



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

Employment and Social Governance  
Social dialogue

## SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEES FOR FURNITURE and WOODWORKING

15 October 2021  
Joint working group meeting  
MINUTES

### *FURNITURE SPECIFIC TOPICS*

Chair : Kees HOOGENDIJK

#### **1. Opening of the meeting – Adoption of the agenda – Adoption of minutes**

The agenda of the meeting was adopted. The minutes of the plenary meeting dd. 5 May 2021 were approved. The committee welcomed Camilla SMORRA, who recently joined EFIC.

#### **2. Industry policy**

a) Maila PUOLAMAA presented the Industrial Strategy Update (ISU), which is necessary in order to bring it in line with the main objectives of the Green Deal. She particularly referred to the Renovation Wave and Bauhaus, both of particular importance for the sector. ISU also takes into account new initiatives, such as the Single Market Emergency Instrument, the Green and Digital Transition, and is related to the European Green Deal Winter Package, supposed to be presented in December, containing a proposal against deforestation and forest degradation, as well as a proposal on Restoring Sustainable Carbon Cycles.

The transition pathways are a co-creation project, including a public consultation for key areas, such as construction, textiles and mobility. Workshops will start next year. It is key to build up the connection between stakeholders, and to have a comprehensive view on financing. Attention is paid to SMEs, their financing and their capacity to develop the necessary skills.

The Sustainable Products Initiative is also of major importance for the sector.

Gabriella KEMENDI called for bilateral discussions on the pathways, in order to define which pathways the sector will have to follow. She also asked how the Commission intends to tackle shortages of raw material. Maila PUOLAMAA replied that the quick recovery supported by fiscal stimuli causes a huge demand, combined with demand from China. This caused a price increase, also due to the surge in export from Europe. Many new sawmills have started up, which boosts production. However, apparently China has a higher demand for logs than for wood products.

Rolf GEHRING inquired whether – given the increasing complexity of legislative acts and communications – tools or guides would be provided. He also asked for more consistency in Commission policies and initiatives. By way of example, he pointed at the ambition of the Renovation wave, which is not in line with the

low level of actual renovations. Maila PUOLAMAA agreed that reality checks are important.

- b) It was announced that EFIC President Edi SNAIDERO will give a presentation during Raw Materials Week.
- c) Under “Due diligence and chain liability”, Rolf GEHRING stressed that human rights and a level playing field need to play a role in economic activities.
- d) EFIC presented its position paper on the Sustainable Products Initiative, as well as the one from the Alliance for Flame Retardant Free Furniture.

### **3. AOB**

The CCMI gave a green light – without specific date – for an opinion on the furniture industry. This means that the initiative is no longer on the waiting list. External advisers to assist the study group will be needed.

## *JOINT MEETING WOODWORKING – FURNITURE*

Chair : Kees HOOGENDIJK

### **1. Opening of the meeting - Adoption of the agenda – Adoption of minutes**

The agenda of the meeting was adopted. The minutes of the joint meeting dd. 18 February 2021 were approved.

### **2. Industry Policy**

The minutes of the F-BI expert group dd. 9 June 2021 were accepted.

### **3. Education, training and skills initiatives**

- a) Rolf GEHRING introduced the EU Next Generation Plan. He explained that the initiative mainly uses existing budget, and gave an overview of the areas it covers, some of which are of interest for the “woodworking” and “furniture” committees. 37% of the budget is earmarked for climate projects, and 30% for digitalisation. Guidance for member states is included. This initiative is quite complex, and the participants were invited to study the relevant documents in view of discussions in a later meeting.
- b) Public consultation on upcoming proposal for a Council recommendation on Education for Environmental Sustainability : information point.
- c) Potential social partner initiatives: Rolf GEHRING stressed the importance of VET, and inquired about the possibility to create a VET platform under the social dialogue umbrella, possibly called “Erasmus for apprentices”. The social partners will discuss a proposal at secretariat level, and then contact the Commission.

Magdalena SIKOROWSKA presented the Pact for Skills as implemented in the construction sector, and asked whether and how a pact for the “woodworking” and “furniture” sectors could be created in the future. She proposed to discuss the challenges first, and then to see how the 5 key principles of the pact could be turned into commitments. For EFIC, Kees HOOGENDIJK agreed with the importance of the pact for the furniture sector, pointed at the organisation’s limited resources, and announced that the issue would have to be discussed in its board first. For CEI-Bois, David JOHNSON announced that the main challenges would be discussed internally.

