



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

Employment and Social Governance  
**Social dialogue**

**SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEES FOR FURNITURE  
and WOODWORKING**

**20 February 2020  
Joint working group meeting  
MINUTES**

*FURNITURE SPECIFIC TOPICS*

Chair : Mr Kenneth JOHANSSON

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

The agenda of the meeting was adopted, with an additional point on Brexit under AOB. The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2019 were approved. The Chair introduced Mr Tom DELEU, who was recently nominated General Secretary of EFBWW. Mr DELEU praised the good cooperation between social partners in the committee.

**2. Social dialogue work programme**

Mr GEHRING presented the 2020-2024 social dialogue work programme. The work programme is balanced, and it can also be useful in contacts with external stakeholders. Ms KEMENDI proposed to have a mid-term review in 2022, and to attach an annex highlighting the 2020 Commission work programme, and priorities such as the Green Deal. Mr HOOGENDIJK proposed to have a kind of “rolling programme”, adjusted to upcoming initiatives. The chair confirmed that new priorities would be taken into account. EFBWW delegates welcomed these proposals

The work programme was adopted.

**3. Flame retardants**

Ms KEMENDI informed the participants about recent developments in the UK and Ireland. The UK intends to scrap the existing furniture flammability regulations, and then organise a public consultation. The creation of a new standard was announced as well. In Ireland, a public consultation has been organised on the revision of the Furniture Flammability Regulations. The Alliance for Flame Retardant Free Furniture released a position paper in April 2020, accompanied by a press release, and established contacts with MEPs and Commission decision-makers. Mr HOOGENDIJK claimed that the use of chemical flame-retardants is an impediment for the switch to a circular industry. Support from MEPs and from trade unions will be needed. Mr GEHRING proposed to form an alliance with the MEPs against Cancer group that would address targeted questions to the Commission. Mr HOOGENDIJK suggested including references to the Green Public Procurement criteria in those questions.

#### 4. **Digitalisation in the furniture sector**

The social partners discussed a draft joint statement on digitalisation, developed by EFBWW and EFIC, with support from UEA. Mr HOOGENDIJK stressed the importance of prioritising skills; Mr HARTMANN stated that qualifications and upskilling rather than re-training are essential. The design of machinery is an important step with a high impact on skills. Ms LANDOLFI pointed at the risk that digitisation would become a pretext for dismissals, and asked for solutions. Mr RODRIGO suggested including references to the DIGIT-Fur project in the document. Mr LUKES added that digitalisation of the European furniture industry was the best answer to the consequences of the US-China trade war. It was agreed to have a consultation round at secretariat level, and adopt the document at the next meeting.

#### 5. **CCMI (Commission Consultative pour les Mutations Industrielles)**

Mr GEHRING informed the meeting that a possible opinion on the furniture industry is on the reserve list. Since it is not on the priority list, no study group will be created at present.

#### 6. **AOB**

- EFIC proposed to open up a discussion on Brexit, since it will affect the labour market. Mr GEHRING proposed to find a keynote speaker for the plenary meeting.
- CENFIM presented a proposal for a shared value project, called “Furn-CSR” (presentation attached), possibly to be presented under the “social dialogue” call. Mr HOOGENDIJK asked for a more embedded description, since the proposal is somewhat vague at this stage. He suggested to present a full description as a normal agenda point in a next meeting; UEA agreed.

### *JOINT MEETING WOODWORKING – FURNITURE*

Chair : Mr Kenneth JOHANSSON

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

The agenda was adopted. The minutes of the meeting dd. 21 October 2019 were approved.

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

The agenda point was only partially covered, since DG GROW’s representative could not attend the meeting. CEI-Bois expressed their disappointment, also about a meeting with the responsible Head of Unit in DG GROW; they feel that the concerns of the industry are insufficiently taken into account. The Forest-based Industry (F-BI) vision document 2050, although drafted at the request of the Commission, is not mentioned in recent Commission documents. EFIC also mentioned that in the Cabinet Breton no specific member is in charge of the F-BI. EFBWW stressed the need to point at the importance of the F-BI sectors and forestry, focussing on its products as well as on the employment factor. The need for wood is growing. The sectors are central, and an important driver for change. So there is need for better communication and sector positioning.

#### 3. **VET**

- a) Bolster Up II

Ms SIKOROWSKA (EFBWW) gave a presentation (attached) on the project, funded by the social dialogue budget line. Mr POÇAS welcomed the results of the project, since there is a lot of inconsistency in the description of profiles in Europe. He added that the project is important in terms of communication about the sectors.

b) Sawyer

Mr RODRIGO (CENFIM) gave a state of play of the project. Regular updates can be found on the project website : [www.circularfurniture-sawyer.eu](http://www.circularfurniture-sawyer.eu)

c) New skills agenda for Europe

Mr GEHRING informed the meeting about the ongoing consultation process on the Commission paper; he claimed that the proposal mainly repeats past initiatives, and asks for confirmation of the results. EFIC participated to the consultation, and stressed the skills gap in the furniture sector which should be addressed. Also the need to modernise VET was mentioned.

#### **4. European Labour Authority (ELA)**

The point was postponed to the next meeting.

