



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

Employment and Social Governance
Social dialogue

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

**21 October 2019
Joint working group meeting
MINUTES**

FURNITURE SPECIFIC TOPICS

Chair : Mr Kees HOOGENDIJK

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

The agenda of the meeting was adopted. The Chair introduced Ms Gabriella KEMENDI, recently appointed as EFIC's Secretary General. The minutes of the meeting dd. 15 May 2019 were adopted with the changes in point 5 proposed by EFIC.

2. EFIC Manifesto 2019-2024

Ms KEMENDI presented this document, which stresses EFIC's objective to create a more competitive furniture industry. The document contains 6 key actions to that aim. Mr GEHRING confirmed that EFBWW considers it is possible to work on joint actions in the fields mentioned in the manifesto. For UEA, Mr LUKES welcomed the EFIC Manifesto and pointed at the importance to present a clear view on the furniture industry, and to disseminate the document to the right target audience.

3. Flame retardants

Ms KEMENDI claimed that at this stage it is important to convey new messages, pointing at the old-fashioned approach to fire safety through the use of toxic flame retardants and their ineffectiveness. Mr GEHRING suggested involving the "MEPs against cancer" group. At EU-level, a possible precedent could also be created under the Eco-Design Directive, which banned halogenated flame retardants in electronic displays. Reference was also made to the joint letter from the social partners to the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) to extend the current restriction on a number of flame retardants from residential furniture to office furniture

4. Digitalisation in the furniture sector

EFBWW announced that the first draft of the joint opinion on digitalisation was not ready yet. Further work will be done at secretariat level. Mr HOOGENDIJK suggested including the findings of the DIGIT-Fur project, with a reference to new skills. Ms KEMENDI proposed to establish a link with the circular economy. In this context, Ms PARASCHIV (APMR, Romanian employers) referred to the Horizon 2020 funded L4MS project, which aims at supporting the development of new

logistics automation solutions in manufacturing, more in particular in SMEs (www.l4ms.eu)

5. CCMI (Commission Consultative pour les Mutations Industrielles)

Mr GEHRING reiterated the conditions for submitting a new proposal for a CCMI opinion on the furniture industry. Regarding the subject of such a proposal, several ideas were mentioned, such as “Wood as raw material”, “Effects of climate change on the furniture industry”, “Harmonisation of the internal market”, etc. The social partners agreed that their proposal for a CCMI opinion had to be dealt with asap, and that external experts had to be selected to support the rapporteur’s and the co-rapporteur’s work.

(Note : on 22 November 2019 the social partners were informed that the preparatory meeting of the workers group of the CCMI agreed that the furniture sector could introduce a proposal for an opinion. The fact that unions and employer federations proposed it as a joint initiative had a positive influence on this decision).

6. Social dialogue work programme

The social partners adopted their work programme 2020-2024, covering a 4-year period. This has the advantage that it is more in line with the Commission mandate. It was also agreed to report regularly on progress made, possibly combined with a mid-term review.

7. European elections and outreach

The social partners recognised the importance of contacting newly-elected MEPs. Taking into account the priorities of the sector (e.g. flame retardants, digitalisation and its effects to the sector, a greening economy, circular economy, the “MEPs against cancer” intergroup and relevant MEPs from the ENVI and ITRE committees especially should certainly be approached.

8. US-China Trade

In his presentation (attached) Mr LUKES (UEA) warned about the trade war between the US and China, and the possible increased import of Chinese furniture in the EU. He pointed at the need to consider levying customs on furniture produced in China. In addition, there would be a different impact on old and new member states, given the different structure and importance of their furniture industry. He asked the other social partners to draft a joint opinion addressed to the Commission, taking into account the above elements. The workers’ side replied that they do not see advantages in limiting free trade, but would prefer to put the focus on fair trade. Also, they claim that many problems of the EU furniture sector are due to internal causes, and that the importance of trade with the US should not be neglected. EFIC also pointed to the importance of free trade for the sector and to the fact that barriers should be lifted rather than created.

9. AOB

CENFIM presented its proposal for a possible new project on shared values in the furniture industry (powerpoint attached).

JOINT MEETING WOODWORKING – FURNITURE

Chair : Mr Vitor POÇAS

1. Opening of the meeting - Adoption of the agenda.

The agenda was adopted.

2. Industry policy

a) Mr WALL (DG GROW) explained the composition of the Forest-Based Industries (F-BI) expert group, based on Commission Decision C (2014) 4321. He stressed the importance of the expert group in that it enables the members to speak with one voice as a sector. In this context, he also invited the social partners to approach the new Commission, and possibly to present dossiers of particular sectoral importance to the respective cabinets.

b) He then gave an overview of the most important Commission initiatives with an impact on the woodworking and furniture sectors :

- Regarding trade negotiations, the Mercosur agreement was adopted;
- The revision of the Renewable Energy Directive 2018/2001/EU entered into force in December 2018. It establishes a new binding renewable energy target for the EU for 2030 of at least 32%, with a clause for a possible upwards revision by 2023.
- There are ongoing efforts to integrate environmental considerations in order to mobilise finance for sustainable growth.
- The "Deforestation Communication" was adopted in July 2019 (COM/2019/352 final).

Mr POÇAS enquired about the intentions of the Commission to deal with the increasing number of forest fires. Mr GEHRING wondered whether a task force is on the EU's agenda. Mr WALL replied that a European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS) exists since 1998. He added that forests are member states' responsibility, which also explains the existence of initiatives on floods at regional level without an EU-level equivalent.

Replying to Mr POÇAS' remark that member states have their own rules and standards related to the circular economy, Mr WALL pointed at the guidance document on cascading use of biomass, which includes good practices on the use of woody biomass. The document was published in August 2019.