#### **4. Health & Safety initiatives in the woodworking and furniture sector**

- a) Wood Dust Measurement: no progress to be announced.
- b) Wood Dust Joint Social Partner Action  
EFBWW proposed to engage in a joint action following the Wood Dust Conference, that dealt with the implementation of the revised exposure limit value. More in particular, EFBWW proposes to update the “Less Dust” brochure that was issued in the framework of an EU social dialogue project. CEI-Bois supported the initiative, and proposed to discuss this at secretariat level. EFIC will raise the issue in the board, including the financial implications.
- c) EU Strategic OSH Framework  
In his presentation, Rolf GEHRING referred to EU-OSHA data that indicated that 98% of work related fatalities are caused by health problems, and only 2% by accidents. He explained the main elements of the framework, and the social partners’ crucial role in finding commonly agreed solutions for challenges, based on subsidiarity. The Strategic OSH Framework needs to be put in practice, which can only be done by cooperation between social partners. He therefore proposed to put proposals and comments related to the framework in a joint social partner statement. For EFIC, Kees HOOGENDIJK was hesitant to engage in a joint statement, but he welcomed cooperation on the subject. David JOHNSON replied that internal discussions in CEI-Bois were needed, in order to obtain the views of technical experts at members’ level.
- d) Formaldehyde : the EFBWW-EPF project is ongoing and extended.
- e) EU-OSHA Campaign “Lighten the Load”  
Brenda O’Brien presented an update on the EU-OSHA Campaign on musculo-skeletal disorders (MSDs). The European Week for Safety and Health at Work took place on 25 October 2021, focal points are available at national level. A promotion kit is available in every EU language. In addition, two new OIRA tools have been developed : one for delivery workers and another one for people working in clients’ premises. Different aspects of MSDs are dealt with in the campaign : sedentary work, telework, psycho-social risks, diversity, etc.

#### **5. Gender Equality and Women’s Rights Worldwide.**

Mercedes LANDOLFI proposed possible common action in a gender policy group. Magdalena SIKOROWSKA informed the participants that EFBWW launched a questionnaire for its members, in particular to obtain information about existing gender clauses in contracts, case studies, gender issues, and best practices in the field of collective bargaining.

#### **6. SSD review and social partner consultations**

Not dealt with due to time constraints.

#### **7. AOB**

N/A

#### *WOODWORKING SPECIFIC TOPICS*

Chair : David JOHNSON

#### **1. Opening of the meeting - Adoption of the agenda – Adoption of minutes**

The agenda of the meeting was adopted. The minutes of the plenary meeting dd.6 May 2021 were approved.

## **2. Overview of the ongoing challenges of the woodworking industries**

### a) Wood for Bauhaus Alliance.

CEI-Bois, together with EFBWW, EPF and Innovawood is part of this alliance. A first on-line event was well attended and produced valuable outcomes. A more detailed document with policy recommendations was drafted, including recommendations for research. The possibility of a follow-up event was discussed.

### b) Proposal for a Directive : Sustainable Products Initiative

This initiative will revise the Eco-design directive. CEI-Bois took part in the public consultations.

### c) Skills and lack of work forces

Following up on the discussion in the morning session about a VET platform, CEI-Bois proposed to add the element of attractiveness, which is considered to be a main challenge. Students with the right education for the sector are needed. Rolf GEHRING reacted by proposing to use one of the joint meetings (or an additional one) to have discussions on a VET platform and/or an “Erasmus for apprentices” in the presence of experts and stakeholders. The new attractiveness project has several aspects: extrinsically there is a lack of recognition for craftsmanship. The intrinsic aspect is the sector’s duty to prove that it is able to adapt the work organisation to changes by means of e.g. digitalisation. The project will only work if it is based on the willingness of companies and their conviction about the usefulness. He also pleaded for a cross-sectoral approach.

Mercedes LANDOLFI added that past projects were more structured, so a platform would be useful to gather all the experiences. She also stressed the necessity to exchange information between workers from different countries, notably North and South Europe.

