



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

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

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

**11 March 2016
Joint working group meeting
MINUTES**

Chair : Mr Kenneth JOHANSSON (EFBWW)

WOOD SPECIFIC TOPICS

1. Welcome and opening of the meeting

**2. Adoption of agenda and of draft minutes of the working group meeting dd.
17/09/2015**

The agenda and the minutes of the previous working group meeting were adopted.

3. New project woodworking industries.

The social partners discussed the possibility of introducing a new project "Perspectives and Challenges of the Woodworking Industry in Europe", which would be submitted by EPF for the next deadline of the social dialogue call for proposals. The project would consist of 2 main pillars, namely "Industry Policy" on the one hand, and "Working Conditions" on the other. A foreseen third pillar on demographic changes would be split over the 2 main ones, in view of the obvious links. CEI-Bois uttered the possibility to include a cross-cutting chapter on the image of the sector, which is insufficiently adapted to modern times. Also, CEI-Bois asked whether it would be possible to foresee a link with the previous project on demographic changes. A project proposal is expected to be ready by April 2016.

4. Work programme 2016-2017

EFBWW presented a "rolling" work programme for the Woodworking SSDC, which should cover the priorities for the next 2 years, based on the level of implementation of the on-going work programme. It was convened that also the new work programme should include an item on climate change, possibly linked to the circular economy. Social partners, however, agreed that these are vast subjects, which would oblige them to make choices. EFBWW also proposed to discuss the availability of wood (in relation to its multiple uses) as a sustainable material. Further fine-tuning of the work programme would be discussed at secretariat level.

5. AOB

N/A.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted. The meeting started with a minute's silence in remembrance of the deceased William VAN DER STRAETEN, who – in his capacity of EFBWW representative - was an active member of both the Woodworking and Furniture SSDCs. He was a convinced supporter of the European Social Dialogue, and will be remembered by the EU social partners from both workers' and employers' sides.

2. Evaluation of the Practical Implementation of the EU Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Directives in EU Member States

EFBWW informed the meeting that the EU had asked the Danish COWI institute to evaluate existing EU OSH legislation. Unit B3 of DG EMPL envisages to finish the assessment of the COWI report by the end of 2016, and to publish conclusions of the Commission. At a later stage, these conclusions could result in policy options. EFBWW proposed to follow this process closely, with a view to developing a joint position on the subject.

3. New project: psychosocial hazards in the woodworking sector

EFBWW presented a draft outline for a joint programme on psychosocial hazards by the woodworking and furniture industry. The project would consist of four pillars : stocktaking at EU level, studying existing concepts, mapping sector-oriented best practices, and finally developing a joint research project, focussed on work-related changes. Since a cross-sectoral project from 3 sectors might be more successful in a call for proposals, the question was raised whether the construction sector (FIEC) could be included as a third partner. In this respect, the employers' organisations asked for clarity about the expected outputs, and their usefulness and quality in relation to the comparability of the envisaged sectors. Also the level of sub-sectoral approach in terms of outputs was put on the table. These issues – as well as the availability of FIEC - would be further discussed at secretariat level.

4. Bolster-up project

EFBWW informed the participants on the state of play of the "Bolster-up" project, aimed at establishing the concept of European Core Qualifications in the EU furniture industry. The job profiles for cabinet maker and upholsterer are included in a handbook. A follow-up project could be presented by June 2016, based on input from stakeholders. An extension to other countries, coverage of an increased number of professions and an update of the guide would fall within the possibilities. Due to the absence of the responsible staff member, the terms of reference could not be drafted yet. The question remains whether another social partner should take this up, or whether it is preferable to wait for the colleague's return.

5. Migration as possible new source of manpower

The agenda point was proposed by UEA, pointing at recent developments in the Czech furniture sector. The Czech Ministry of Trade and Industry has done cross sector research on the question, whether companies are available hire immigrants? The research has been realized by sector federations. And also by Czech furniture federation. Situation in Czech furniture industry is that companies demand skilled

labour force and the labour market is short. So result of the research in the Czech furniture industry is that there is a willingness to hire immigrants by the companies. Sure the Ukrainian immigrants are identified as a possible best choice . In this context, the Belgian trade unions pointed at the Belgian skills passport, which is based on the recognition of acquired skills. The relevant registration scheme is accessible to all residents, including migrants. The Belgian workers' representatives also pointed at the role of social partners to address societal problems, such as workers' fear that migrants would take over their jobs. The Swedish employers' representative stated that the integration of migrants is difficult, and that it is important to involve enterprises in this process. He also suggested looking at best practices; more in particular, Southern European countries may be a source of information, given their experiences with immigration.

