

BIO4ECO
*Sustainable regional bioenergy
policies – a game changer*

Report

**Thematic Workshop
“Role of forests
within regional and national low
carbon and bioeconomy
strategies and programmes”**

08-10.11.2016, Bansko, Bulgaria

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1. Introduction

The project Sustainable regional bioenergy policies – a game changer **BIO4ECO** is funded by the European Union programme Interreg Europe. It foresees several international events – Thematic Workshops and Study Visits.

The first Thematic Workshop “Role of forests within regional and national low carbon and bioeconomy strategies and programmes was organized in the Bulgarian town of Bansko by the Executive Forest Agency of the Republic of Bulgaria and all 10 partners from Bulgaria, Finland, France, Italy, Latvia, Romania, Slovenia and Spain participated in it. Regional stakeholders were invited and took part in the seminar as well. It was conducted in the period 07-10.11.2016 and a parallel meeting of the Project Steering group was planned.

The main goal of the Workshop was to present the regions ‘specifics in the field of biomass, production of energy and the policy/legislative umbrella. During the first day of the Thematic Workshop were held four sessions during which: was presented the experience of some of the partners and were organized two round tables for discussions and finding common conclusions on the topics of interest.

During the second day was organized field visit that helped the participants to understand the practical Bulgarian experience in the sustainable forest management, the utilization of the wood as renewable energy source and the production of energy.

This event gave the participants the opportunity to exchange information and know-how and deeper understand the situation in the other EU regions that is around the policy implementation and practical orientation of the energy production.



2. Good practices and experience exchange (08.11.2016)

2.1. Common information

During the first couple of sessions were presented six PPT presentation that were focused on the sustainable forest management and the policy / legislation issues. The presented information is summarized below, as the relevant presentations are attached to the present report.

2.2. Bulgaria – 2 PPTs presentations

- *Forest biomass based sector perspectives in Bulgaria*
 - Forest resources in Bulgaria
 - Wood products and users (incl. statistical information)
 - Opportunities for development of wood based energy sector
 - Limitations and obstacles in front of development of wood based energy sector
 - Best EU practices
 - Conclusions
- *Role of the Bulgarian forests in regional and national low carbon strategies and programmes based on low-carbon emissions and bioeconomy:*
 - European policies and legislation on renewable energy resources
 - Energy – climate, trading scheme for greenhouse gases
 - National policies and legislation, encouraging energy production from renewable resources
 - Forestry policies and their impact on development of renewable resources

2.3. Finland – 2 PPT presentations

- *Forests in Finnish national and regional climate and bioeconomy policies and programmes*
 - North Karelia information
 - Climate and bioeconomy in policies
 - Forests and bioeconomy (incl. in North Karelia)
 - Forests, energy and climate
 - Forest and Forestry information/statistics
- *Heat Energy Entrepreneurship*
 - Bioenergy in KUAS
 - Heat energy entrepreneurship

- Heat production and business
- Benefits for municipality and entrepreneur
- 2.4. Latvia** – 1 PPT presentation
- *Biomass and land use - need for supplementary policies*
 - Forest resources
 - Domestic biomass consumption
 - Main biomass markets
 - Bioenergy and Climate
 - Renewable energy policy
 - Opportunities for management in rural areas
 - Smart and productive land use
 - Regional dimension of land use changes
 - ILUC (indirect land use change)
- 2.5. Slovenia** – 1 PPT presentation
- *Role of forests in the regional and national low carbon and bio-economy strategies and programs*
 - Background and natural/forest conditions
 - Forest management
 - Wood biomass balance
 - Legislative framework for wood biomass production and use
 - NFP and low carbon
 - NFP and bio-economy
 - Action plan
 - Rural Development Programme
 - Main barriers and possible solutions
- 2.6. Spain** – 1 PPT presentation
- *Implementing the Bioeconomy concept in Catalonia*
 - About Catalunya and its forest sector
 - Innovation for sustainability and economic growth
 - Bioeconomy in Catalonia
 - wood mobilization in public forests
 - Catalan strategy to promote the energy use of forest biomass and agricultural products
 - Cork Industry
 - new uses of forest biomass
 - Non-wood forests products
 - New services: forest, ecosystem, wellness