### d) Project proposal “Resilient Wood”

Teodora ILIEVA gave a brief summary of the work plan of the project, which was submitted under the “Support for social dialogue” call for proposals.

## **3. New Forest Strategy**

This new strategy was published in the summer of 2021. Next to a number of position papers, CEI-Bois launched a press release to express its position that “sustainable forest management” as a concept is not included in the strategy.

## **4. EFBWW/ETUI seminar on future of work**

EFBWW presented the seminar on 25 and 26 March which it organises together with ETUI on the future of work. The seminar deals with changes in the work performed in the relevant sectors. Apart from technological change, the discussions will focus on the political framework, the role of social dialogue, the role of social partners in VET structures, etc. CEI-Bois showed interest in participating.

## **5. Project proposal related to “Perspectives and Challenges of the Woodworking industries in Europe II (PCWIE-II).**

The social partners discussed the negative result of the evaluation by the Commission, and the possibility to submit a new project – with added value - under the upcoming call for proposals.

Kenneth JOHANSSON added that forests are not only meant as a source for biomass, but as a raw material for an important sector. He pleaded for more innovation and research to transform the sector. Rolf GEHRING pointed at the need to transmit social partners' criticism about the "one size fits all" approach regarding biodiversity when the forest strategy will be discussed in the European Parliament. Also the forest fires need to be addressed properly at EU level.

## **6. COP 26**

- a) COP 26 was hosted by the UK, in cooperation with Italy. The woodworking industry created a stand to promote the sector and its products. Also a manifesto, a promotional video and a speech were prepared.
- b) A joint social partners' declaration on their commitment to Europe's climate ambition and skills agendas will be the subject of a discussion at secretariat level.

## **7. Social Pillar Action Plan**

Rolf GEHRING gave a short overview of the components of the Action Plan (presentation attached). He described it as a way to join existing activities, albeit with some specific aims that provide an opening for reactions. Employment is an important aim, as well as training. In this respect, he mentioned the Pact for skills to which social partners could contribute.

## **8. Work programme 2022-2024**

This will be further developed at secretariat level, in order to adopt in the 2022 spring meeting.

## **9. AOB**

N/A

Annexes :

- List of participants
- Presentation : "Industrial Strategy Update – Furniture Industry"
- Presentation : "New Strategic OSH Framework"
- Presentation : "European Social Pillar Action Plan".

Annex : List of participants

<p><u>Employers</u></p> <p><b>CEI-Bois</b>          Silvia MELEGARI (EU)          Teodora ILIEVA (EU)          Anna DIJAN (HR)          Eva GLUCKMAN (SE)          David JOHNSON (SE)          Charlotta STEINWALL (SE)</p> <p><b>EFIC</b>          Gabriella KEMENDI (EU)          Camilla SMORRA (EU)          Pauline CLOUZET (FR)          Anna FREIJ (SE)          Kees HOOGENDIJK (NL)          Julio RODRIGO (ES)          Miroslava SIMEONOVA (BG)          William VERNON (IE)</p> <p><b>UEA</b>          Tomas LUKES (CZ)          Andreea PARASCHIV (RO)</p> <p>16 employers representatives          (6 woodworking, 10 furniture)          (4 EU, 12 MS)</p>	<p><u>Workers</u></p> <p><b>EFBW</b></p> <p>Tom DELEU (EU)          Rolf GEHRING (EU)          Magdalena SIKOROWSKA (EU)          Jean-Marc CANDILLE (FR)          Paula CRAVINA (EU)          Elise ANDSAGER (DK)          Fabio DEL CARRO (IT)          Christian FÖLZER (AT)          Mikko HAKKARAINEN (FI)          Kenneth JOHANSSON (SE)          Mercedes LANDOLFI (IT)          Ole-Kristian PAULSEN (NO)          Fabiola RICHTER (DE)          John VILLADSEN (DK)          Josef WINDPASSINGER (DE)</p> <p>15 workers representatives          (3 EU, 11 MS, 1 TC)</p>
<p><u>Other participants</u>          Brenda O'BRIEN (EU-OSHA)</p>	
<p><u>European Commission</u>          Maila PUOLAMAA (GROW)          Danny SCHEERLINCK (EMPL)          Anne-Pascale DE SMET (EMPL)</p>	