



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

**6 February 2023  
Joint working group meeting  
MINUTES**

*FURNITURE SPECIFIC TOPICS*

Chair : Kees HOOGENDIJK

**1. Adoption of the agenda and minutes dd. 21 October 2022**

The agenda of the meeting and the minutes were adopted.

**2. Shortage of staff**

Gabriella KEMENDI (EFIC) sketched the issue of shortage of staff in the furniture sector. It will be impossible to meet the training needs caused by digitalisation. The Commission recently published the transition pathways for the chemical industry, which contain a specific component on skills. She proposed to use this as inspiration for a document containing recommendations with the furniture industry. Reskilling and upskilling are necessary and have a link with education. The European Year of Skills would offer opportunities for this initiative.

For EFBWW, Slavica UZELAC replied that more preparatory work would be needed before being able to react. Kenneth JOHANSSON replied that the sectoral needs have to be identified first, and pointed at the Bolster Up 1 and 2 projects. Also the Digit-Fur and Sawyer projects could offer input.

The issue will be further evaluated at secretarial level, with a focus on both woodworking and furniture.

**3. VET & European Year of Skills**

Slavica UZELAC (EFBWW) said that research at EU-level on technological change and related skills is taking place. EFBWW took part in this.

Julio RODRIGO added that CENFIM focuses on companies in the furniture sector, and more in particular on changed skills needs following a change of occupation. Also research on social responsibility has been done.

Kees HOOGENDIJK referred to the skills passport that exists in the Netherlands.

**4. Circularity in the furniture sector**

a) Alliance for Flame Retardant Free Furniture

Gabriella KEMENDI explained that furniture has been identified as a candidate priority under the “Eco-design for Sustainable Products Regulation” (ESPR). In addition, the JRC recently published an assessment that reinforced this. The ESPR is going through the legislative process. A delegated act for furniture could be adopted by 2026 at the earliest. Under the ESPR, several standards for

disassembly and reassembly are possible. Substances of concern – such as flame retardants - are part of the discussion. EFIC wants harmonised standards, and more in particular the cigarette test as standard because then flame retardants are not needed. Kees HOOGENDIJK added that circularity will cause a change of qualifications and curricula.

b) Projects

Julio RODRIGO presented an update on the FurnCSR project; an international conference will be organised on-line on 30 March 2023. He then introduced a proposal for a new project “Industry 5.0”, dealing with well-being of workers. He also informed the participants that CENFIM will be called AMBIT henceforth.

**5. AOB**

N/A

*JOINT MEETING WOODWORKING – FURNITURE*

Chair : David JOHANSSON

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

The agenda of the meeting was adopted. The minutes of the joint meeting dd. 21 October 2022 were approved.

**2. Education, Training & Skills initiatives in our sectors**

a) Teodora ILIEVA presented the draft agenda of the joint VET Conference on 13 February 2023. It will be a hybrid event. The focus will be on VET, but the discussions will also be related to attractiveness.

b) The Commission provided a brief update on the European Year of Skills 2023. Up-to-date information can be found on [https://year-of-skills.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://year-of-skills.europa.eu/index_en)

**3. Industry Policy**

a) Outlook for F-BI.

GROW.H.1 gave a presentation (attached) on the use of wood, wood supply, the impact of the war in Ukraine, and the impact of the twin transition on skills. They also provided an overview of the legislation related to the EU forest policies, and focussed on the EU forest strategy for 2030.

Regarding the European Bauhaus Academy, they confirmed that not only academies would be targeted, but all levels (from architects to construction workers) would be addressed.

Kenneth JOHANSSON asked for particular attention to the careful use of wood as a raw material; in his view, a more complete framework of knowledge is needed that does not only take trees as a focal point, but also focuses on its use in relation with other raw materials.

Gabriella KEMENDI stressed the importance of the cascading use of wood principle, in order to meet the requirements regarding recycled content.

Following a question from Slavica UZELAC on organisation and timing of impact assessments, DG GROW replied that impact assessments usually focus on the social and economic impact – including on SMEs – of an initiative. There has been a call for evidence and a public consultation, the results of which will be integrated in the ongoing impact assessment.

