

Joint Statement of the European Social Partners from the woodworking sector and the furniture sector

The social partners organisations of the European woodworking and furniture sector - EFBWW, CEI-Bois and EFIC – welcome the European Commission’s view on Occupational, Safety and Health (OSH). Social partners believe that the European OSH legal framework is in general effective and fit for purpose and would like to comment some specific aspects of the Communication on “Safer and Healthier Work for All - Modernisation of the EU Occupational Safety and Health Legislation and Policy”.

Preliminary remarks

- Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) is a core issue for social partners of the woodworking sector and of the furniture sector. Companies, Employers, Safety Reps and OSH Committees make great efforts for ensuring good working conditions with high safety standards. However, workers are still confronted with a relatively high number of accidents. OSH is a relevant regulatory area that has to be dealt at the European level.
- Whereas social partners welcome that the European Commission updated its EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014 -2020 and has now presented a more operationalized plan with three core activities. There are still several aspects that need strong attention in today’s working conditions. With this regard, social partners strongly support more specific actions to be taken in few more areas such as: Ergonomics, exposure to chemicals, health surveillance, machine safety or training.
- Social partners agree on the Commission’s statement about socio-economic benefits of investment in occupational safety and health.
- Social partners welcome the practical guidance document. This is an important instrument in support to companies and businesses who are often not properly supported by public institutions in implementing OSH measures at workplaces. Social partners call on the Commission to further support business in terms of training, information and financing, with a special attention to SMEs and micro-enterprises.
- Whereas the European Commission has identified implementation and enforcement as areas of highest concern and as main priorities for the upcoming years, social partners strongly encourage the European institutions to provide financial and human resources’ support in order to effectively (or efficiently) implement OSH legislation.

- The European Social Partner of the woodworking and the furniture sectors welcomes that the European Commission focuses on fighting cancer caused by the exposure to workplace agents and is working on the revision of the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive (2004/37). Social partners call on the European Commission to reflect on common methodologies for measurements.
- Whereas the Communication is referring to tripartite dialogue and to consultation procedures in the area of working conditions, social partners would like to encourage the European Commission to increasingly involve sectorial social partners in consultations and dialogue processes in order to focus on specific working condition aspects that – due to the use of various materials, technology and processes - differ in each sector.
- In preparation of the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014 - 2020, the European social partner organisations from both sectors sent you separate Joint Position papers. In these statements, we listed a number of more specific considerations and demands relevant for our sectors. These specific considerations concern single risk factors but also the management of OSH on company level. We like to draw again your attention to these documents that are still valid in most of its statements and are annexed here.

Specific remarks

- a. Labour inspectorates and other public authorities dealing with OSH implementation need proper financial support and personnel facilities. Social partners also agree with the European Commission statement on the need to concretely support SMEs in understanding existing obligation. Overlapping inspections must be avoided because they are a burden for companies and inefficient resources deployment.
- b. In the field of OSH, however, we miss more precise wording concerning the integration of OSH-aspects in other EU policy areas. OSH issues should be combined with EU policy initiatives such as vocational education, the “Build Up Skills” programmes and apprenticeships.
The previous strategy had at least the ambition to streamline OSH in other policy fields. We expect that the European Commission is not reducing its efforts to highlight the importance OSH should have in other areas. This would also contribute to improve the consistence of EU-policies.
- c. Social partners welcome the updating of the EU Directives on OSH and call on the European Commission to regularly update and revise provisions that cover ever-changing aspects such as technology, chemicals, and new materials in general. This must be carried out in coordination with social partners.
- d. Social partners welcome that the European Commission will initiate a peer review process for reducing administrative burden in national legislation. This process must take into account the need of companies that must be provided with guidance for compliance and good practice exchange tools.

- e. Especially in the field of chemical agents and new products containing chemicals, employers and workers are permanently confronted with new products, proving new options and possibilities but also possibly new hazards. This makes a regular updating of the CMD (2004/37) and CAD (98/24) and enlargement of its respective list of covered substances an imperative.
- f. As announced by the Commission's Communication we see the need to seriously deal with ergonomic risks. Possible progress will very much depend on the future design of workplaces, material, machinery and software. Any future initiative should integrate the aspect of proper design and manufacturing of these products, including the education of designers.
- g. Social partners acknowledge the relevance of workforce aging as well as gender-neutral approach in workplaces. The woodworking and furniture sector is facing an aging workforce and this matter needs to be carefully dealt with by companies and by Institutions.
- h. Social partners recognise the growing impact of psychosocial risks in workplaces and welcome the announced initiatives, especially the focus on better guidance and practical tools for the evaluation of workplace hazards. However, Social partners call on the European Commission to take into consideration the specific conditions in each occupation.
- i. We agree with the European Commission that a modern and updated concept of "workplaces" is needed.

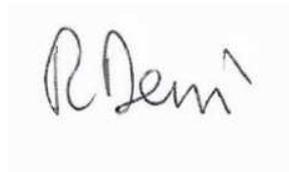
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On behalf of EFBWW



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