



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

Employment and Social Legislation, Social Dialogue  
Social dialogue, Industrial Relations

## SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE FOR FURNITURE

20 March 2015  
VET and OSH Working Groups meeting  
MINUTES

### **A. Vocational Education and Training (VET)**

Chair : Tomas LUKES

#### **1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda of the meeting was adopted.

#### **2. Adoption of the draft minutes of the Working Group Meeting dd. 26 September 2014**

The minutes were adopted.

#### **3. Bolster Up Project**

EFBWW informed the meeting on the outcomes of this project (implemented by IG Metall), which aimed at establishing the concept of European Core Qualifications in the EU furniture industry. It was stressed that the goal is not to harmonise VET, but rather to guarantee minimum training standards for cabinet-makers and upholsterers. The fulfilment of certain criteria related to core competencies could become instrumental in terms of mobility and enhance the reliability of EU qualifications. The results of the project (a handbook and a memorandum of understanding signed by the social partners involved) are seen positive by decision-makers in the field. Ms GALLA asked whether the project could be extended towards other countries by including the profiles in their curricula. EFIC reacted by saying that a possible extension should focus more on minimum agreed core qualifications, and take regionalism into account. UEA suggested that an extension should not only include translations, but also recognition of national diversities. EFBWW proposed to design a follow-up project for 2016.

#### **4. Sector Skills Council**

Mr GEHRING sketched the history of the sector skills councils. The view of the woodworking committee was mentioned, which consists in dealing with skills related issues by means of projects rather than entering the scheme of Commission sector skills councils. Ms LORENZINI then provided more details on a workshop organised by EFBWW the day before. Although end-users are often not aware of all the existing tools created at European level to recognise skills and competences across borders, the participants recognised that the efforts of the EC in this direction are pushing Member States to work on definitions and standardization of learning outcomes and qualification frameworks. . The participants welcomed the work that the EC has reportedly started to reduce and harmonize as much as possible the

number of existing tools. Also they highlighted the importance of creating tools and learning outcome definitions that give enough space for the integration and inclusion of national diversities and insist on quality assurance

#### **5. European Alliance for Apprenticeships**

Mr BJORSTAD (DG EMPL) gave a presentation on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (attached), explaining the objectives and priorities of the EAfA programme. He also pointed at the project of the food and drink sector, and introduced the “New Boost” presidency event in Riga on 22 June 2015. Responding to a question by the social partners on the possibilities to develop curricula, Mr BJORSTAD confirmed that this is a purely national remit, although the social partners were invited to play a pro-active role in this respect. The trade unions asked for a strong commitment from the Commission in combating forms of labour that are detrimental to VET, such as grey, black or bogus work or even self-employment. Finally, social partners were invited to a stakeholder meeting on 23 April 2015.

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

Chair: John VILLADSEN

#### **1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda of this working group meeting was adopted

#### **2. Adoption of the minutes dd. 26 September 2014**

The minutes were adopted.

#### **3. Strategic Framework on OSH 2014 to 2020**

Mr GEHRING, after having sketched the history of the OSH framework, expressed EFBWW's criticism on its content, which is considered as weak. According to the workers' representatives, occupational diseases are insufficiently covered by the document, and more initiatives towards streamlining with other policies are necessary. Regarding the implementation of REFIT, a risk towards different levels of protection arises since the key issue of the paper comes down to simplification of legislation. Since the report on the evaluation of legislation by the Danish institute is expected to be published this year, he pointed at the possible value of a position paper on the subject as soon as the conclusions of the report are known. The employers' side agreed with the latter.

#### **4. OSHA Campaign**

EFBWW pointed at the possibilities of cooperation with OSHA in their campaign on psycho-social risks. OSHA does not provide funding, but cooperates in providing assistance to projects in the framework of their campaign. Against this background, a project proposal – based on cooperation between the woodworking and furniture SSDCs - was circulated for comments. Both sides of industry pointed at the difficulties in obtaining sector-related data on psycho-social hazards at national level. Therefore, one of the proposals was to join efforts in obtaining data, either from OSHA at cross-industry level, or stemming from social partners' empirical experience at sectoral level. Taking into account the pertinence of the subject, and the changed angle from physical accidents towards psychosocial problems with an impact on

productivity, it was agreed that the issue needed further discussion at secretariat level.

#### **5. Feasibility Study on Social Labels in the Furniture Industry**

Mr LUKES referred to the final report that was presented on 9 December 2014, which came to the conclusion that a social label helps the consumer to make a decision, having a limited influence only. The label however, may help against third country import produced under socially unfavourable circumstances. The cost of developing a separate label was considered too high. Therefore, the social partners proposed to create a working group at secretariat level to look into the possibilities to include sector-specific social standards in existing labels.

#### **6. European Expert Group for Forest Based Industries**

The participants were informed on the background of this expert group, which dates back to the Advisory Committee for Forest Based Industries. Mr GEHRING stressed that no specific financial resources have been foreseen for this structure. He also stated that a stronger focus on the research on the innovative use of wood (i.e. not only as a construction material) should be taken up as a subject matter. Mrs DESSI (EFIC) then explained the composition of the subgroups, but she could not confirm that "furniture" would be accepted as a subgroup.

#### **7. Formaldehyde**

EFBWW explained that the European Panel Federation is in favour of a follow-up project on the subject. After the non-acceptance of a 2014 proposal, an updated project will be submitted for the 2015 call for proposals. At EU level, discussions are ongoing on the limit level of formaldehyde; the Finnish ECA institute has proposed the creation of a committee for the reclassification of formaldehyde in category 1B (supposedly carcinogenic). The Commission should react to this proposal, but no news has been confirmed to date.

#### **8. Operationalization of the 2015 Work Programme**

It was accepted to discuss the implementation of the 2015 work programme at secretariat level in detail, to be discussed at a later stage.

#### **9. AOB**

Date of next meeting : 19 may 2015.

The Commission asked for respect of the deadlines regarding the organisation of the meetings, and the reimbursement requests.

Annexes :

- List of participants
- Presentation "European Alliance for Apprenticeships"