



EFBWW Standing Committee Wood/Furniture/Forestry

Videoconference 22 September 2020, 9:00 to 12:00

Item 5 : COVID-19 Disease and its impact in our countries/sectors

Short description on the national situation and in the wood/furniture/forestry sector. The reports will be compiled and send back to the participants. They shall give a structured overview on the situation and serve as basis for the discussion in the SC Wood. We may use them for the EFBWW webpage too. Therefore, we ask you to write not more than 10 lines for each question.

Please complete this survey and return it to info@efbww.eu before 10 September.

Country: Belgium

Union: ABVV Algemene Centrale/ FGTB Centrale Générale

Sectors concerned: Wood - Furniture

Survey completed by: Gianni De Vlaminck (SC Wood) and Hanne Sanders (S&H group FETBB)

1. What is the current situation on COVID19 in your country (maximum lines)

There was a general national lockdown of the Belgian labour market from 18 March to 17 May 2020. Only the essential and crucial sectors (defined in legislation) continued to operate. The social security system of temporary unemployment was extended and reimbursements were increased. The 'temporary unemployment corona' was introduced.

Late May - early June: economic relaunch. General measures were taken to prevent the spread of covid-19 both in the public space and on the labour market. The prevention measures to be applied in companies were listed and formalised by the social partners at national level in a 'generic guide'.

<https://werk.belgie.be/nl/themas/coronavirus/veilig-aan-het-werk-tijdens-de-coronacrisis-generieke-gids-versie-2-en>

<https://employment.belgium.be/sites/default/files/content/documents/Coronavirus/Genericguide.pdf>

Current situation - September 2020: most economic sectors have restarted. Only the sectors most affected, such as events, culture, etc., can continue to benefit from the system of temporary unemployment and other public financial support.

2. What are the consequences for the wood and furniture sectors?

During the national lockdown, some companies in the sector stopped their activities, while others drastically reduced their activity and staffing levels.

The economic impact of the lockdown and the general corona-crisis is felt in the

companies but varies greatly according to subsector, activity... It is still too early to precisely assess the economic and financial impact on the companies. But in our opinion, as in all other sectors, the impact will be considerable.

3. Which measures will be taken to support the sector?

For the employers, the general support measures apply, as well as a part of the sector (building events, fairs, ...) has been recognized as 'severely affected sector'.

Since the beginning of the crisis, various systems of government support for the self-employed have been put in place. The wood and furniture sector has many SMEs and one-man businesses that have benefited from specific financial (corona) support for enterprises.

For example, all self-employed workers could apply for a one-off premium of €4000 if they were obliged to cease their activities during the lockdown period.

4. Are there any negotiations or specific joint action of the social partners in our sectors?

A sector protocol has been concluded to supplement the general 'generic guide'.

https://werk.belgie.be/sites/default/files/content/documents/Coronavirus/sector/ceulemat_6-4-2020_16-28-00.pdf

A concrete checklist was also worked out for the sector as supported material.

https://werk.belgie.be/sites/default/files/content/documents/Coronavirus/sector/Woodwize_Checklist_Corona_nl.pdf

For employees, agreements were made to guarantee the consequences on 'bestaanszekerheid' (supplementary allowances) and payments of the 2nd pension pillar.

5. Other aspects of importance you like to report on?