



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

Employment and Social Governance
Social dialogue

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

**19 March 2019
Joint working group meeting
MINUTES**

FURNITURE SPECIFIC TOPICS

Chair : Mr Kees HOOGENDIJK

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. 26 September 2018 were adopted. Ms DESSI (EFIC) announced her upcoming departure from her organisation. Mr GEHRING (EFBWW) thanked her for the fruitful cooperation in the context of the EU social dialogue for the furniture industry.

2. Flame retardants

EFIC reported on this file. The main concern at this stage is that the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) is working on a proposal restricting the use of flame retardants in child toys and domestic furniture. However, also e.g. office furniture can contain flame retardants. A joint letter with specific demands will be prepared by the secretariats.

3. Project DIGIT-Fur

CENFIM reported on this project that was successfully concluded by a final conference in Barcelona (presentation attached) where the final report was presented. The social partners expressed their appreciation for the very specialised results focussing on the digital transformation in the furniture sector. By way of example, Mr HARTMANN stated that the four main kitchen producers recently invested 1 billion Euro in new technology, which proves the need for the industry to adapt if it does not want to disappear. Mr SOLANA (CENFIM) also presented the DITRAMA project, focussing on the profession of digital transformation manager and funded under Erasmus+.

4. Digitalisation in the furniture sector

Building on the results of DIGIT-Fur, EFIC proposed to work on a joint statement regarding digitalisation in the sector. EFBWW suggested including elements to influence political decision makers. UEA welcomed that suggestion because it may be useful for national federations in their contacts with media. A joint statement will be prepared at secretariat level, so that a first draft can be discussed in the plenary meeting in May.

5. CCMI

Mr GEHRING explained the role of the Commission Consultative pour les Mutation Industrielles (CCMI) of the Economic and Social Committee, of which he is a member. He proposed to draft an opinion to explain the situation and challenges for the furniture industry. Once this proposal put on the agenda, it can become the subject of a formal application to the Board, which will decide on its acceptance.

6. VET – New project : SAWYER

CENFIM presented the SAWYER project, which can be considered as a follow-up project to DIGIT-Fur. SAWYER, however, will focus more on aspects of the circular economy and sustainability with a sectoral approach. It will also develop new business models and reach out to other sectors. The project was selected for funding under the 2018 "Social Dialogue" call for proposals.

7. AOB

N/A.

JOINT MEETING WOODWORKING – FURNITURE

Chair : Mr Vitor POÇAS

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

Mr POÇAS opened the meeting, pointing at the positive effects of a joint meeting of the two sectors. The meeting agenda and the minutes of the 26 September 2018 meeting were adopted.

2. Industry policy

Due to the absence of DG GROW, the discussion on the Forest-Based Industries expert group, the cascade use of wood, and the Blueprint were postponed to a next meeting. Mr GEHRING, however informed the participants that the next meeting of the expert group is scheduled for 11 April 2019.

3. European Wood Dust Conference

Mr GEHRING sketched the background for the conference, and gave an overview of the agenda items. The Commission explained the logistical aspects.

4. Bolster Up II Project

By way of introduction, Mr GEHRING informed the participants that, in principle, education does not fall under the remit of the EU. However, the EU funds educational projects that show links with some of its political objectives. Hence, the Bolster Up II Project receives funding under the "Social Dialogue" call for proposals. It focusses on existing curricula and core qualifications (minimum standards) for three professions : cabinet-maker, upholsterer and joiner. There is also a link with the DIGIT-Fur project, which revealed competition with other sectors in attracting specialised profiles.

5. Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)

The participants received an update on the revision of the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive (CMD). The third amendment will include a limit value for formaldehyde. It is expected that a limit value for diesel emissions will be included soon, since it was already tabled in 2018. Diesel emissions are of high importance

for the construction and F-BI sectors, stated Mr GEHRING, since diesel engines are regularly used on sites of these sectors. .

6. AOB

a) CEI-Bois proposed to actively and jointly approach the new MEPs and possibly Commissioners after the European elections. Apart from the economic impact and the competitiveness of the sectors, the social aspects and the value of social dialogue should be stressed in these contacts. Mr JOHANSSON pointed at the importance of finding common grounds, such as the EESC report on competitiveness or the importance of wood as a construction material. Mr HOOGENDIJK announced that EFIC intends to publish a new manifesto on the use of new materials in furniture, such as recycled plastics, which could also be touched upon. Mr GEHRING pointed at the existence of an intergroup, bringing together MEPs and cross-industry social partners. He also raised the idea of organising an event and producing a paper for a few selected MEPs.

b) The social partners discussed the recent events in the context of Brexit. Mr WHEATLEY doubted whether he would be able to participate in future social dialogue meetings. The Commission informed the social partners of the modalities regarding participation of UK participants in social dialogue meetings in case of a "no-deal" Brexit.

c) The Commission informed the social partners of the upcoming publication of the calls for proposals "Support for social dialogue" and "Improving expertise in the field of industrial relations".

WOODWORKING SPECIFIC TOPICS

Chair : Mr Vitor POÇAS

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

The agenda was adopted and the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2018 approved.

2. WP-2018-2019

The social partners discussed the level of execution of their current work programme. Some points have not been tackled. A number of core issues will be selected to be included in the 2020-2021 work programme. CEI-Bois proposed to increase the level of cooperation. After an exchange of views at secretariat level, the proposal will be put on the agenda of the next plenary meeting in May 2019.

3. PCWIE project

CEI-Bois updated the meeting on the "Perspectives and Challenges of Woodworking Industries in Europe" (PCWIE) project, which will conclude with a final conference in Porto (Espinho) on 24 May 2019. The agenda of the final conference will focus on highlights of the two project seminars, as well as on the action guide on formaldehyde, which was signed in the context of the Lisbon seminar. Mr POÇAS said that there is the ambition to produce a final document, may be a protocol on the subject of retaining talents in the woodworking industry. Both Mr GEHRING and Mr WIJNENDAELE (EPF) claimed that it may be over-ambitious to aim for a signed protocol with commitments by May, because of the necessary preliminary internal consultations.

4. Good Wood project

This project is selected for funding under the 2018 "Social Dialogue" call for proposals. It is dealing with the challenges related to the greening of the economy in the wood sector. The project is coordinated by Confapi, assisted by project partners.

5. VET – WeWooders project

Ms Miceli (CEI-Bois) presented this project, submitted under Erasmus+. The result has not yet been communicated to applicants. The intention is to create a VET platform for information exchange on the subject of digital skills. The project would also include a strategic agenda on the subject.

6. Action Guide on Formaldehyde

Mr WIJNENDAELE (European Panel Federation – EPF) announced that the action guide is being translated, with financial support obtained from ETUC and BusinessEurope. Subsequent to the Lisbon conference, EPF members were informed about the signature of the guide. EPF sent a form to its members in the EU and EFTA requesting the implementation of the action guide in terms of reaching the occupational limit value of 0.3 ppm. Eighty percent of the main sectors of EPF signed up to the implementation of the limit value. EPF also set up a monitoring group for implementation. Mr GEHRING complemented by saying that the project shows that it makes sense to work jointly at EU level, taking into account national responsibilities and labour law.

Mr WIJNENDAELE also announced the creation of an EPF taskforce on fire, explosions and secondary explosion risks.

7. AOB

N/A

Annexes :

- List of participants
- Presentation "DIGIT-Fur"
- Presentation : "SAWYER"