

# TREATED WOOD FOR DECARBONISATION

A strategic enabler  
on the pathway towards climate-neutrality

## Executive summary of the Roadmap for the EU 2024-2029 political priorities



From forests to construction, treated wood is a strategic enabler of decarbonisation and sustainable growth. It is part of what makes the European wood economy a major remover of carbon emissions, playing an indispensable role to achieve the EU 2030, 2040 and 2050 climate targets.

The European Institute for Wood Preservation (WEI-IEO) and the European Wood Preservative Manufacturers Group (EWPM) have prepared together a roadmap of policy recommendations for the EU 2024-2029 political term. **We call on the European Union to prepare an ambitious Wood Optimisation Plan with enabling policy reforms to increase the decarbonisation potential of the wood.**

### WHO ARE WE?

The European Institute for Wood Preservation (WEI-IEO) and the European Wood Preservative Manufacturers Group (EWPM) represent **the wood preservation sector**. Together, we count more than 150 individual companies (wood preservative manufacturers, wood processors, builders, etc.), which play an indispensable role for **the production of treated wood in the EU**.

### WHAT IS TREATED WOOD?

European wood species are **vulnerable to biodeterioration** and **require protection to extend their service-life**. "Wood protection" consists in treating wood against decay caused by fungi, insects, mould or humidity, thus making it more durable and resistant over time. Once treated, wood can **substitute carbon and/or energy intensive materials** such as iron, steel, aluminium and glass reinforced plastics.

### WHAT IS IT USED FOR?



Treated wood is used as a **construction material** for many types of structures such as buildings, houses and outdoor infrastructures, railway sleepers, urban landscaping, electricity and telecom poles, decking installations, and many more.

# Treated wood is essential to meet the EU 2030, 2040 & 2050 climate targets

The EU has committed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 55% net in 2030 compared to 1990 and to reach climate-neutrality (net-zero) by 2050. As listed in the European Climate Law Regulation, those objectives are legally binding and will be followed by an intermediary 2040 target.

## Extending the service-life of wood:

### Improves the carbon sink of forests, by optimising their use and productivity



Forests absorb 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the EU27 annual carbon emissions. By focusing more on the long-term uses of wood, the EU can achieve important climate and productivity gains in the way it uses its forests and wood resources.

### Enables the replacement of carbon and/or energy intensive construction materials

Treated wood is often the most sustainable (and only renewable) construction material. Preserving wood against biodegradation is crucial to compete against carbon or energy intensive materials (such as iron, steel, plastics) in terms of service-life duration.



### Reinforces sustainable growth and European strategic autonomy

Wood is a strategic resource for the European economy. The EU is a net exporter of wood products. Around 85-90% of the EU wood demand is satisfied by EU forests. More wood protection could further reduce the quantity of rainforest wood imported from outside the EU.

## Treated wood can do more for climate: Call for a new EU Wood Optimisation Plan with enabling policy reforms for decarbonisation

**Putting Europe on tracks to becoming climate-neutral is one of the main challenges for the current and future decades.** The EU can (and should) succeed by focusing on its strategic decarbonisation enablers, such as treated wood, and the missing necessary policies to increase their potential for society.

As part of a **new and ambitious Wood Optimisation Plan**, the EU should prioritise the reforms mentioned below so as to maximise decarbonisation, circularity and sustainability in the wood economy: from forestry and timber to wood protection, woodworking industries, recyclers and wood waste operators.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1 Encourage the use of sustainable materials in all EU legislations



Situation

Iron, steel, cement, aluminium and plastics emit a lot of carbon and consume a lot of energy during production. Yet, EU legislation does not always (or does not sufficiently) differentiate materials based on their sustainability impacts.



Solution

EU legislation should always differentiate materials based on their sustainability impacts, and require or reward the use of the most sustainable ones. This requires a coherent implementation of the new ecodesign, building and construction product legislations, the new carbon removal certification framework, and complementary reforms in public procurement and public service delegation contracts.

## 2 A coordinated EU wood waste approach for more circularity



Situation

Wood is a highly circular material with many possibilities for use, reuse, recycling and energy recovery. However, Member States have very different approaches when it comes to the disposal of material waste, and in particular wood waste. Cross-border incoherences hinder its full circularity potential.



Solution

A new EU Directive for wood waste prevention and optimisation, aiming to ensure a minimum level-playing field for wood waste management in the EU, to improve wood reusing and recycling, to ensure sustainable energy recovery, and to set a clear and single EU definition of hazardous wood waste.

## 3 Price incentives that reward the most sustainable materials



Situation

Iron, steel, cement, aluminium and plastics emit a lot of carbon and consume a lot of energy during production. Yet, they are often chosen for construction. Carbon taxes are being developed, but are still insufficient to date.



Solution

All materials should be priced in proportion to the quantity of carbon emissions generated during production. This requires a swift scope extension of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism to all construction materials, while exploring other climate-based price incentives or disincentives.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 4 A chemical regulatory framework that considers climate impacts



Situation

The transition to climate-neutrality cannot happen without chemicals: many low-carbon technologies (such as treated wood) depend on chemistry processes. Yet, EU regulations mostly focus on the health and environmental impacts of chemicals. Climate impacts are overlooked, if not ignored.



Solution

The EU chemical regulatory framework should systematically consider climate impacts together with health and environmental impacts, so that contribution to decarbonisation and climate change mitigation can also be accounted for in chemical regulatory decisions.

## 5 R&D and knowledge development for a more efficient wood economy



Situation

Wooden structures in construction can last for decades or centuries when they are properly treated and maintained. As the EU is transitioning towards climate-neutrality, it should develop the necessary skills and knowledge to better use wood as a material and to limit avoidable wood waste.



Solution

The EU should develop specific R&D, knowledge, skills and innovation support measures aiming at extending the service-life of wood and reducing wood waste. Improving resource efficiency and sustainability in (and through) the wood economy should be better emphasised in EU funding programmes.

## 6 Accelerate the transition of all industries towards climate-neutrality



Situation

The transition towards climate-neutrality requires large R&D and CAPEX investments in all industry sectors. The EU sustainable finance framework plays a critical role in rewarding green assets and investments, but it does not sufficiently accompany industries in need of transition to “become green”.



Solution

Complete the EU sustainable finance framework with a new EU transition finance framework to facilitate all industry investments that bring verifiable decarbonisation results over time.

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