



FEBO NEWSLETTER 2/2007

Timber Trade

Extension of coexistence phase for DIN EN 14081-1 “CE marking of structural timber”

As you will remember we reported that European and national timber trade associations have been appealing for an extension of the coexistence phase for DIN EN 14081-1. The relevant committee (Standing Committee Construction) considered this request at a meeting on April 19th 2007 in Brussels and concluded that the coexistence phase should be extended for a further year up to 31st August 2008. FEBO welcomes this decision and believes that this longer coexistence period will be of advantage to all parties in putting the standard into practice.

Legally binding duty of declaration for timber and timber products in Switzerland?

In spring 2005 WWF handed in a petition to parliament which demanded the following measures from the confederation: an embargo on the import and trading of illegal timber, introduction of a legally-binding declaration of the species and origin of timber, partnerships with countries of origin and controls to stop the use of illegal timber in public buildings. The regional parliaments modified the WWF petition and submitted the following paper: the Executive Federal Council is called upon to design a model which includes the duty of declaration of timber species and origin which is to be introduced in phases (temporally staggered). The system will rely on the principle of self-declaration with spot-checks, Exceptions will be made for complex panel products, international developments such as FLEGT will be taken into consideration and the scheme will be put together with the co-operation of the timber sector.

German Timber Trade Federation passes Code of Conduct

At its annual General Assembly on 14th June in Berlin the German Timber Trade Federation adopted a code of conduct in the struggle against the trade with timber and wood products from illegal sources. The federation's response to increased political and public interest in this issue also documents a big step forward for the timber trade in combating illegal timber.

Timber

Parquet remains Europe's favourite floor covering

The current annual statistics of the European Federation of the Parquet Industry (FEP) show further growth in production and consumption compared to 2005. The total production of the FEP countries has increased by 2.02% reaching the record level of 98 million m². Deciding factors were growth in production in Germany and Poland as well as the positive development in the Netherlands and Rumania.

Consumption grew this year by 5.5%, whereby individual developments could be traced amongst the countries. Particularly positive were the figures of the eastern markets, Belgium, Switzerland, Spain and also France. Growth was also noticeable in Austria, Italy and the Scandinavian states. The German market stagnated.



On the whole parquet was able to strengthen its stable position as important floor covering. Some figures from the various lines: lamparquet is losing ground (2%), increases in mosaic parquet (3%) and solid parquet (16%). Multi-layer parquet leads with 79%. Taking FEP non-member countries into account, it is estimated that the volume of the parquet market in the EU and the European free trade zone exceeds 115 million m². As in previous years Germany with a 19% share of the total volume has the largest European market for parquet followed by Spain, Italy and France.

Species: in comparison to 2005 oak's leading position has been reinforced, the proportion of beech has also improved. Real losers this time round are red oak and tropical timbers.

Forecast for 2007: Current market indicators suggest the parquet branch will most probably profit from the favourable economic climate in 2007.

The statistics in detail are available at the FEBO office.

European Veneer Convention at the 2007 interzum trade fair Cologne

On May 10th and 11th the 11th European Veneer Convention took place in the hall for the timber and veneer branches. The international veneer market and its sales markets in a global context made up the first part. Dr. J.P. Schmitt, DRS Consulting from Saarbrücken, used international figures to demonstrate the challenge which Asia will present to the veneer sector and its sales markets in the coming years. The veneer industry must apply itself to the task of future strategic positioning. Dieter Betz, President of the Federation of the European Veneer Industry, followed by explaining the situation on the European parquet market. Jan Desmet from Decospan in Menen, Belgium, presented his ideas on the future of timber and veneer from the viewpoint of a veneer processor. The event's second part was centred around the topic of "Veneer in interior finishing". Ulrich Kühnholz from Deutsche Werkstätten in Hellerau, Dresden, gave a talk on the new trends in species and veneer backings and Dr. Christiana Swaboda, Institute for Timber Technology, Dresden, outlined the effects of new requirements for the surface treatment of veneers and also presented an overview of current developments in the paint industry. The latest technical developments in three-dimensional veneers and their applications was the subject of a talk by Jörg Förster, Rehholz GmbH in Kesseldorf. In the afternoon the two-day programme was complemented by a work shop targeting "EU-level activities concerning the import of illegal timber from Africa" and "The Veneer Logo – Arguments for its use in Europe". All presentations are available on CD from the FEBO office.

Trade

System of general tariff preferences

As reported by the FTA (Free Trade Association) following the first meetings of the council's working group "General Tariff Preferences", there will be hardly any changes in the new preference scheme to be used as of 2009 for the imports of goods into the EU. The European Commission refers only to an earlier communication to the Council, the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee (in July 2004) in which the guidelines for the general tariff preference system up to 2015 were laid down. These guidelines are to remain unaltered as far as possible.



Green light for EU-wide payment services

On 27th March at the Economic and Finance Council (ECOFIN) the finance ministers of the EU member states agreed on a compromise on the proposed regulations for payment services within the EU, thus accelerating a speedy conclusion to this legislative procedure which has already lasted over five years.

The decisive contribution to the creation of a common European payment area was delivered by the European Parliament when it accepted the Council's compromise on 24th April, making possible the adoption of the directive at the first reading.

The payment services directive supplements the banks' so-called SEPA (Single Euro Payments Area) initiative by providing SEPA's technical harmonisation work with a legal framework for the introduction of new EU-wide payment methods.

Amongst other things the directive plans a staggered system of minimum capitalisation according to the complexity of the services offered. Most payments should now be credited at the receiving bank by the end of the following working day. In the interim period, which lasts until 2012, a maximum of three working days has been agreed upon.

From January 2008 EU-wide uniform systems for bank transfers, direct debit and card payments come into force enabling crossborder transactions which are as easy, speedy and cheap as domestic ones.

The directive will now return to the EU Council for final adoption. The member states then have until November 2009 to incorporate the regulations into their national legislation.

New working time directive in force

New labour regulations for the transport sector have been in force since 11th April 2007. For the professional lorry driver this means a minimum rest period of 45 consecutive hours every two weeks as well as longer daily rest periods. The new rules align the systems of the individual member states.

Commission Vice-President Jacques Barrot (responsible for transport) called the new rules an "important step for the European transport branch". The regulations are of benefit to all those involved: the drivers who profit from social progress, the transport companies for whom fairer competition conditions have been created as well as all those on the roads as they benefit from the resulting improved road safety. Trade, employees and the member states have had more than a year to prepare for the new regulations.

The new regulations update a law that was passed 20 years ago and are valid – independent of the licensing country of the vehicle – for transport within the EU as well as that between the EU, Switzerland and the countries belonging to the European Economic Area.

Calendar

17th October 2007

24th/25th October 2007

12th March 2008

28th – 30th May 2008

30th May 2008

5th – 8th November 2007

Strasbourg, FEBO Board Meeting

Cologne, Branchentag Holz

Strasbourg, FEBO Board Meeting

Carrefour de Nantes

Nantes, General Assembly

Botât, Paris (Timber construction fair)

*Lutgart Behets-Oschmann
Wiesbaden, 26th June 2007*