The social partners were informed that the next Liaison Forum would feature an agenda point on migration and social dialogue.

6. OSHA campaign on ageing workforce

Ms O'BRIEN presented OSHA's new campaign "Healthy Workplaces for All Ages". In her presentation (attached) she explained the coordinating role of OSHA in the network of partners that will be involved in this major campaign, covering 30 countries. It is expected to have an increase of 16% of older workers between 2010 and 2030, which explains the importance of this campaign. She stressed the importance of prevention, even already at schools. The underlying principle is to start young if you want to keep older workers at work healthily and safely. The campaign –which will be launched in April 2016 - also takes into account diversity in all its aspects. It will also focus on the possibilities to return to work after an absence. An important instrument will be the multilingual e-guide, tailored to national legislation.

7. EU Expert Group for the Forest-Based Industries (F-BI)

Mr WALL (DG GROW) presented the implementation of the new EU Forest Strategy and the blueprint for the EU Forest-based industries. In his presentation (attached) he explained the key priorities of the multi-annual plan (MAP). This plan is of a non-legislative nature and is based on 12 key challenges and related remedial initiatives. It also covers the implementation of the F-BI Blueprint and includes a platform for interacting with third countries. More information can be found at :

http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/raw-materials/industries/forest-based/index_en.htm

EFIC welcomed the initiative to create a platform to meet third countries, and enquired about the decision to create a furniture sub-group in the F-BI expert group. UEA, building on the presentation, explained a problem regarding the recognition of forest certification schemes by large companies. More in particular, FSE seems to be more supported than PEFC while there is a difference in availability of wood harvested under the respective schemes. Mr WALL would investigate whether a study assessing the differences between FSE and PEFC has been produced.

FURNITURE SPECIFIC TOPICS

1. Adoption of agenda and of draft minutes of the working group meeting dd. 18/09/2015

The agenda and the minutes were adopted.

2. Flame retardants

EFIC explained the background of the use of flame retardants, which concerns consumers, fire-fighters as well as workers. Flame retardants are expected to reach a standardised level of protection. However, several standards set at national level are being used, which may give rise to use of standards for protectionist reasons. In addition, the use of flame retardants creates environmental issues which are difficult to manage in the context of a circular economy. The necessary protection levels can be obtained these days without using flame retardants. Some of them are already banned by REACH, but this procedure is time-consuming. Mr VILLADSEN enquired about the existence of an EU study on fire safety degree of substitutes, e.g. clay. The social partners agreed to further discuss the issue at secretariat level, possibly with the aim to develop a common position.

3. Social labels

The social partners reiterated that it is not feasible to create a new furniture-specific label. The issue will be kept on the agenda of the SSDC for information.

4. Work Programme 2016-2017

The social partners discussed the possibility to develop a "rolling" work programme for the Furniture SSDC, which should cover the priorities for the next 2 years, based on the level of implementation of the on-going working programme. It should also include a narrative part. A final draft will be presented to the plenary meeting in June, after bilateral discussions at secretariat level.

5. AOB

a) Mr WALL briefed the social partners on recent developments regarding exchanges with China on the subject of volatile organic compounds, more in particular standards TBT/1094/95/96. Following concerns expressed by DG GROW on the impact of the deviation of Chinese standards from international standards, China agreed on voluntary application thereof.

b) Ms BAZELEY introduced the BFM project entitled Tri21, which aims at research and development support for the integration of people with the Down syndrome as employees in the furniture industry. A complete presentation will be given at the next meeting. Information can already be found at www.workingtri21.eu

Annexes :

- List of participants

- Presentation "Healthy Workplaces for All Ages" (OSHA)
- Presentation "Implementation of the new EU Forest Strategy and Blueprint for F-BI (DG GROW)