

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE APRIL MEETING IN ZAGREB

Croatian partners from the Leonardo da Vinci's Biomass EUVET hosted the second project meeting in Zagreb in April. After presenting the reports on the state and use of biomass, namely the regulations in education and certification of pellets burners installers, the partners discussed the similarities and differences between countries involved. All the partners agreed that biomass is important, and should be even more important but it is not used enough. There is also the problem with the small scale biomass systems, first and foremost the pellets burners, for there is no specific programme, no qualifications for such systems installers. Most of the training, in most of the countries is done through boilers manufacturers, on in-job trainings, seminars and workshops. But there is the need for regulating the certification of these installers. The growing demand for biomass systems demands it, and so do European laws.

From the Spanish point of view, Cluster de la Energia de Extremadura to be exact, one of the main objectives of meeting in Zagreb was getting information about the training in the biomass sector and the research about the training certificates, which was mainly done through the "Report of existing national certificates" done by each partner. The information provided by partners showed that countries share the need of developing a training certificate in the biomass sector. To date, the steps taken in all countries point at two main statements: the workers of the sector should have a high level of training and secondly, there is a really good potential of the sector in rural parts and green areas, for instance in Croatia with its favorable geographical area. All the partners agree in carrying on the necessary stages to research what should be done to get a right and well-established certificate in order to accredit the professional belonging to the biomass sector. Finland, in this sense, will play an important role due to its experience in the sector and Spain will provide the tool to the partnership to develop it: the SolTec methodology.

The basic conclusion from the Finnish point of view, based on both the reports and the presentations from meeting in Croatia, was that more has been done in Finland towards anticipating the required skills for the future of biomass usage. This is particularly the case regarding training in anticipation of the RES-directive regarding requirements for the certification of qualified installers of small-scale renewable energy units. With regard to pellet burners in Finland at least two pilot training sessions have already been held, involving close cooperation between relevant national stakeholders.

Czech mandatory target is a 13% share of energy from renewable sources in gross final energy consumption by the Czech Republic by 2020. Statistical data collected by the countries Ministry of Industry and Trade show that these targets will not be met. One of the main reason is the insufficient use of biomass for energy purposes. Similar situation exists in other countries in Europe. During workshop the partners found that their countries have great potential for development of biomass sector, for example in the Czech Republic there are approximately 977,000 ha of unused arable land. That is a great potential for the production of agricultural biomass as a source for direct burning and biogas and liquid fuel production. But utilisation of biomass for the generation of electricity and heat grows too slowly.

Romanian partners believe the reports presented in Croatia stand for a good basis towards a common report. Similarities and differences among the reports were underlined: Biomass sector development is a priority in all countries, and the importance of the sector as a renewable energy source is underlined by Government documents and programs. The dynamics of use of modern heating installations is similar in all countries, new equipment is installed, demand is up and also demand for specialized personnel is increasing. The difference is on one hand the current level of use attained and the buying capacity, especially of households. The countries of the partnership present disparities in what regards the VET system regarding biomass installer qualifications on one hand and certifications needed for operators (workers and companies alike) in the field. The technological level varies among the partner's countries – in some countries modern heating installation are more common while in others, the majority of biomass heating is made using basic installations – classical stoves.

All EU countries are responsible for setting up and authorising certification/qualification schemes by 2012 for installers of small-scale biomass boilers and stoves, solar photovoltaic and solar thermal systems, shallow geothermal systems and heat pumps. Individual countries have difficulties with achieving this goal. Biomass EUVET project can help meet this goal and therefore is meaningful and useful.

Most of the partners at the Zagreb meeting reported various degrees of awareness of the needs for development of training in the sector, but what has been done does not appear to have been so well coordinated.

There was the impression given that in Spain the desire to develop installation training in the biomass sector is strong at the moment. There is certainly potential for learning from what has been and is being done in Finland, but also great potential to share and adapt the methodology lessons of the earlier SolTec solar energy project. The resources from Croatia, Romania and Czech Republic together with the experience of Finland and the methodology of Spain will get the solution to improve the biomass sector and its lack of trained workers.

The meeting was an efficient platform for debate and discussions regarding on one hand the technical aspects of the work, a good opportunity to exchange information and views about the biomass sector and biomass installer qualifications, about the project implementation and evaluation.

Partners work must also focus on dissemination, on spreading information about the conclusions on the benefits of using biomass, and RES in general, and the need to educate workers in RES to meet the needs of labour market.