

The Hungarian Team of the Energyforest Project Held an Open Workshop in Budapest, on March 31, 2004.

ONE PAGE SUMMARY

The national project teams of the Energyforest project held a series of open workshops in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary to present their views before a carefully selected audience made up of entrepreneurs, academics, and public officials. These events provided an ample opportunity to expose a wide range of maturing ideas, on how to promote biomass planting, and alternative energy use.

The forum for Hungarian biomass professionals and enthusiasts took place in Budapest, on March 31, 2004. More than seventy organisations and interested individuals attended the workshop surpassing even the most optimistic expectations of the organisers. The event was jointly hosted by GEOMONTAN, co-ordinator of the Energyforest project, and the Budapest chapter of the Hungarian Agrarian Chamber.

Mr. Janos Horvath co-ordinator, by giving a detailed account of the project, set the keynote of the session, and Mr Laszlo Adam offered a lecture on research methodology. The consecutive lectures represented a wide range of approaches, and were delivered by leading academics, entrepreneurs, and senior level public officials from Hungary and Austria. All presentations were thorough and colourful, and followed by a vivid discussion.

Based on the Budapest workshop some generalisations can be made:

- Alternative energy, and biomass, in particular, *has recently become a hot topic* in Hungary, and in other Central European countries.
- The share of RES in the Hungarian energy-supply mix is very low, and its structure is seriously inadequate. The government *should subsidise much more alternative energy* and biomass experiments, and investments. The current level of support has only a marginal effect, and alternative energy is far too expensive.
- Although, the potential is there, there are still *substantial legal obstacles to overcome*. For instance, the legal standing of energy-forests is unclear, we do not know whether it is legal or illegal to conduct short-rotation forestry operations, or whether it is legally classified as an agricultural or forestry operation.
- The domestic and European regulatory framework is too complicated and not well understood. Voluntary *professional organisations are not well informed* about pending legislative changes and opinion requests.
- Alternative energy and biomass related initiatives are often *sharply criticised by the Hungarian green movement* and other grassroots organisations.
- Beside favourable natural conditions, a more democratic and *decentralised government structure should be an important prerequisite* for moving ahead faster, as it is shown by the Austrian examples.

Considering the great success of the event the organisers decided to hold two more sessions about the Hungarian prospects of alternative energy, in the near future. For more details and a complete listing of the participants, please contact us at geomontan@axelero.hu.