



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

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

SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE FOR WOODWORKING

13 November 2013
Working Group meeting
MINUTES

Chair : Philip BUISSERET (CEI-Bois)

1. Opening of the meeting

Mr BUISSERET welcomed the participants.

2. Adoption of agenda and of draft minutes of Plenary Meeting dd. 28 May 2013

The agenda of the meeting was adopted, after having added two items under AOB at the request of EFBWW. The minutes of the plenary meeting were adopted.

3. New EU Forest Strategy and Blueprint for Forest-based Industries (F-BI)

Mr WALL (DG ENTR) gave a presentation on "The Blueprint for the Forest-based Industries". He explained that a Staff Working Document does not have the same value as a Communication, and that the name "Blueprint" was used to mark the distinction with an action plan. After having presented the activities of his unit and a historical background to the F-BI approach, he described the activities of the ad-hoc working group, which identified a number of challenges for the F-BI. The most important ones are : growth, structural adaptation, innovation, training and skills, demographic change, international competition and communication and image.

Referring to the follow-up of the F-BI Blueprint, Mr BUISSERET pointed at the necessary cooperation between social partners in the fields of competitiveness and sustainable growth. Mr WALL added that the foreseen Advisory Group will not act as a mere brainstorming instrument, but is intended to produce a work programme to turn the Blueprint into reality. He also informed the participants that input to the Blueprint could be given immediately and certainly after the January 2014 meeting of the Advisory Group.

Replying to the Chair's question on the legal powers of the Commission in the field of logistics and transport, Mr WALL replied that the vehicle dimension is also covered by the Construction Products Regulation and the Building Regulation.

He also informed participants about a study commissioned by DG ENTR to evaluate the cascade use of wood and the impact on the bio-energy sector. The final report thereof will be published very soon.

Finally, replying to a question by Mr GEHRING he confirmed that DG ENTR intends to invite the EU Trade Unions to the Advisory Committee meetings as observers, apart from their possible presence in the related expert working groups. He also invited the social partners to foster the information flows with DG ENTR in line with the communication objective of the F-BI Blueprint.

4. WG VET : update on the activities.

a) Mr GEHRING explained the objective of the questionnaire which was distributed. Referring to the coordinating role of the EU in the field of education, and the related

programmes like "Lifelong Learning" and the upcoming "Erasmus+", he came to the subject of "sector skills councils". As he explained, the woodworking sector would not enter the Commission scheme, but would develop its own views and practices on the subject in the framework of the SSDC meetings. The questionnaire should be seen as a preparatory stocktaking exercise in this context.

b) With regard to the "Bolster-up" project, Mr GEHRING informed the meeting that the project is half-way through. The country reports on structures for the sectors "furniture" and "upholstery" are being translated and summarised. The aim is to develop core qualifications that can be used for quality requirements. The sectoral social dialogue committee will be invited to the final conference.

5. WG OSH : update on the activities

a) Less Dust : see point 6 a

b) On formaldehyde, no follow-up is envisaged, due to the lack of feedback on the outcomes of the first project. Also, the item is being discussed at European level and will be on the agenda of the Advisory Committee for Safety and Health (ACSH), which is a second obstacle to a follow-up project.

c) Mr GEHRING also enquired about the follow-up to Mr Stefano BOY's (ETUI) proposal to join the Committee 142 CEN. He suggested discussing the item during an upcoming education and training event in June 2014.

6. Update on the joint projects

a) With regard to the "Less Dust" project participants were informed that the brochure was translated and printed in 5 new languages; the older versions are available on-line. Mr GEHRING added that the 2 latest workshops proved to be very useful. The final report has been sent to the Commission. Whether a follow-up project could be envisaged is to be discussed internally.

b) Mr LAUWAERT introduced the project on demographic changes, intended to develop means to attract young people on the one hand and keep experienced workers active on the other hand. The foreseen start date is 1 December 2013, but will supposedly be postponed until January. EFBWW will propose two persons for the steering committee of this project.

7. Work Programme 2014 – 2015

The SSDC decided to develop a two-year work programme, in which more stress would be put on the F-BI Blueprint. The wording "ageing workforce" would be modified into "demographic changes" in view of the more positive connotation. Also, the employers suggested including issues such as wood mobilisation and increased availability, sustainability and reduction of costs related to the chain of custody. Mr VAN DER VEER asked to keep the roadmap item in the work programme, until conclusions are received on that subject. Given the upcoming election year, employers suggested paying attention to communication, addressing the new Commission and the newly elected MEPs.

Finally, it was decided to make the work programme more operational including outcomes, deadlines and responsible actors. After a discussion at secretariat level, an updated version will be circulated before Christmas.

8. AOB

a) Mr VAN DER VEER reported on the negotiations related to a legally binding agreement with a view to include ILO conventions in the Treaty. He asked for endorsement of the preamble by the major employers.

b) He also proposed to discuss at the next OSH WG the issue of encephalitis, a disease caused by tick bites affecting 3000 people per year. Taking into account the increased forest extraction in the EU a discussion may be held on awareness raising, protective measures and a possible vaccination programme to protect workers.

Annexes :

- List of participants
- Presentation " The Blueprint for the Forest-based Industries"