3. VET : Sawyer project

CENFIM presented an update on this project (slides attached), which deals with the effects of the circular economy on the furniture sector. Mr LUKES found it positive that the issue of "safety at work" was included in the project, since the circular economy may have an impact on that aspect of working conditions. Mr GEHRING pointed at the qualitative outputs of the "Digit-Fur" project and the transferability of methodology and data from that project.

4. Bolster Up II

Mr GEHRING introduced this project, based on a comparison of curricula and resulting in a set of European core qualifications. The profession of "joiner" was included in this follow-up project. The final conference will take place on 18 March 2020 in Brussels. Mr POÇAS added that AIMMP used the vocabulary from the project already in reformulations of collective bargaining agreements in Portugal.

5. Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)

a) Ms KEMENDI reminded of the third revision of the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive (CMD), which covers i.e. OELs for formaldehyde. The European Parliament was of the opinion that diesel emissions also needed to be included, finally accepted during the triologue negotiations. EFBWW is evaluating to what

extent its sectors are concerned by diesel emissions. Regarding the CAD Directive, [an ongoing public consultation on OELs for diisocyanates](#) was also mentioned, which will feed into a RAC opinion.

- b) Building on the success of the Wood Dust Conference, the social partners discussed possible follow-up activities, such as joint social partner activities, collaboration with manufacturers, or actions on measurement strategies. For the latter point, a German comparative project was mentioned; Mr GENTNER from the German "Berufsgenossenschaft Holz" is prepared to attend the next meeting. Mr VILLADSEN enquired whether the "Less Dust" brochure from 2010 could be promoted.

6. European elections and outreach

The social partners discussed possible joint initiatives to contact newly elected MEPs. The new F-BI policy will soon be presented, and could be used as a starting point. EFIC considers using their manifesto for such contacts, whilst paying attention to address the right MEP, depending on the subject. CEI-Bois will organise the "Club du Bois" in the European Parliament in January 2020, which may be presided by MEP Simona Bonafè. EFBWW suggested using "Wood in Construction" as a subject for discussion with MEPs. EFIC showed interest to join in a possible initiative.

7. AOB

Mr LUKES announced his upcoming departure as Secretary General of UEA. Mr David PAVLIS, who said being interested in improved collaboration on various domains of common interest, will replace him on 1 January 2020. Mr POÇAS thanked Mr LUKES for his involvement in EU social dialogue, and welcomed Mr PAVLIS.

WOODWORKING SPECIFIC TOPICS

Chair : Mr Vitor POÇAS

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. 14 May 2019 were approved.

2. Work Programme 2020-2021

The social partners had a debate on their work programme 2020-2021. They also discussed the possibility of a work programme, covering a 5-year period, which has the advantage that it is more in line with the Commission mandate, and with the preparation and implementation of projects. Mr ANTONICOLI agreed to develop a slender work programme at secretariat level in order to make it more realistic and easier to finalize. In addition, he proposed to organise more regular short meetings between secretariats.

3. PCWIE follow-up project

CEI-Bois introduced the subject by pointing at the limited geographical scope (Portugal only) of the sectoral attractiveness study under the PCWIE project. He proposed to launch a follow-up project. EFBWW proposed, building on the PCWIE

success, to prepare a follow up based on links between work organisation, changes in the technical infrastructure, the attractiveness of the sector, apprenticeships, and mobility.

4. Wood Dust : follow-up

This agenda point was already dealt with in the joint meeting.

5. Raw materials week

This event, scheduled on 18 November 2019 is particularly important because the Commission presented the new 2050 F-BI strategy in the presence of sectoral social partners.

6. VET

The We-wooders project was not selected for funding by the Commission.

7. Implementation of the action guide on formaldehyde

CEI-Bois and EFBWW submitted a project under the "Support for social dialogue" call for proposals. They were informed on 9 December 2019 that the project was selected for co-funding.

8. AOB

N/A

Annexes :

- List of participants
- Presentation "US vs China : trade war in furniture ?"
- Presentation : "Shared value project"
- Presentation : "Project status – SAWYER".

Annex : List of participants

<p><u>Employers</u></p> <p>CEI-Bois Mr Patrizio ANTONICOLI (EU) Ms Margherita MICELI (EU) Mr Anders CANEMYR (SE) Ms Eva GLÜCKMAN (SE) Mr Vitor POÇAS (PT)</p> <p>EFIC Ms Gabriella KEMENDI (EU) Ms Giorgia MURGIA (EU) Ms Anna FREIJ (SE) Mr Kees HOOGENDIJK (NL) Ms Giada PEDEMONTE (IT) Ms Miroslava SIMEONOVA (BG)</p> <p>UEA Mr Tomas LUKES (EU) Ms Andreea PARASCHIV (RO) Mr Martin PAVLIS (CZ) Mr Julio RODRIGO (ES) Mr Joaquin SOLANA (ES)</p> <p>16 employers representatives (5 woodworking, 11 furniture) (8 women, 8 men) (5 EU, 11 MS)</p>	<p><u>Workers</u></p> <p>EFBWW Mr Rolf GEHRING (EU) Ms Elise ANDSAGER (DK) Mr John CAMPBELL (DE) Mr Fabio DEL CARRO (SE) Mr Wilfried HARTMANN (DE) Mr Kenneth JOHANSSON (SE) Mr John VILLADSEN (DK) Mr Paul WHEATLEY (UK)</p> <p>8 workers representatives (1 women, 7 men) (1 EU, 7 MS)</p>
<p><u>Other participants</u> N/A</p>	
<p><u>European Commission</u> Mr Jeremy WALL (DG GROW) Mr Danny SCHEERLINCK (EMPL.A.2)</p>	