



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

Employment and Social Governance
Social dialogue

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

**26 September 2018
Joint working group meeting
MINUTES**

Chair : Mr Kenneth JOHANSSON

FURNITURE SPECIFIC TOPICS

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

The agenda of the meeting was adopted. The minutes of the meeting dd. 21 March 2018 were adopted, as well as the minutes of the plenary meeting dd. 24 May 2018.

2. Flame retardants

Following EFIC's proposal for a draft joint position on the subject of flame-retardants in furniture and their toxic aspects during the previous meeting, a number of reactions were taken into account. The social partners agreed that practical actions at national level are needed in order to start the process of informing governments on new technologies. Therefore, the document was adopted. For EFBWW Mr GEHRING stressed the need for a new meeting of the EU alliance www.safefurniture.eu in order to come to measurable data related to the impact of flame retardants on workers in the production process. He also proposed to send the information to OSHA and wondered whether "MEPs against cancer" should be involved. For EFIC, Ms DESSI pointed at the historical decision of the Californian authorities to forbid the sale of products containing flame retardants.

3. Work Programme 2018-2019

The social partners discussed the final version of the work programme, with a view to identify the most important activities in 2019. Mr GEHRING proposed to focus more on joint statements in the future. Ms DESSI stressed the importance of industrial policy and asked to have regular information points on the circular economy. She also pleaded for harmonisation of national rules and social issues, to which Mr JOHANSSON reacted by saying that harmonisation should be towards the best result achievable. Mr LUKES agreed with EFIC's proposal to put the circular economy in the picture.

4. Expert Group for Forest-Based Industries (F-BI)

Mr GEHRING informed the meeting that the CCMI adopted an information report on Europe's woodworking competitiveness strategy on 25 September 2018 (CCMI/159). He called for sectoral initiatives to promote wood as a raw material for a broad range

of industries and products. Along the same lines, Mr HOOGENDIJK, speaking for EFIC, asked for increased efforts to promote the industry at various levels.

5. VET projects

CENFIM presented an update on the DIGIT-Fur project, which will be concluded in a final conference in Barcelona on 7 February 2019. Furthermore, the DITRAMA project, focussed on training material for Digital Transformation Manager, has been selected for funding under Erasmus+. Presentations on these projects are attached. The SAWYER project was presented under VP/2018/001 (update : the project was selected for funding).

Mr DOOM (Woodwize) presented the WOODUAL project (powerpoint attached), selected for funding under Erasmus+. The project deals with VET in the woodworking and furniture sectors, focussing on market trends and personal qualifications and aiming at facilitating the mobility of apprentices. The project also includes a practical mobility component, which faced some issues related to insufficient language knowledge of youngsters involved.

6. AOB

- UEA and EFIC agreed that the chair of the Committee will be held by EFIC in 2019 since the secretariat of this organisation is based in Brussels. See attached note for a detailed explanation.
- EFIC informed the meeting that it became member of the “Industry for Europe” coalition.

JOINT MEETING WOODWORKING – FURNITURE

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

The agenda and the minutes of the 21 March 2018 meeting were adopted.

2. Industry policy

a) Forest Strategy

Mr WALL (DG GROW) informed the meeting on the Forest Strategy 2013-2020. A mid-term review was developed by DG AGRI, which commissioned a study led by the European Forest Institute. The report will be published as a Staff Working Document, an official document “noted” by the College. The review is reporting on progress in a summary way, so the Blueprint for the F-BI is not part of it. A revision for the remaining years of the strategy would be possible, but unlikely taking into account the end of the College mandate.

b) Expert group for the Forest-based Industries (F-BI)

Mr WALL explained the composition of the F-BI Expert Group (56 full members). On average, 6 to 8 member states are present. Social partners are free to request meetings or propose agenda points.

c) Cascade Use of Wood

Following the request to produce a Staff Working Document (SWD) on the cascade use of biomass, it was decided to focus on guidance in the area of wood biomass. Five main principles were proposed : sustainability, resource efficiency, circularity, development of new products and markets, and subsidiarity. The Commission organised formal meetings and a workshop, followed by a request for case studies. 40 Examples were withheld, which are to be included in the annex of the SWD, which are expected to be presented during the High Level Conference during Raw Materials Week (14 November 2018), and the workshop “F-BI up to 2050” the following day.

