



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

Employment and Social Legislation, Social Dialogue
Social dialogue, Industrial Relations

SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE FOR WOODWORKING

27 May 2014
Plenary meeting
MINUTES

Chair : Coen VAN DER VEER (EFBWW)

1. Welcome and opening of the meeting, adoption of the agenda and of draft minutes of the Plenary Meeting dd. 13/11/2013

The agenda of the meeting was adopted with changes in the order of the items. The minutes of the previous plenary meeting were adopted.

2. The Bilbao Agency campaign on psycho-social risks at the workplace.

Ms O'BRIEN gave a presentation "Healthy Workplaces Manage Stress" (attached), in which the recently launched OSHA campaign was presented. Social partners were informed about the more holistic approach of the campaign, which is considered more valuable than individualisation. Examples of good practices can be found on the OSHA website, as well as the toolkits available. The social partners were invited to enter the partnership scheme, which includes specific support from the Agency. The workers' side found it positive that the campaign is not person based, but rather focuses on subsystems that fall under the competence of the social partners. Replying to a question of the employers, Ms O'BRIEN explained that an evaluation in line with benchmarks will take place only in the second year of the campaign, measuring also the impact of minor changes in the workplace. The social partners agreed to explore the possibility of joining the campaign after consultation of the relevant working group and their internal organisms.

3. 2014- 2015 Work Programme.

The draft work programme was accepted, provided that some changes would be made at secretariat level.

4. Mr Tricart's mail on strengthened effectiveness of resources for the working parties of the Woodworking and Furniture sectors

The participants were briefed on the outcomes of a meeting held with the Furniture EU social partners and representatives of the Commission the day before. It was proposed to develop a much more flexible structure for the meetings of the VET and OSH working groups of both committees, in order to remedy the apparent partial overlap between the respective work programmes, and to use the available resources more efficiently. It was made clear that the objective of the exercise is not to dissolve sectoral activities or to merge committees, but rather to react appropriately to the imposed budget restrictions for sectoral social dialogue actions, possibly making use of funds made available under a call for proposals. The issue requires follow-up at secretariat level.

5. Industry Policy Woodworking sector

Mr BUISSERET gave a presentation (attached) on a possible strategy following the publication of the Commission Blueprint for the Forest-Based Industries. He expressed his disappointment with the level of the document, taking into account that a genuine Commission Communication was adopted for the metal industry. He presented 11 areas of action in which increased awareness raising is necessary. These key areas will be elaborated in a manifesto from the industry, which would be presented to MEPs, asking for their support. In this context, he introduced the Wood Action Days, to be organised in the European Parliament 22-23 September 2014. The objective is to show the importance of the woodworking sector to newly elected MEPs, policy makers and other stakeholders. Mr GEHRING enquired about the possibilities to interact with the activities proposed, and possibly to develop joint positions on specific areas.

6. Report from the working party on VET

Participants were informed on the state of play of various projects :

a) Mr LAUWAERT presented the state of play of the project "Tackling Demographic Changes in the Woodworking Industry". A steering group was created that was able to identify five key areas of attention related to younger workers, i.e. attractiveness of the sector, regulatory initiatives, education, sectoral initiatives and company actions. Also, to keep older workers active, regulatory activities were identified, such as job flexibility, working conditions adequate to age, partial retirement, sustainable employability etc. Further steps will be the creation of a website and a booklet, and the organisation of a seminar.

b) On the sector skills council, Mr GEHRING informed the participants that no progress was booked. He proposed to await possible new views of the Commission before deciding on possible further steps.

c) On the "Bolster Up" project, an information point was presented since the Woodworking sector is not directly involved. This project of the furniture sector aims at developing European Core Qualifications" for cabinet-maker and upholsterers, taking into account relevant changes in these professions. In order to achieve this, it is intended to actively involve trainers.

7. Report from the OSH Working Group

a) The OSH Working Group received a reply from Commissioner ANDOR on its position regarding a new OSH Community Framework. According to Mr GEHRING, the letter was considered to be unsatisfactory and unclear by the members of the working group. Also the absence of a Commission initiative at the foreseen time calls for reaction. The delay in presenting a framework will forward the implementation thereof towards the new Commission. Consequently, the participants were invited to consider sending a joint position from the Construction, Furniture and Woodworking sectors to the new Commission. CEI-Bois did not object to including other sectors in a joint initiative.

b) Regarding the Wood Dust project, the brochure is available in 10 languages and it received positive feedback. No new proposal for additional languages is needed. As to the access to technical committee 142 of CEN, CEI-Bois could not report back.

8. EFBWW proposal for a joint statement on "National wage setting and EU governance/interference"

Mr GEHRING explained the background to this proposal by pointing at the increased interference of the troika when issuing recommendations to member-states in the context of the Country Specific Reports. He claimed that these recommendations often contain attempts to influence national wage setting, which is in breach with the Treaty, since this is a pure competence of member-states. He also referred to the right to strike and the freedom of collective bargaining of the social partners.

Therefore, he proposed to issue a joint position on the issue, drawing the parallel with the joint statement by the EU social partners of the metal, chemicals and textile sectors.

Since CEI-Bois could not discuss the proposal internally yet, they would define their position before summer.

9. AOB

a) Ms Isabelle BROSE of the European Panel Federation made a proposal for a joint project to be submitted under the social dialogue call for proposal. The project would cover challenges for the Woodworking industry, such as formaldehyde and the cascade use of wood. The project would include workshop discussions between employers and employees at national and EU levels. EFBWW reacted by saying that a project should cover the future of sector entirely and be more focussed on working conditions, work organisation and innovation.

b) Following a question by Mr KURTH on the impact of EU structural funds subsidies destined at Eastern Europe on the turnover of German companies, Mr GEHRING reacted that specific cases should be checked against the structural funds regulations. On the other hand, the Committee might study the possibilities to make increased use of structural funds in the context of the industrial policy for the sector.

Annexes :

- List of participants
- Presentation : "Healthy Workplaces Manage Stress"
- Presentation : "F-BI Strategy – Possible Joint Actions"