

Joanna PIKUL-BINIEK, Ewa RATAJCZAK

FULFILLING INDUSTRY'S NEED FOR RESEARCH – NEW INTERACTIVE DATABASE

One of the deliverables of the recently completed InnovaWood SSA Project, which was embarked on by 14 partners from 10 different EU member states, is an interactive database which bridges the existing gap between the industry needs and research capabilities. As a result, the competitiveness of the European Forestry-Wood Chain is stimulated. The issue is particularly important for Poland, where the industry is rather sceptical about collaboration with knowledge and skill producers.

Keywords: forestry-wood chain, industry needs, research capabilities, bridging the gap, interactive database

One of the changes that can lately be observed in the European forestry-wood sector is closer cooperation between the research provider community and industry. Research providers, that is R&D agencies and universities, are becoming more active in the market, which increases the demand for their knowledge and services. This topic is of great significance for the entire sector, as it influences its integration and competitiveness.

These observations became a driving force for 14 partners from 10 different EU countries to embark on a project whose purpose was to bridge the gap between industry needs and research capabilities. The project entitled “InnovaWood SSA – An Innovation Strategy to Integrate Industry Needs and Research capability in the European Forestry-Wood Chain” was funded under the EU “Global change and ecosystems” research activity of the Sixth Framework Programme as a “Specific Support Action”. It lasted from September 2005 to February 2008 and gathered together a mix of experts and practitioners

Joanna PIKUL-BINIEK, Wood Technology Institute, Poznan, Poland

e-mail: j_pikul@itd.poznan.pl

Ewa RATAJCZAK, Wood Technology Institute, Poznan, Poland

e-mail: e_ratajczak@itd.poznan.pl

representing research, education & training, and industry. Poland was represented by the Wood Technology Institute.

The project was undertaken mainly out of the desire to forge stronger links between industry and research as well as to increase international cooperation in the European forestry-wood chain. It was meant to help find out how research and industry could work together more effectively, to define what the specific needs of industry are and to evaluate how R&D agencies can meet those needs. All these questions were posed in the context of an enlarged European Union. As a result, the Project was addressed to the European providing community, public authorities, industrial federations and associations, producers and end-users, especially SMEs.

In order to meet the aims of the Project, the following tools were developed:

1. Contact databases of:
 - a. performers in the provider community,
 - b. industry performers;
2. Surveys in 27 European countries to create:
 - a. the provider community's capability database,
 - b. the industrial community's needs database;
3. Interactive database analysis to match the needs of industry with the capabilities of research community in the enlarged European forestry-wood sector. The analysis was made up of three stages:
 - a. merging of data obtained from capabilities and needs surveys,
 - b. match analysis "capabilities versus needs",
 - c. gap analysis "capabilities versus needs";
4. Integrated strategy for innovation to bridge the gap between needs and capabilities;
5. Interactive database allowing companies to get into direct contact with research institutions from all over Europe.

As a result of the recent completion of the SSA Project, European wood companies and researchers of the field have the possibility to use a new interactive communication tool. The created interactive database allows users worldwide to choose specific problems of wood science and technology and obtain links to European institutions which are experts in dealing with the chosen topic. It enables companies to find research providers capable of meeting exact demand, i.e. solving specific problems, offering particular services, products, technologies etc. The website is available to the public, free of charge, with no requirement for login. It allows the user to choose from the following forestry-wood topics:

- silviculture,
- harvesting,
- forest protection,

- forest management,
- ecological and social services,
- marketing and economics,
- physical properties of wood,
- mechanical properties of wood,
- chemical aspects of wood,
- processing techniques and technological aspects of wood,
- production aspects of wood,
- durability of wood,
- wood preservation,
- wood modification,
- quality grading of wood,
- product development.

The user can also limit the search to one or more of the EU-27 member states. Consequently, a list of research institutions possessing knowledge/offering services in the chosen topic will appear on the screen. On choosing a particular institution, the user will be given detailed, up-to-date information about the research provider, together with a link to its website.

During the duration of the Project particular dissemination tools were also used: sending newsletters to relevant companies and institutes, organization of conferences and workshops, creation of the Project website (www.innovawood-ssa.net).

Now that the Project has successfully ended, the following benefits resulting from it must be emphasized:

- development and reinforcement of the European Research and Training Network of the Forestry-Wood Sector,
- greater contribution of the Forestry-Wood Chain to sustainability by increased understanding between the provider and user communities,
- integration of these two communities, allowing for a more efficient collaboration in projects.

These benefits are especially vital for the wood sector in Poland due to the fact that cooperation in the field of knowledge transfer between R&D agencies and companies in most Polish sectors remains in its initial phase. Most Polish entrepreneurs do not see the need to cooperate with research providers and about 40% of firms are unaware of how to reach research institutions. On the other hand, research providers would most willingly commercialize their services. A similar situation exists in the wood sector. In light of the above, Polish entrepreneurs should be encouraged to collaborate with knowledge and skill producers from all around Europe. One of the tools supporting this process is the InnovaWood free-of-charge database.

Finally, it must be noted that apart from the InnovaWood Project other initiatives which stimulate the integration of the Polish forestry-wood sector and which stimulate the activity of research providers can be observed. These include: the Polish Technology Platform for Forestry and Wood Sector, Virtual Network “Forests”, Woodism as well as a number of cluster initiatives which are being undertaken in the sector at present.

DOSTOSOWYWANIE POTENCJAŁU BADAWCZEGO DO POTRZEB PRZEMYSŁU DRZEWNEGO – NOWA INTERAKTYWNA BAZA DANYCH

Streszczenie

W lutym 2008 roku zakończył się realizowany przez 14 partnerów z 10 krajów UE projekt InnovaWood SSA pt.: *An Innovation Strategy to Integrate Industry Needs and Research Capability in the European Forestry-Wood Chain*” (Strategia innowacyjna integracji potrzeb przemysłu i możliwości badawczych w europejskim łańcuchu leśno-drzewnym), którego celem było opracowanie narzędzia ułatwiającego dostosowanie potencjału badawczego do potrzeb przemysłu drzewnego w europejskim sektorze leśno-drzewnym. W tym celu przeprowadzono działania polegające na identyfikacji możliwości instytucji badawczych oraz diagnozie potrzeb operacyjnych przedsiębiorstw europejskiego przemysłu drzewnego, co umożliwiło dokonanie analizy istniejących rozbieżności. Dla zmniejszenia rozpoznanej w tej sferze luki stworzona została interaktywna baza danych, z której bezpłatnie mogą korzystać firmy drzewne z całego świata. Dzięki bazie uzyskują one informacje na temat potencjału europejskich ośrodków badawczych, które specjalizują się w określonym obszarze tematycznym z zakresu leśnictwa, drzewnictwa i meblarstwa. Korzystanie z bazy jest szczególnie ważne dla zwiększania integracji oraz konkurencyjności europejskiego sektora leśno-drzewnego.

Słowa kluczowe: łańcuch leśno-drzewny, potrzeby przemysłu, potencjał badawczy, interaktywna baza danych