



SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE FOR FURNITURE

**13 June 2017
Plenary meeting
MINUTES**

Chair : Mr Kees HOOGENDIJK (EFIC – CBM)

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda of the meeting was adopted.

2. Adoption of the draft minutes of the plenary meeting dd. 19 June 2016 and the Working Group meeting dd. 20 March 2017.

The minutes were adopted, taking into account some corrections to be made in the minutes of the latest working group meeting.

3. Work Programme 2018-2019

The social partners intend to develop a work programme for the next 2 (possibly three) years and to discuss it during the autumn working group meeting. There is consensus that there are too many items in the present work programme, so a more focussed document will be drafted. Industry policy, VET and OSH are considered to be key areas; it was also proposed to pay attention to Industry 4.0 and innovation in general. In addition, the circular economy may be included in the new work programme.

4. European Commission Expert Group on Forest-Based Industries (F-BI)

For EFIC, Ms MICELI updated the participants on the meeting of the F-BI Expert Group, held in the morning of 13 June 2017. Although the meeting agenda was mainly related to the woodworking sector, the agenda also included some points of interest for the furniture sector. The circular economy and the cascade guidelines were presented by DG Environment. The EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) and the public consultation on its scope were discussed. The skills agenda was presented by DGs EMPL and GROW, followed by CEPI. Finally, the Chinese standards for furniture were presented by Ms MICELI. Mr GEHRING proposed to present a joint input to the public consultation on the EUTR. The social partners agreed to send the 2018 meeting dates of the sectoral social dialogue committee to DG GROW, in order to avoid coinciding dates with the F-BI Expert Group meetings.

5. Flame Retardants in Furniture

The social partners discussed the state of play regarding the UK revision of furniture fire safety regulations. Both EFIC and EFBWW are members of the "Alliance for Flame Retardant Free Furniture in Europe". This alliance has produced a policy paper that was presented as background information during the meeting. Upon

EFIC's request to prepare a joint statement on the UK revision for October. EFBWW reported that it is difficult to act convincingly at member state level. In addition, EFBWW informed about latest research showing that (some) newly developed substitutes are probably as hazardous as the old flame retardants.

6. New project : psychosocial hazards

Following up on the discussion during the joint woodworking-furniture meeting of 20 March 2017, the social partners now came to the conclusion that, in spite of the importance of a project on this subject, not all social partners have the capacity to fully engage in this project. The social partners agreed to keep the subject on the agenda, and to share information on the ongoing project in the construction sector. It was suggested having discussions at secretariat level to decide on possible steps in the future.

7. Bolster Up project

The social partners intend to submit a "Bolster Up" follow-up project for funding by the "social dialogue" call for proposal. The new project would also build on the experiences of the "Eurojoiner" project, by including joiner as a third profession in the "Bolster Up II" project, besides cabinet-maker and upholsterer.

8. Proposal for a European Wood Dust Conference

By way of introduction, Mr GEHRING pointed at recent developments in research and technology in the area of prevention of exposure to wood dust. Also measurement techniques have considerably improved. Recent studies and data have become available. That is why EFBWW proposed to the responsible Commission service (i.e. unit B3 of DG EMPL) to organise a European Wood Dust Conference, which would serve as a forum to discuss the state of play. Unit B3 reacted in a relatively positive manner to the proposal. Mr VILLADSEN also mentioned the possibility to discuss new approaches (e.g. in cleaning methods and ventilation) and risk management. Mr HARTMANN pointed at the need to include knowledge in medicine and the common responsibility for healthy working places. UEA questioned the necessity to organise a conference, and proposed to publish a brochure on tools and methodology, which would be more in line with the financial capacity of the industry in poorer countries. Along the same line, Ms PARASCHIV stated that a campaign would have more impact than a conference.

EFIC pleaded for a clear scope of the conference and for the need to agree on limit values and comparability of measurement methods. Ms DESSI also asked to include the impact on SMEs in the conference programme. Mr GEHRING, however, opposed to a distinctive approach for SMEs, since the vast majority of the industry is composed of SMEs. He therefore proposed to make a distinction between micro-companies and others, if necessary.

The social partners agreed to further reflect on the preparation, and to discuss the content and semantics of a possible joint letter to the Commission within their internal structures.

9. OSHA campaign on Ageing Workforce

EFBWW proposed to work on a joint activity (possibly together with other sectors) that would be linked to the OSHA campaign, but having a more holistic view. Mr VILLADSEN suggested using the title "Healthy workplaces at all ages", which would

also refer to the attractiveness of the sector, and the opportunities for education and training, including life-long learning. UEA was in favour of a limitation of the scope to "ageing workforce" Mr HOOGENDIJK pleaded for the use of "durable" or "sustainable" employment in the title, and proposed to work on a joint opinion that could be the start of further action, and the inclusion of the item in the work programme.

10. COM Communication on OSH.

Following up on previous discussions, Mr GEHRING sketched the history of this dossier. He proposed to convey the expectations of the sector to the Commission by means of a joint opinion together with the woodworking sector. He presented a first draft of the document to the participants, which was presented to the woodworking SSDC the day before. It was agreed that the employers would send their comments in due time.

11. Evaluation of other possible joint initiatives

Ms DESSI proposed to compare the agendas of the different social partners, including the middle and long-term priorities. This would enable the SSDC to develop common positions more easily. Mr GEHRING suggested reacting to EU initiatives more swiftly. He also proposed to focus more on the F-BI Expert Group, in order to influence its agenda.

12. AOB

1) Mr LUKES (UEA) updated the meeting on the latest developments in the FSC-PEFC discussion. He stated that IKEA's choice to opt for FSC wood is indeed a private company's decision, in which the European Commission has no remit. He mentioned the risk that a possible future shortage of FSC labelled wood could result in an increased dependence on Russian wood.

2) The Commission informed the social partners about the content and priorities of the Social Pillar package, and the importance of social dialogue in that context. EFBWW pointed at the need for increased capacity building for social dialogue at EU and national level. EFBWW also deplored that the terms of reference and the thresholds for the various calls for proposals are applied very strictly, and made an appeal for more flexibility by the Commission.

3) EFIC informed the meeting about their upcoming High-level Conference on the Circular Economy (27 June 2017).

4) Ms PARASCHIV informed the participants about the state of play of two projects funded by Erasmus+ : www.gpp-furniture.eu and www.ergosignproject.eu .

Annexes :

List of participants