

European Federation  
of Building  
and Woodworkers



**Action Programme for the  
Sectoral European Social Dialogue  
of the  
Woodworking Industries**

**2016-2017**



## Introduction

The European social partners, EFBWW and CEI-Bois confirm the importance of a strong and autonomous European social dialogue for the woodworking sectors in order to develop a sustainable and prospering woodworking industry and will continue to reinforce their collaboration in order to achieve this.

Our social dialogue is acting in an ever more interdependent world on both all levels, the economic as well as the political or cultural and others. We are convinced that conflict or problem solving processes are more and more depending on the involvement of all concerned parties into any action and on the recognition of ambiguous interests. For our own field of action this means to recognize the interests of the various type of workers or companies but, also recognizing the true interests of end-users, suppliers or the population.

On the European level and in the framework of their joint initiatives, EFBWW and CEI-Bois will take into account the repartition of responsibilities between the European and national level and will respect the role and autonomy of the national social partners in determining their labour market and terms and conditions of employment by themselves.

This multi-annual working programme serves as a guideline for the activities of the European social partners of the woodworking sectors for the years 2016-2017. However, EFBWW and CEI-Bois may, according to the developments in the EU agenda decide to tackle other issues than those contained in this programme, amongst others in the framework of the consultations of the social partners that will be launched by the European Commission during this period.

During this period the EFBWW and CEI-Bois will in particular strive to give a stronger visibility and follow-up to their joint actions, statements and projects.

## Main priorities for the period 2016-2017

### **Strengthening industrial relations**

Functioning industrial relations are a major element of a level playing field for economic activities. Shaping working conditions in all its aspects by joint agreements is a cornerstone in this respect and the best guarantee to avoid and to fight competition by wage dumping or other kind of dumping related to working conditions.

EFBWW and CEI-Bois will therefore pay a particular attention in the strengthening of autonomous industrial relations within the woodworking sectors. They also reaffirm the primary responsibility of the national sectoral social partners, through autonomous industrial relations, for finding a common understanding about the organisation of their national the labour market.

CEI-Bois and the EFBWW will continue to support the establishment of autonomous sectoral industrial relation systems for the woodworking sectors in all the Member States and in this respect, they will examine specific needs or demands raised by national social partners and, where needed, jointly develop specific capacity building initiatives.

### **Improving the functioning of the labour market**

As most industries, the woodworking industries have significantly hit by the crisis, which is still affecting many Member States. Situations or unfair competition occurs and this is due, amongst others, to a legislative framework that is sometimes unclear, to difficulties in enforcing it or to difficulties in undertaking adequate controls, in particular in cross-border operations. Ensuring a level playing field for companies and fighting against social fraud will be amongst the priorities of the current work programme.

CEI Bois and the EFBWW apply a policy of zero tolerance against unfair and illegal practices in the woodworking industries and will

address the issue of the appropriate measures for combating "undeclared work", amongst others through an active involvement in the EU Platform that should be set up by the European Commission towards the end of 2015.

In addition, where appropriate the necessary initiatives will be taken to this end at national and European level, in a broad partnership with the various actors concerned, i.e. labour inspectorates, national authorities or social funds.

### **Industrial policies and a "Greening" economy**

Wood is the solution! When talking about a greening economy or a circular economy, the consumption of renewable raw material, energy consumption or the cascade use of material are crucial. In this respect, forestry and the forest-based industries can play a decisive role in the future. The Communication of the European Union's industry policy for Forestry and the forest based industries as well as the parallel published Blueprint as well as a number of other related documents are proving this prominent role. Beside the function of delivering raw material, our sectors are also providing new type of material for various application, amongst other in the construction industry. The latter aspect is also pointing on the need for a future fruitful collaboration between science, companies and other stakeholders aiming at the creation of innovation clusters.

The changes in the demand due to the "greening" of the economy and of jobs represent, on the one hand, a significant opportunity for the woodworking sectors in terms of activity and creation of new jobs. On the other hand, they will also have an impact in the organisation of companies (new market opportunities, new skills needed, etc.) and in the working conditions (additional/new training, adapted Health and Safety conditions, etc.).

The EFBWW and CEI-Bois are committed to address these issues in the framework of their joint activities and to reflect the voice of workers and companies more closely in the debate on a strengthened competitiveness of the forestry and woodworking sectors at national, European and international level. We paid particular at-

tention to the need for an industry-wide dialogue between employers and workers at every level, as well as to the need for continuous sustainable financial investments and strengthening of lifelong learning. What is in our focus equally is the improved use of the European innovation programme Horizon 2020 to improve and innovate production processes, the advanced use of new technology and the development of intelligent work processes as well as the production and use of new combinations in terms of material.

### **Demographic changes: taking account of an ageing workforce**

The demographic changes and in particular the ageing of the population and of the workforce, combined with the difficulties observed in several Member States to attract and maintain young people in the woodworking sectors, are a growing challenges both for companies and for workers.

The EFBWW and CEI-Bois will address the impact of such demographic developments from the various angles of its components (image of the sector, health and safety, employment issues, etc.) by gathering examples of national best practice and identifying potential topics for action at the EU level.

### **Initiatives for youth employment and the quality of apprenticeships**

The crisis which has hit the EU since 2008 has had and is still having a significant impact on the levels of unemployment of most of the Member States and is particularly affecting young people. Despite what the EU and its member countries are doing, employment prospects for young people in the EU are bleak. One in five under 25 years old who is looking for work cannot find a job. Approximately 7.5 million young people between 15 and 24 are neither working, nor in education or training.

