Forest-based and related industries: state of competitiveness

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PURPOSE : to propose a series of measures that main sector players should adopt or continue, with a view to reinforcing global and sustainable competition in the Union's forest and forest-based industries.
CONTENT : in the Communication, the Commission recognises the importance of forest and forest-based industries - which at present make up one of the biggest industrial sectors in the European Union - and of the role they play in sustainable development within the Union thanks to their social and economic weight, the high level of employment, and their particular environmental characteristics. Even if these industries generally maintain a good competitive position in comparison with their main partners /competitors, they have however been faced with several major challenges (in particular, market globalisation, technology, environmental sensitivity, the competition of other material and supports) which pose a threat to future competition and sustainability. The Communication outlines the main socio-economic characteristics of the forest industry in the European Union and analyses the main factors influencing competitiveness in relation to the main international competitors. It also highlights the main challenges facing forest and forest-based industries and areas where measures could contribute to its sustainable development taking into consideration its economic competitivity, the environment, employment and the social well-being. In order to efficiently promote these measures, the Commission, proposes to create a forum, made up of sector representatives, Commission services and interested parties (forest owners, unions, Environmental Protection NGOs, scientific world) as well as national experts and Members of the European Parliament. Its aim should be to: complete the analysis of competitive factors; make an inventory of the main challenges facing the forest industry; lead to a debate and find agreements on concrete measures to be launched and to be continued; monitor their implementation and ensure regular up-dates on measures taken. In addition, the Commission proposes to reunite the forum in a plenary meeting, in collaboration with the Presidency and the high level industrial groups.