Mr GEHRING pointed at the absence of “maintenance” in the SWD; Mr WALL would enquire whether this aspect could still be inserted.

3. European Wood Dust Conference

The Commission confirmed receipt of the social partners’ letter to Commissioner Thyssen. The “Social Dialogue” unit will deal with logistical assistance, whilst the “Health and Safety” unit will provide assistance with the agenda. Two steering group meetings will be organised soon, in order to decide on logistical and content issues respectively. Social partners were invited to nominate contact persons.

4. Wood dust measurement methods in Europe

Mr GENTNER (German Berufsgenossenschaft Holz/Metall) gave a presentation (attached) on the comparability of hard wood dust sampling and exposure measurement methods in several European countries. Harmonised and comparable methods do not exist in Europe. It is difficult to distinguish between hard-wood and soft-wood dust (in one sample) because it cannot be achieved with existing measurement methods. During the project, it will also be decided whether the national differences can be addressed by means of conversion methods. He invited the social partners to participate in the steering committee of a project on the subject, which would start in the spring of 2019. Mr GENTNER was invited to present the outcomes of the project at a later stage.

Mr HOOGENDIJK criticised the absence of comparable measurement modalities in the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive, which justifies the effort of developing a project on measurement methods, including an international steering committee.

5. Bolster Up project

EFBWW informed the meeting that the project started with a kick-off meeting, and steering group meeting in Stockholm. Research has started, 4 country reports are envisaged, but more countries should be involved.

6. Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)

Mr GEHRING informed the meeting that the second batch of the revision of the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive (CMD) will not contain substances of interest. The 3rd list, however, will include a limit value of 0.3 ppm for formaldehyde; the fourth list will include a limit value for diesel emissions. Ms DESSI proposed to address MEPs with a request to maintain the limit value for formaldehyde at the level of the Commission proposal.

7. AOB

The meeting discussed the possibility to translate the SSDC work programme, in order to be able use it in a political context. The Commission representative replied that the social dialogue budget lines do not offer the possibility to fund this.

WOODWORKING SPECIFIC TOPICS

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

The agenda of the meeting was adopted. The minutes of the meeting dd. 21 March 2018 were adopted, as well as the minutes of the plenary meeting dd. 23 May 2018

2. Projects

a) Perspectives and Challenges of Woodworking Industries in Europe

Mr ANTONICOLI informed the participants that the next activity in the project would be the organisation of the second project seminare in Lisbon. In that context, also a workshop on the implementation of the Action Guide (protection of workers against the exposure to Formaldehyde) will be organised, where the exposure to formaldehyde will be discussed in order to come to a joint opinion. Mr POÇAS complemented by pointing at another parallel meeting (framework agreement for coffins) to be held in Lisbon.

b) Action Guide for the prevention against Formaldehyde.

The action guide will be presented in Lisbon, following negotiations based on hands-on experience.

3. Wood in Construction

Mr ANTONICOLI reported on the success of the conference, held on 21st November 2017 in the EESC premises. The keynote speaker, Professor MIYAKE from the Sapporo Fuji Women's University was praised for his intervention. Mr ANTONICOLI pointed at the importance of convincing architects of the value of wood as a construction material. He proposed to keep the item on the agenda of the social dialogue meetings. Mr GEHRING replied that, generally speaking, the construction sector needs to be convinced as a priority.

4. Draft Work Programme 2018-2019

The social partners discussed the final version with a view to identify the most important activities in 2019. CEI-Bois reiterated the need to focus on joint projects, as well as on new skill and attractiveness of the sector. Also the use of wood as a construction material is of the utmost importance.

5. AOB

N/A

Annexes :

- List of participants
- Presentation "DIGIT-Fur, DITRAMA, SAWYER"
- Presentation : "WOODUAL"
- EFIC proposal for an internal agreement in view of EU Social Dialogue.
- Presentation "Wood Dust Measurement Methods in Europe"