



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

Employment and Social Governance
Social dialogue

SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEES FOR FURNITURE and WOODWORKING

18 February 2021
Joint working group meeting
DRAFT 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 joint meeting dd. 16 October 2020 were approved.

2. Social dialogue work programme 2020-2024

The social partners agreed to update their work programme at the next plenary meeting, if necessary. It is also available as a handout that can be used in discussions with policy makers.

3. Flame retardants

Ms KEMENDI updated the meeting about the activities of the Alliance for Flame Retardant Free Furniture. This dossier has strong links with the Sustainable Product Initiative and the Chemical Strategy for Sustainability, since it may be used as a platform to achieve the Alliance's goals (see next agenda point). The flame retardants issue should also be seen in the light of the transition to a circular economy.

The UK 1998 legislation is under review, with the intention to replace it with new legislation containing standards. This process, however, may be slow so that the current legislation is expected remain in force for some more years. In Brussels, the Alliance is monitoring the activities of chemical flame retardants producers.

More information can be found at <https://safefurniture.eu/>

4. Circularity in the furniture sector

a) Gabriella KEMENDI explained that the Commission is expected to produce a proposal for a directive in the context of a Sustainable Products Initiative. This will have an important impact on the industry, since one of the objectives will be to widen the scope of the Eco-design Directive. EFIC's position paper (https://9e2160bf-a0b5-460b-aec7-e9af818978ee.filesusr.com/ugd/a1d93b_457a04fa809244cf97342a97f2a796b8.pdf) pleads for harmonised rules at EU level, accompanied by a holistic approach with regards to EU policies. Standardisation bodies (for the development of disassembly criteria) and industry representatives should be involved in an open dialogue, and the complexity of furniture products should be taken into account.

For EFBWW, Rolf GEHRING agreed that the issue is quite complex, since it touches upon a variety of EU policy areas. He doubted, however, that political decisions – which are at framework level – should already take into account standardisation bodies. Gabriella Kemendi made a point on the need to involve standardisation bodies from a harmonisation perspective (definitions, requirements).

Kees HOOGENDIJK concluded by pointing at the importance of education and skills in addressing the challenges, and the importance of a level playing field.

- b) There was no agreement yet on the joint statement on the Circular Economy Action Plan.

5. Health & Safety Initiatives.

Rolf GEHRING explained that the current EU strategic framework is primarily aimed at implementing existing legislation, and at addressing the effects of COVID, occupational diseases and new emerging risks, such as psychosocial risks. It also wants to foster the implementation of a prevention culture. A public consultation ran until March 1st. The social partners were informed that a dedicated hearing for social partners will be organised on April 21st 2021. The new framework is scheduled to be adopted in the second quarter of 2021. EFBWW enquired whether a joint position by the woodworking and furniture sectors could be envisaged.

Gabriella KEMENDI proposed to work on a joint position once the Commission initiative is adopted, and possibly to include a reference to the flame retardants issue in the context of exposure to chemical agents.

6. AOB

No decision had been taken on the proposed text for an own initiative for a CCMI (Commission Consultative pour les Mutations Industrielles) opinion on the furniture sector. However, for the hearings on a CCMI opinion and its preparation, competent speakers from the social partners will be needed. In the study groups a rapporteur and a co-rapporteur representing one side of industry respectively will nominate one expert each; normally social partners are expected to find an expert with knowledge of the legal framework. The secretariats would discuss the use of the position paper on circular economy as a basis for an opinion.

JOINT MEETING WOODWORKING – FURNITURE

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 joint meeting dd. 16 October 2020 were approved.

2. Education, Training & Skills initiatives in the woodworking and furniture sector

- a) Anna NIKOWSKA presented the Pact for Skills (presentation attached). She explained that the reported lack of skills is at the basis for the development of the pact. Funding for the pact will be found in existing instruments, but also in new sources such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility. She also explained the process for joining the pact. At the social partners' request, she mentioned the re-skilling of coal mine workers towards the automotive sector as an example. Both upskilling and re-skilling are in the focus of the pact; the difference between them is often a question of definitions. She also recognised the importance of SMEs. The charter was the subject of an open consultation, to which also social

partners replied. The Commission is open to comments; however, the pact is only open to EU social partners.

- b) Osnabrück Declaration : p.m. After a short discussion, the social partners agreed that it contains elements for their work programme.
- c) European approach for micro-credentials : p.m. See point b.
- d) Jeroen Doom from the Belgian training organisation Woodwize reported on their dual learning project.
- e) Stimulating e-learning : postponed to next meeting.
- f) Potential social partners' initiatives : postponed to next meeting.

3. Circular Economy

Julio RODRIGO (CENFIM) provided an update on the SAWYER project, and announced the on-line final conference, scheduled for 10 March 2021. The final report can be found on : <https://circularfurniture-sawyer.eu/the-sawyer-new-report-on-eu-initiatives-supporting-circular-economy-transition/>

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

- a) Wood Dust Measurement
The BG HM Project has come to a standstill, because the on-site tests could not yet be performed due to Corona.
- b) Joint action
EFBWW presented their proposal for joint action in the field of wood dust measurement. The proposal is based on earlier actions, such as the “Less Dust” brochure and information obtained in this context. The point will be further discussed between secretariats.
- c) EU Strategic OSH Framework : see point 5 under “Furniture specific topics”.