#### **5. Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)**

a) New Bilbao Campaign

Ms O'Brien presented OSHA's new Healthy Workplaces campaign 2020-2022 "Lighten the Load", focussing on musculo-skeletal disorders (MSDs) (presentation attached). She invited the social partners to become a partner.

b) Wood dust

Mr GENTNER from the German "Berufsgenossenschaft Holz" gave a presentation "Wood dust measurements in Europe" (attached). He invited national social partners to take part in the measurement project, which was already introduced during the "Wood Dust Conference".

#### **6. European elections and outreach**

Following up on previous discussions, the social partners agreed that – even after the elections – the point remains topical. It will be put on the agenda regularly.

#### **7. AOB**

a) EFIC informed the meeting on the communication "A Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions", presented on 14 January 2020.

b) The meeting thanked Wilfried HARTMANN and John CAMPBELL for their many years of participation in the committee, and wished them all the best with their retirement.

### *WOODWORKING SPECIFIC TOPICS*

Chair : Mr Kenneth JOHANSSON

#### **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. 21 October 2019 were approved.

#### **2. Work Programme 2020-2021**

The discussion started with EFBWW's question whether a four-year work programme (like in the furniture committee) would be more in line with the Commission work programme and with the complete preparation, the implementation time of projects and other activities on specific topics. CEI-Bois, however, is of the opinion that a slender work programme is more in line with a 2-year focus.

Regarding the amendments proposed by CEI-Bois, EFBWW announced that it will discuss the amendments in its standing committee "Wood". More in particular, it was agreed that discussions on the Commission's OSH initiatives should be maintained, in order to be able to address new legislative initiatives, without the need to produce a joint opinion. The same reasoning goes for other transversal subjects, such as innovation and digitisation.

The discussion will be continued at secretariat level.

### **3. PCWIE follow-up project**

CEI-Bois introduced a future project, following on the previous PCWIE project. This new project would focus on attractiveness of the sector. The previous project produced an interesting study performed in Portugal on perception and attractiveness of the sector. The new project intends to transpose the methodology of that study; for the new project, the consortium will include a partner from Bulgaria, which is in the top 10 in terms of production.

### **4. Wood Dust : follow-up**

This agenda point was postponed until the next meeting.

### **5. Implementation of the action guide on formaldehyde.**

Mr GEHRING introduced this project. It is linked to the PCWIE project, which produced – inter alia - the "Action guide on formaldehyde", an agreement signed by EFBWW and EPF. The agreement has a political aspect, since at national level it has to be agreed upon by the affiliated members. At technical level, the agreement has to be translated into a number of member states' languages. Mr WIJNENDAELE announced that EPF has created a formaldehyde task force, which provides support to an envisaged "train the trainers" workshop and other implementation workshops at national level. He also invited the trade unions to participate in the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) activities, which would strengthen the position of the sector and the formaldehyde guide.

### **6. AOB**

CEI-Bois debriefed the meeting about the "Club du Bois" event, attended by 15 MEPs. The president of the Club du Bois will be Simona Bonafé. Ms LANDOLFI, who attended the event, welcomed the nomination of Ms Bonafé. She also confirmed the importance of addressing high-level decision maker. Also Mr POÇAS expressed his enthusiasm about the Club du Bois, which will be used as a skeleton for further contacts. It is an important instrument in tackling the crisis.

Annexes :

- List of participants

- Presentation : “Furn CSR”
- Presentation : "Bolster Up II"
- Presentation : “Project status – SAWYER”
- Presentation : "Lighten the Load".

Annex : List of participants

<p><u>Employers</u></p> <p><b>CEI-Bois</b> Mr Patrizio ANTONICOLI (EU) Ms Teodora ILIEVA (EU) Mr David JOHNSSON (SE) Mr Vitor POÇAS (PT) Mr Markus RING (DE)</p> <p><b>EFIC</b> Ms Gabriella KEMENDI (EU) Ms Giorgia MURGIA (EU) Ms Paola CHINI (IT) Ms Pauline CLOUZET (FR) Mr Michele FALCONE (IT) Mr Kees HOOGENDIJK (NL) Mr William VERNON (IE)</p> <p><b>UEA</b> Mr David PAVLIS (EU) Mr Tomas LUKES (EU) Ms Andreea PARASCHIV (RO) Mr Julio RODRIGO (ES)</p> <p>16 employers representatives (5 woodworking, 11 furniture) (6 women, 10 men) (6 EU, 10 MS)</p>	<p><u>Workers</u></p> <p><b>EFBWW</b> Mr Tom DELEU (EU) Mr Rolf GEHRING (EU) Ms Ermira BEHRI (IT) Mr John CAMPBELL (DE) Mr Fabio DEL CARRO (IT) Mr Hubert GENTNER (DE) Mr Mikko HAKKARAINEN (FI) Mr Wilfried HARTMANN (DE) Mr Kenneth JOHANSSON (SE) Ms Mercedes LANDOLFI (IT) Ms Fabiola RICHTER (DE)</p> <p>11 workers representatives (3 women, 8 men) (2 EU, 9 MS)</p>
<p><u>Other participants</u> Ms Brenda O'BRIEN (EU-OSHA)</p>	
<p><u>European Commission</u> Mr Danny SCHEERLINCK (EMPL.A.2)</p>	