



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

Working conditions and Social dialogue
Social dialogue

SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE FOR FURNITURE

5 May 2021

Plenary meeting (videoconference)

Draft MINUTES

Chair : Kees HOOGENDIJK

1. Welcome-opening of the meeting

The chair welcomed Mr Edi SNAIDERO, President of EFIC. Mr SNAIDERO pointed at the importance of a sustainable furniture industry. He also stressed his interest in social dialogue, which serves the common interest of both sides of industry, and generates important benefits for the sector.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda of the meeting was adopted.

3. Adoption of the draft minutes of the joint working group meeting dd. 18 February 2021.

The minutes were adopted.

4. Circular Economy

a) In her presentation of the Circular Economy Action Plan (attached), Maila PUOLAMAA (DG GROW) provided an overview of its objectives, its links with the Sustainable Product Policy Framework, and the 35 planned underlying actions. She also pointed at the importance of the taxonomy for sustainable finance, and announced that the Eco-label will be extended.

For EFBWW, Rolf GEHRING noted that the CEAP combines several policy areas, and pays particular attention to wood recycling; this requires organising the process and including the right to repair and a stronger focus on maintenance. The need to develop the capability to repair shows a clear link to education.

The employers recognised the opportunities for the future of the industry, but expressed their concern about the cost for the sector and possible price increases (Tomas LUKES). They also highlighted the importance of a reasonable timeframe for the industry to adapt (Gabriella KEMENDI). Kees HOOGENDIJK added that support for and empowerment of SMEs will be needed; he also made a claim for enforcement of customs rules, notably with regards to products imported from China.

Maila PUOLAMAA replied that the development of an industrial policy is an ongoing process with several approaches being under consideration; the level of granularity of the options is still open. Regarding possible price increases, one

should also take into account the lifetime and durability of a product; if materials can be recycled for a new purpose, this may lower the price of a product. Support for SMEs can be found under InvestEU. On enforcement of rules, she stated that they also apply to China, which has a clear interest in the EU market as a trade partner.

- b) It was not possible to come to a Joint Statement on the Green Deal and the CEAP in the limited time-span available. The social partners will keep it on the agenda.
- c) EFIC is preparing a position paper on the Sustainable products initiative to support the EFIC reply to the consultation that will close on 9 June.

5. Industry Policy

- a) Rolf GEHRING informed the meeting's participants on the New Industrial Strategy for Europe. The update of the strategy was presented on the day of the meeting, so it was impossible to study it. The social partners agreed to check the strategy for points of interest, and keep it on the agenda.
- b) EFBWW expressed their disappointment on DG GROW's absence for the agenda point on the Forest-based Industries Expert Group. In their view, the social partners should be informed about DG GROW's intentions for the functioning of the Expert Group.
- c) The CCMI did – for the second time – not accept the application of the furniture industry for an Own Initiative Opinion. Rolf GEHRING will gather information on the requirements for a possible new application.
- d) The EU Initiative on Due Diligence and Chain Liability is being prepared by the Commission; the European Parliament has issued a resolution on the subject. The legal framework should be presented end of this year by the Commission. There are outstanding questions, such as the threshold for being recognised as SME, the nature of the rights to be respected, the reporting obligations, involvement of workers and their representatives, etc...
- e) Regarding the Bauhaus initiative, the woodworking sectors created an alliance. Bauhaus is not only about wood in construction, but it also relates to design and circularity. The furniture sector is thus an important stakeholder.

6. Health and Safety initiatives

- a) Rolf GEHRING updated the participants on EFBWW's attendance at the dedicated hearing, organised by the Commission. Both sides of industry could express their views on the EU Strategic Framework 2021 – 2027. In spite of a genuine common ground, there are also different views. For instance, for the workers' side the legal framework needs an update in order to address permanent changes in the working environment. For the employers (as well as for the Commission) the implementation of existing legislation is more important. Kees HOOGENDIJK mentioned that EFIC did not participate, since it was not invited as a member of the BusinessEurope delegation.
- b) Regarding Wood Dust, the German measurement project did not show progress, due to COVID. In the context of EU social dialogue, EFBWW proposed to discuss a five-step proposal which takes into account similarities with the woodworking sector.
- c) COVID-19 : prevention concepts for the furniture sector. There seems to be little examples of specific guidance on prevention in the furniture sector. EFIC raised

doubts about the necessity to develop guidance at EU level; they will consult their national members to obtain information on national measures.

d) EU OSHA Campaign on MSD.

Back pain can be caused by bad posture, lifting heavy loads, repetitive movements or stress. EFBWW is partner in the EU OSHA Campaign, and proposes to follow the campaign and identify a possible area of activity.

7. Vocational Education and Training

a) Rolf GEHRING pointed at the various EU initiatives in the field of skills. These are often addressing transformation and restructuring of sectors. However, some of them deal with new skills that depend on work organisation, and the design of new technology and the VET system. The Blueprint brings together social partners, giving them the possibility to identify future skills needs. The Pact for Skills will transform knowledge into specific activities for the sector. Building on previous activities and projects, it should be possible to come to an agreement at sectoral level. Also, EFBWW proposes to consider developing an Erasmus for apprentices.

Edi SNAIDERO pointed at the difficulty to find skilled workforce. So activities in this field are key, notably communication on the quality, image and attractiveness of the sector.

b) Julio RODRIGO (CENFIM) showed a presentation on the outputs of the SAWYER project (attached). He also referred to the recently started CSR project that aims to increase sectoral attractiveness by enhancing CSR.

8. AOB

a) Mercedes LANDOLFI informed the meeting that EFBWW sent a proposal for long-term and short-term joint actions in the field of gender equality. The proposal is based on a questionnaire and covers different aspects, such as health and safety, conciliation instruments, career and promotion possibilities, etc. It was agreed to discuss this further at secretariat level.

b) In the field of the representativeness study, the consultation of national social partner organisations is ongoing.

Annexes :

- List of participants
- Presentations
 - o The Circular Economy Action Plan
 - o Main outcomes of the Sawyer project.

- Annex : List of participants

<p><u>Employers</u></p> <p>EFIC Edi SNAIDERO (EU) Gabriella KEMENDI (EU) Giorgia MURGIA (EU) Paolo CHINI (IT) Pauline CLOUZET (FR) James CORBETT (IE) Leva ERELE (LV) Anna FREIJ (SE) Kees HOOGENDIJK (NL) Alexander OSWALD (DE) Didde RISHOJ (DK) Miroslava SIMEONOVA (BG)</p> <p>UEA Tomas LUKES (CZ) Andreea PARASCHIV (RO) Julio RODRIGO (ES)</p> <p>15 employers' representatives (3 EU, 12 MS)</p>	<p><u>Workers</u></p> <p>EFBWW Rolf GEHRING (EU) Magdalena SIKOROWSKA (EU) Laetitia BALDAN (BE) Juan BARRERO (ES) Francisco CUADRADO (ES) Fabio DEL CARRO (IT) Mikko HAKKARAINEN (FI) Kenneth JOHANSSON (SE) Mercedes LANDOLFI (IT) Ole-Kristian PAULSEN (NO) Fabiola RICHTER (DE) John VILLADSEN (DK) Josef WINDPASSINGER (DE)</p> <p>13 workers' representatives (2 EU, 10 MS, 1 TC)</p>
<p><u>Other participants</u></p>	
<p><u>European Commission</u> Maila PUOLAMAA (DG GROW) Danny SCHEERLINCK (DG EMPL) Jiri SIKORA (DG EMPL)</p>	