material while boosting the availability of secondary materials
- Identify and implement cohesively actions that can ensure a sustainable, reliable, and resilient wood supply for Europe's timber industries in order to support a transition to a sustainable and circular bioeconomy
- Implement systems to divert wood from waste streams through the improved sorting and collection of urban and reclaimed wood from cities and communities
- Encourage partnerships and cooperation throughout the value chain to improve efficiency and effectiveness in raw material sourcing and recovery
- Require buildings to be designed for disassembly while our sector will facilitate the re-use of wood structural elements and the continued long-term storage of the carbon within them
- Establish new standards (and updating existing standards) that are necessary for a more efficient wood processing, use, reuse and recycling and setting up end-of-waste (EoW) criteria for wood streams in order to promote wood circularity, facilitate the development of secondary raw materials markets for recovered wooden construction products and help expand wood availability.

**For further information**

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**About CEI-Bois**

The European Confederation of Woodworking Industries represents 22 European and National organisations from 16 countries and is the body backing the interests of the whole industrial European wood sector: more than 160.000 companies generating an annual turnover of 194 billion euros and employing 930,000 workers in the EU.