On Silvia MELEGARI's question what the engagement of DG GROW is in the forest monitoring system, DG GROW replied that it is analysing and streamlining

the discussions, without being constantly in the lead. Since forestry is a national competence, this also includes discussions with member states.

b) EU Forest Strategy – joint opinion

The social partners adopted their joint opinion “The European Woodworking and Furniture Social Partners welcome the new EU forest strategy passed by the European Parliament on 13 September 2022: A new EU Forest Strategy for 2030 – Sustainable Forest Management in Europe”. It will be published on the “Social Dialogue” database.

#### **4. Health & Safety initiatives in the woodworking and furniture sector**

a) Wood Dust Joint Social Partner Action

The social partners are working on an update of the brochure “Less Dust” in a task group.

b) EU Strategic OSH Framework 2021-2027

N/A, due to Rolf GEHRING’s absence.

#### **5. SSD review and social partner consultations**

Slavica UZELAC (EFBWW) updated the participants on the recently adopted Social Dialogue Communication and the Recommendation. The announced changes in the organisation of the social dialogue meetings (more in particular, the meetings of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees) is perceived as controversial. Reference was also made to the Liaison Forum meeting on February 1<sup>st</sup>, in which Director General Joost KORTE provided details on the content of the communication.

#### **6. Information point**

a) The social partners were informed about the updated timing for the representativeness studies. The consultation of the social partners on the draft text is scheduled between 11 April and 24 May.

b) Ongoing initiatives of interest for social partners.

The Commission provided a short update on the European Year of Skills 2023. The social partners were also informed about the changes in the two-stage consultation for OSH dossiers. Finally, reference was made to the recently adopted Green Deal Industrial Plan, which contains a component on skills.

#### **7. AOB**

a) Andreea PARASCHIV (APMR) expressed her concern about the use of melamine as an alternative for formaldehyde. Gabriella KEMENDI agreed with the statement.

b) The DG EMPL policy officer in charge of the Committee announced his upcoming retirement on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. He thanked both committees for their cooperation since 2012, and wished them success with their discussions on the challenges for their sectors.

Chair : David 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 2022 were approved.

**2. Joint project Resilient Wood**

In her presentation, Teodora ILIEVA provide a status report on this project. The next steering group meeting will take place in Brussels on 19 April 2023 and a mid-term conference is planned for June-July 2023 in Croatia.

Kenneth JOHANSSON pointed at the need for broad competences in sawmills, based on his own experience. He also mentioned the increase of female woodworkers.

**3. Wood4Bauhaus**

Silvia MELEGARI presented this initiative, which is based on the New European Bauhaus, launched by Commission President Von der Leyen. The Bauhaus Academy was launched by the President during an event that took place on 24 November. The Academy will be developed in the form of an on-line platform.

**4. ERA4FutureWork**

The social partners were informed that the responsible service (EMPL.F.3) could not be present due to staff shortage. This unit has – together with DG Research and innovation - set up a research and innovation project under the European Research Area. The project aims to convene actors involved in research and innovation with experience in the future of work. The main objective is to reunite R&I and employment actors. The final deliverables and the main subject of discussion would be regarding future of work research and funding priorities for research. Because of that, EMPL.F.3 is looking for social partners who have experience with funding research, have an interest in research and innovation, or have a research centre of their own to join the project.

EFBWW replied that they are running a study project on technological change in construction and woodworking. A workshop on that study will be organised on 17 May. This could link to the ERA4FutureWork.

EMPL.F.3 will be invited to join the plenary meeting in May 2023.

**5. Joint woodworking activities in the framework of 2023 European Year of Skills**

Teodora ILIEVA made the link with the VET conference on 13 February 2023. Furthermore, CEI-Bois is considering organising a Twitter campaign and a dedicated webpage. She invited all participants to further develop activities during the year.

**6. AOB**

- Teodora ILIEVA informed the participants that the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has prepared an opinion on wood in construction. A hearing takes place on 13 February. The rapporteur is a former trade union member from the woodworking/furniture sector.
- A draft version of the 2024 work programme for the SSDC will be prepared for the October meeting.

Annexes :

- Presentation : “Alliance for Flame Retardant Free Furniture”
- Presentation : "FurnCSR”
- Presentation : “DG GROW-European Social Dialogue”
- Presentation : “Resilient Wood”
- Presentation : “Wood4Bauhaus”