In addition, in most member States the woodworking sectors are still suffering from a relatively negative image which affects its attractiveness and which, to some extent, explains the difficulties

in hiring and in keeping young people as well as skilled workers.

Therefore, improving the attractiveness of the construction industry towards young people can provide an important contribution in fighting against the extremely high levels of youth unemployment that the EU is facing nowadays.

The development of high quality vocational education and training (VET), in particular so-called "dual forms", combining elements of training at the workplace, in training centres and in schools, has been high on the EU agenda for quite a while and is considered an important mean for facilitating the transition from education and training to work.

EFBWW and CEI-Bois will develop actions aiming at the promotion of apprenticeships amongst woodworking companies of all sizes both quantitatively and qualitatively, through the creation of strong partnership involving employers, trade unions, paritarian funds, VET institutes as well as local or regional authorities.

### **Anticipating and influencing the skills needs**

In several Member States, independently on whether the forestry and woodworking industries are strongly effected by the crisis or not, there are changes in used technology, new work processes and companies have partly difficulties in finding workers with the appropriate skills.

The so called "skills gap", i.e. the difference between the skills available and the ones that are effectively needed by the work process is a serious obstacle to economic growth, creation of jobs and competitiveness. In order to reduce this "skills gap" there needs to be on the one hand a better "market intelligence" aiming at better anticipating the changes in technology, tools, material and work processes and the skills needs and, on the other hand, a constant adaptation of the training schemes and the respective work organisation.

Addressing the issue of anticipation of skills needs is of significant importance both for the competitiveness of construction companies, as well as for employment in the sector. EFBWW and CEI-Bois

would therefore like, on the one hand, to gather the experiences of some Member States and see how added value can be created by a better coordination at the EU level, in particular as regards mutual learning, creation of synergies and exchange of best practices between national stakeholders.

In a second step, they will also try to set the basis for a longer term and more structured cooperation/coordination between national stakeholders and to extend the involvement of further national stakeholders (companies and workers, national

observatories, sectoral paritarian funds, public and private bodies involved in training, private and public research centres, academics, etc.).

### **Fostering a culture of H&S**

Despite the overall reduction in the number of work related accidents and illnesses, improving health and safety in the workplace continues to be an important field of action for the woodworking sectors and therefore one of our main priorities. The improvement of health and safety very much depends on knowledge and a proper legal framework, also providing a level playing field for companies, but can also be achieved through promoting the development of a real culture of health and safety within each company, with the involvement of all the concerned stakeholders and in particular the workers.

The Social Partners of the woodworking sector are focusing their activities for the next two years especially on:

- Assessment of the EU H&S legislative framework
- Operational action for better working conditions, including joint projects
- Addressing potential new hazards and precautionary preventions strategies
- Collaboration with the OSHA Agency



The following annex is tabling the specific planned activities, also indicating aims, responsibilities and timing.

Policy Area	Topic	Aim	Period	Responsible
<b>Industry policy Competitiveness</b>	Influencing the EU initiatives and policies in the wood industries	The general aim is to jointly define an industry policy for the various covered sectors	2016-2017	All
	Discussing innovation policies and fostering innovative action in the sectors	Presenting a Joint policy on innovation for the various sectors	Joint policy paper	Plenary meeting / Secretariats
	Project on demographic changes in the woodworking industry	Improving working conditions and the attractiveness of the sector	2016-2017	Working group / Steering group
	Innovation (products and material)	Working out a position paper with specific areas of action and proposals for initiatives	Draft for autumn 2017	Secretariats
	Discussions about a possible common strategy on the competitiveness of the Forest-based industries	Getting more influence in the framework conditions for the economic activities of the sector	2016-2017	Secretariats
		Formulating joint essentials with reference to the EESC opinion	Draft for the second wp meeting in 2017	Secretariats

Policy Area	Topic	Aim	Period	Responsible
<b>Environmental policies</b>	Legally binding agreement on forests in Europe	Follow up and evaluation (position paper)	2016–2017 (ongoing activities)	Plenary meeting / Secretariats
	Wood mobilization	Follow up		Plenary meeting / Secretariats
	Biomass – renewable energy policy	Follow up		Plenary meeting / Secretariats
	Climate change	Follow up		Plenary meeting / Secretariats
	Circular Economy	Joint position paper	2016	Plenary meeting / Secretariats
	<b>Training and Education</b>	EU policies in the area of VET	Improving our capacity to influence on the European level	2016-2017

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<b>Health &amp; Safety</b>	New EU strategy on Occupational Safety and Health for the period 2013 – 2020 – Evaluation Report	Follow up	2016-2017	Secretariats / Working party
	EU policies in this area, especially the revision of the Carcinogenic Directive (2004/37) and a possible directive on musculoskeletal disorders	Follow up Possible EU-funded projects	2017	
	Psychosocial Hazards at the Workplace	Social Partner Project	2017	EFBWW / CEI-Bois
<b>Industrial Relations and the Labour Market</b>	Support for national affiliated organisations to improve their capacity for Social Dialogue	Collecting information about the respective national situation and giving support	2016–2017	Secretariats
	Combating unfair and illegal employment practices in the wood-working sectors	Joint position paper	2016	Secretariats

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