

# EDITORIAL

## THE FORESTRY PROFESSION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

According to Wikipedia, the aim of public relations is to "foster the relationship with stakeholders who constitute the environment of an organisation for the purpose of obtaining support for its goals and develop trust and reputation". The Public Relations Society of America defines public relations as a "strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their publics (governments, citizens, media, markets ...).

After the explanation of the terms from the title, the question arises whether the forestry profession has done enough to "obtain support for its goals/tasks and build trust and reputation"? Judging by the current status and perception of forestry in the eyes of "its publics", it most obviously has not done so. One can always do better and one should not shy away from it. However, an alarming number of facts indicates that the forestry profession is being ignored. The reasons for this are open for discussion, but in our opinion, one of the most important reasons is the lack of "strategic communication" from the above definition. Such communication requires meritorious partners at the public level, which the Croatian Forestry Association has not had despite continuous efforts to obtain them. It is not hard to communicate strategically because we have arguments which can change the public treatment; what we need to do is to present them frequently and in the right places to those who are willing to listen, even at the risk of repeating ourselves. These arguments have often been highlighted in the columns of Forestry Journal, and particularly in this column.

First and foremost, we advocate the principle of market forest management in the sale of forest products, which means competing for raw wood material rather than purchasing it by contracts/allocation at prices which are much lower than those in the EU and in the surrounding countries. We have repeatedly warned that such low prices, particularly of the most valuable wood assortments, lead to squandering the national wealth and enabling some to make good profit at the primary wood processing stage. This is not conducive to the production of highly finalized products, which would provide high employment of professional workers and engineers as well as ensure the economic use of raw material. Market prices of raw material have never been a problem to proper finalists. An article in *Slobodna Dalmacija* commends wood processing as an *important component of GDP and of growing export, with the exception of furniture..* Let us ask ourselves why it is only export of furniture that is not growing. The answer is very simple: we

export raw wood material at the lowest possible processing stage. Consequently, we also export work places for the benefit of foreign buyers. Add to this the FSC certification and our squandering nature is complete.

When we discussed non-wood forest functions (NWFF) and the NWFF tax, we pointed out that we were dealing with the most valuable resources at our disposal: soil, forest, water and air, which are among the most important climate components. Let us put forth some facts; e.g. at average rainfall of 1,200 mm annually, our forests provide about 13 billion tons of potable water, the strategic resource of the 21st century. Our forests also sequester more than 5 billion tons of carbon. It is estimated that wood as a source of energy that heats family homes, at combustion of 20,000 kWh per annum releases 100 kg CO<sub>2</sub>, gas 4,600 kg CO<sub>2</sub>, and fuel oil 5,600 kg CO<sub>2</sub>. Employment related to the use of wood as energy is 1 : 9 in favour of wood for the same amount of energy. The world is currently concerned with the reduction of so-called carbon economy. There is also an increasing number of those advocating low-carbon economy. As for the NWFF tax, it is being constantly decreased in the Forest Law. The same goes for the proposal of the new Law, in which this joint expenditure is being denounced as "parafiscal tax" by large capital. In the framework of socially responsible business, a part of the profit should be returned to the community and the environment, which is precisely the function of the NWFF tax. The proposal of the Law, related to the reduction of the tax, suggests that everything below 1 million kuna revenue annually should be exempt from the tax. Conscientious economists understand the need to allocate this tax for the general benefit of the society and regard this tax as their obligation and not an impost.

According to information from media discussions with competent agents, a new Climate Change Adaptation Strategy will be implemented and stricter criteria for climate change deceleration will be imposed. Investment of about 70 million euro annually is predicted - justifiably so, because damage is estimated at over 80 million euro annually. Whether there will be a change in the attitude towards the forestry profession and forests, which have a crucial impact on climate change, remains to be seen. In the hope of better treatment of the forestry profession and engineering professions in general, which are the only ones to generate additional value, we wish our readers Merry Christmas and a Happy and Successful Year 2018.

Editorial Board