5. Consultation on Gender Equality and Women’s rights.

Mercedes LANDOLFI referred to the discussion held in the previous joint meeting about the European action plan on gender equality. She stated that a 360° approach is necessary to fill gaps between existing pillars. The industry would also benefit from an increased number of women in leading executive positions. Silvia MELEGARI announced that CEI-Bois will evaluate the proposal for better integration of women, in particular focussing on the high number of SMEs and family businesses in the woodworking sector.

6. Representativeness studies 2021

The Commission informed the social partners on the kick-off meeting, organised by Eurofound on 27 January 2021, and the next steps in the process. All social partners were invited to send their membership lists to Eurofound.

7. AOB

N/A

WOODWORKING SPECIFIC TOPICS

Chair : Ms Silvia MELEGARI

- 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.16 October 2020 were approved.
- 2. Overview of the ongoing challenges of the woodworking industries**

CEI-Bois pointed at the importance of attractiveness of the sector and new skills. This is also reflected in the PCWIE project. For EFBWW, the impact of the pandemic on the economic development, international competition (notably with China) and the implementation of new technologies also has to be taken into account. For the workers' side, the usefulness of collective agreements to assure a level playing field has to be recognised. In some countries, the woodworking industries, which mainly consists of SME's, runs the risk of having no successors for employers-family businesses; therefore, fostering entrepreneurship is key. Finally, the qualities of wood as a construction material should be promoted.
- 3. Renovation wave**

The renovation wave is at present being discussed by the Energy Council. For EFBWW, it should not only be discussed from the energy angle but also from the social perspective. More in particular, it should include reflections on a better living space, necessary skills, and use of materials.

A possible joint position paper could include the opportunities offered by building with wood, linked to the use of natural materials; also, Commissioner Timmermans' tree planting initiative could be mentioned in this context. Mercedes LANDOLFI proposed to stress the link between the sectoral challenges and the Renovation wave. She also claimed that the national level is best placed to steer the availabilities offered by the Circular Economy action Plan, the Green transition and the RRF.
- 4. EFBWW/ETUI seminar on future of work**

EFBWW presented the seminar on 25 and 26 March which it organises together with with ETUI on the future of work. The seminar deals with changes in the work performed in the relevant sectors. Apart from technological change, the discussions will focus on the political framework, the role of social dialogue, the role of social partners in VET structures, etc. CEI-Bois showed interest in participating.
- 5. Project proposal related to “Perspectives and Challenges of the Woodworking industries in Europe II (PCWIE-II).**

The social partners discussed the negative result of the evaluation by the Commission, and the possibility to submit a new project – with added value - under the upcoming call for proposals.
- 6. AOB**
 - a) CEI-Bois informed the meeting on the upcoming EU Forest Strategy, which will put a greater focus on forest management and diversity protection. In addition, the forest's function of job provider will be mentioned : forests notably have an important employment value in rural areas.
 - b) The Commission introduced the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Social Pillar, which takes the Nahles report as the basis for the social dialogue part. The importance of having a social dialogue contact person in every DG of the Commission was recognised by the social partners. In a first reaction, Tom

DELEU (EFBWW) claimed that this was a good start, but insufficient in terms of real commitment towards social dialogue. He also regretted that the Nahles report did not focus enough on the sectoral dimension.

- c) Rolf GEHRING referred to the Commission's Bauhaus initiative, and the role of the Woodworking and Furniture sectors in this. The trade unions would be interested in joining the employers in their initiatives in the context of this initiative. Silvia MELEGARI replied that the Woodworking industry recognises the importance of sustainability, but intends also to stress the need for affordable housing.

Annexes :

- List of participants
- Presentation : "Pact for Skills"
- Presentation : "Project status - SAWYER"
- Presentation : "Representativeness studies".

Annex : List of participants

<p><u>Employers</u></p> <p>CEI-Bois Silvia MELEGARI (EU) Teodora ILIEVA (EU) Margherita MICELI (EU) Per WIDOLF (SE)</p> <p>EFIC Gabriella KEMENDI (EU) Giorgia MURGIA (EU) Pauline CLOUZET (FR) Ieva ERELE (LV) Anna FREIJ (SE) Kees HOOGENDIJK (NL) Miroslava SIMEONOVA (BG) William VERNON (IE)</p> <p>UEA Tomas LUKES (EU) Andreea PARASCHIV (RO) Julio RODRIGO (ES)</p> <p>15 employers representatives (4 woodworking, 11 furniture) (6 EU, 9 MS)</p>	<p><u>Workers</u></p> <p>EFBWW</p> <p>Tom DELEU (EU) Rolf GEHRING (EU) Magdalena SIKOROWSKA (EU) Ann COCQUYT (EU) Paula CRAVINA (EU) Elise ANDSAGER (DK) Fabio DEL CARRO (SE) Jeroen DOOM (BE) Christian FÖLZER (AT) Mikko HAKKARAINEN (FI) Kenneth JOHANSSON (SE) Mercedes LANDOLFI (IT) Chiara MAFFE (IT) Ole-Kristian PAULSEN (NO) Kristine RAPA (LV)</p> <p>15 workers representatives (5 EU, 9 MS, 1 TC)</p>
<p><u>Other participants</u> N/A</p>	
<p><u>European Commission</u> Anna NIKOWSKA (EMPL) Danny SCHEERLINCK (EMPL)</p>	