



Press release
Brussels June 15 2008

The social partners in the EU Furniture Social Dialogue, UEA, EFBWW, and EFIC agree that more actions are needed to make the furniture industry more attractive to (young) persons.

The EU furniture industry is a labour-intensive industry. In the EU 27 more than 110,000 small & medium-sized companies (SME's) employ almost 1.5 million persons. The production value of this industry reached 108 billion Euros in 2008. The furniture sector is entering a period of maturation after wrestling with significant changes and job losses in the last decade. It is now, as a result, more rationalized and more export-oriented even if it is currently suffering strongly from the economic crisis. The sector however faces significant challenges in competing due to skill and staff shortages. The increased reliance on a skilled workforce and efficient production techniques is being compromised by a lack of sufficiently knowledgeable workers, especially in skilled and management positions and a lack of new skilled workers from existing educational programs. The work program of the EU social Dialogue Furniture foresees different actions around this subject.

During a seminar that took place under the Czech EU presidency in Prague on June 12, the EU social partners of the furniture industry agreed on the need for further action on EU and national level to attract young persons to work in the furniture sector. Purpose of the seminar was to present best practices among such actions based on present and past campaigns in the EU Member States.

The seminar was chaired by Mr. Frederik Lauwaert of EFIC.

After a presentation of the future of the European social dialogue by the representative of the European Commission responsible for the European Social Dialogue Committee Furniture, Mr. Lopes, and a presentation of the project by UEA social commission president Rodrigo Rodriguez, Mr. Kimtsaris of the UEA presented the results of the enquiry on the different campaigns to make the furniture industry more attractive in the different countries. Some campaigns address students, some workers and some partially even the general public.

Mr. Lauwaert presented a German campaign developed by VDM.

From the UK, Ms Bazely presented the ICOULD project that gives an insight into real career stories told by real people and the prospect4U, an initiative to attract youngsters to an education in the furniture sector.

Mrs Elisabet de Sablet presented MOBICIT2, an initiative to involve young students with designing furniture. Mr. Van der Veer gave an overview of the initiatives that are jointly undertaken by employers and workers organizations in the Netherlands



Mr. Frederik Lauwaert ended the days presentations with an explanation of the Belgian initiatives which include the "Touch Wood" comic strips. All best practices have been included in a booklet that is available in English, French and German on the project web site: www.ueanet.com/WAVE

In a round table and discussion, with participants from the European Commission, UEA, EFIC and EFBWW, the need for further actions was clearly established, both on national as on EU level. For the EU level, the preference was expressed for projects that obtained a large visibility also among the non professionals. The EC representative saw the newer member States as ideal target for such an initiative.

The social partners decided to follow-up on the conclusions of this seminar and to present a detailed initiative along the lines discussed to be executed in the some of the newer EU Member States.

The project and seminar was co-funded by the European Commission and by the social partners.

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