3. Field visit results (09.11.2016)

3.1. Bansko Biomass Heating Plant – the first stop was in the Bansko heating biomass power plant. It has 10 MW capacity (two 5 MW boilers and back up dieses boiler with 2,5 MW capacity) and produces heating energy for the local households”, all municipal buildings (incl. municipality buildings, museum, 3 kindergartens, 3 schools, 2 social places) church and business (8 hotels, factory, etc.). The functioning period is around 6 months per year, but the distribution network is still a bottleneck for the business (many users still use gas in the business facilities or firewood in the family houses). Coniferous wood chips is the main burning material and for 2016 the consumption is around 12 000 m³ or 10 t.



3.2. Pellet Factory in Razlog – the second stop site was in “Pirin Pelets” LTD. The pellets factory was built in 2012 in the neighbor town of Razlog and at the present moment is considered by some to be with the highest quality production in Bulgaria. It has an Italian owner and uses predominantly coniferous tree species for the production process. Most of the production is “exported” in EU and some remain on the local market as pellets become more and more often used by the people. The factory works 24/7 with capacity 100 t/24 hours.

3.3. State Forest Enterprise Razlog - “State forest enterprise Razlog” is one of the territorial units of the Southwest State Forest Company in Bulgaria. It is located in the central part of Blagoevgrad Region. The relief is predominantly mountainous and the territories are between 850 and 2250 m asl. The most distributed tree species are Scotch pine - 65 %, Beech – 13 %, Black pine – 11 %, Spruce – 4 %, Fir – 3 %, etc. The vast relief diversity is prerequisite for the rich biodiversity on the territory of the enterprise. Main hunting species are wild boar, red deer, fallow deer, roe deer, wolf, fox, wild cat, rabbit and several bird species. The enterprise has own hunting lodge and mountain hut. Additional information was presented by the director of the enterprise during the relevant meeting.

3.4. Forest Press conference



3.5. Felling sites visit – thinnings, regeneration and sanitary fellings

Due to the bad weather - extremely heavy rain – a state of emergency was declared by the Municipality of Bansko in the afternoon and only one attempt was made to visit the planned felling sites. The press conference was not conducted, but during the morning visits in the plant and factory were conducted many interviews with representatives of EFA, project partners and hosts by Bulgarian National Television, Agro TV and several local sites.

4. Conclusions

4.1. Round table 1 Forests and Biomass – during the first round table were discussed all important issues that concern the sustainable forest management, the production of the renewable resource that is used for production of energy, etc. Focus was given to the role of the biomass as independent source, the levels of efficiency in the technological processes, the resource demand that should lead to open market competition, the strong involvement of the society (also in policy drafting and implementation), the necessity for closer cooperation and experience exchange and others.

4.2. Round table 2 Biomass and Policy – all important issues above were discussed in the prism of the policy processes – the development of policy and legislative tools with stakeholder involvement approach, coherence between different tools on EU, national and regional level, etc.

4.3. Conclusions from the 1st Thematic Workshop:

- Importance of the biomass as independent energy source on the basis of the Sustainable forest management principles – availability of the resource but not allowing over exploitation
- Energy production efficiency is crucial
- Open market conditions are obligatory under clear framework (certification, sustainability, etc.) – competition between many consumers and users
- Policy coherence and stability – problem – policy fragmentation
- LULUCF makes the difference
- Working legislative base necessary
- Stakeholders involvement / Society convinced
- Fuel switch convincing society and incentives (fossil to biomass and low to high effective production)
- Project activities expanding to stakeholders (incl. municipalities)
- Experience and best practices exchange
- EU funding for practical implementation of Action plans

All conclusions were subsequently disseminated among BIO4ECO partners and final agreement was achieved on the bullets above.