

Bucharest Declaration

We, the representatives of national trades unions, set up in 2007 a European Sector Network for representing the interests of the workforce in the wood/furniture industry. With the support of the European Commission we carried out a transnational exchange of information regarding company and sector developments, dealing specifically with company standards, changes at the national level and European perspectives in the wood/furniture sector. We reached agreement on joint sector-policy objectives and intensified our cooperation in the fields of operations of trade unions. Vocational education and further training in the wood/furniture sector, as well as the different standards and approaches applicable in different countries, were a central point of focus for our activities over the past few months. On this basis, we agreed on the following declaration at our transnational network meeting Bucharest on 21 September 2010:

Guidelines in vocational training for sustained sectoral and employment development

(1) With over 250,000 firms and employing significantly more than 2.5 million people throughout Europe, the European wood/furniture sector not only makes this continent the world's largest production and consumer region but also represents a centre of technological innovation, whose global competitiveness is secured by a well trained workforce and their expertise potential. **To remain successful in this field it is essential that structural improvements in vocational education and further training be introduced now.**

(2) The wood/furniture sector is an industry of the future oriented to ecological production! In view of the urgent global challenges posed by the issues of renewable raw materials, resource efficiency, climate protection and environment sustainability, this sector has a pioneering role to play in sustainable management and ecological production. **Safeguarding the future, however, also requires investments in research and development, innovative technologies, processes and products, and a continuous improvement to workforce training and professional skills.**

(3) The wood/furniture industry is a sector characterised by small and medium-sized enterprises. The necessary investments in know-how, the core training and skills of the workforce, are often neglected here. The resulting deficits in external and in-company vocational training - and consequently lack of innovation - could together jeopardise the development potential and sustainability of the individual firms. Smaller and medium-sized enterprises require expert and organisational support when planning and executing on-job training programmes. Access to national support programmes and European funding also has to be made easier and better. **Vocational training is a necessary part of structural policy for securing and developing the business of firms in the sector.**

(4) The global financial and economic crisis has also led in the wood/furniture sector to drops in sales and production, to a much tougher business environment and to job cuts. On the other hand, the long-term consequences of demographic trends, with a shortfall in an expert workforce in the future, can even today be noticed in the sector. In-company vocational training serves to create a pool of trained workforce and specialists to meet future needs. Saving in this field is very much the wrong strategy to pursue, one that will only damage firms and the overall sector in the long term. **Firms will have to devote greater initiative and costs to occupational and advanced training if they want to secure a reliable and qualified workforce into the future.**

(5) The markets for the wood/furniture industry will in future continue to be characterised by a sector-specific relationship between quality and price competition. Quality competition will represent an advantage for the firms, but only if they are themselves able to develop, secure and expand the necessary know-how. **Staff development – including in the form of qualified occupational training – is thus an essential strategic factor for future success.**

(6) The structural transformation witnessed throughout the wood/furniture industry is significant not only from an economic point of view. It has specifically also been accompanied by a transformation in professional qualifications and forms of work. The goal of occupational and advanced training – both in the company and in public institutions – is to support this transformation in the required expertise. Profes-

sional qualifications for the workforce must be in line with changes in work content and technical processes. Job-specific skills and know-how and social key qualifications among the workforce are increasingly important. “Life-long learning” is an indispensable factor for individual job protection. Vocational training helps to maintain individual employability and to secure existing jobs. Professional skills and vocational training must therefore also be a central pivot in every operational and technology policy. **Vocational training must be understood by firms in the sector as a guarantee of future sustainability and be implemented accordingly.**

(7) The wood/furniture sector is very much a global industry. In this high-competition environment, competition and cost pressure is increasing above all on smaller and medium-sized firms. This gives rise not only to common challenges for company-based and sector-based trade-union policy, but also to significant risks for industrial and employment-policy developments in the wood/furniture industry in Europe. The principle of “as cheap as possible” won’t help us conquer the markets of tomorrow. The sector in Europe can be successful in the long term only by being successful in innovation and quality competition. **For this, it requires a well trained and motivated workforce, which must in turn be based on a systematic and continuous system of occupational and advanced training.**

(8) For the sustained development of skilled jobs with appropriate working conditions, and for reinforcing innovative competitiveness in the wood/furniture sector in Europe, it is essential that the principles of social dialogue are consistently applied. The traditional organisational strengths of the trade unions and the integration of the representatives of employee interests in company decisions are of central importance in this regard. The design of sustainable and feasible future concepts will be successful only with the participation of the workforce. **If both initial occupational and advanced training of the workforce are to be promoted successfully, it will therefore be necessary to ensure full participation and co-determination by employee representatives.**

(9) Besides the firms and industrial associations in the sector, we also believe the EU has certain responsibilities in this regard. Vocational training must always get due consideration when the European political goals of a single European economic area are being realised. We need a European Initiative for “Europe as a training region”. From a legal point of view this will entail improving legal entitlements and access channels to “lifelong learning” services. We see in particular a special need for more transparency and greater permeability in the European occupational training systems. What is required is a sector-specific professional qualification framework, that is easily comprehensible, precise and controllable for training measures within the different labour markets. We therefore support the development and implementation of a common European qualification framework (EQF). We believe this presents an opportunity for achieving a set of vocational training programmes that are comparable and vocational certificates that are recognised throughout Europe. **This will enhance employability and mobility of all employees in the sector in all of Europe.**

The changes seen in recent years in the global economy make training and knowledge the most important resources for future trends in the developed industrial nations of Europe. Vocational training and qualification policy is a social obligation if our young people are to have an individual chance of reliable employment and income. This represents one basic requirement for the economic and social stability of Europe. **The social policy of the future will to a great extent be educational policy !**

Our demands for the firms in the wood/furniture sector

(1) The right to education is a basic human right! We demand that all employees have equal access to vocational and advanced training in both in-company and in public institutions. We insist that all forms of discrimination – irrespective of whether based on ethnic or social background, nationality, religion, level of education or gender – be eliminated. The socially disadvantaged, the handicapped, foreign employees, immigrants and those with low qualifications deserve special support and assistance in this regard. This also applies to temporary and leased workers. Vocational training measures must be arranged so that there will be no conflict between the needs of family and career. We need special concepts and a broader range of programmes tailor-made for the different target groups.

(2) Vocational and advanced training belong together! On the basis of the “lifelong learning” principle, the overall occupational training of employees must be organised as a systematic “qualification

chain". The first qualification acquired in initial vocational training must be systematically and continuously reinforced by occupational training measures throughout the employee's working life.

(3) Demographic changes call for more vocational and advanced training! We want to see vocational training for jobs in the wood and furniture sector to be made more attractive for young men and women. This will require an upgrading of the sector's general image and continuous improvement to the quality of vocational training. We demand measures for securing in the long term future demands for specialists at all levels (skilled craftsmen, technicians, engineers). We also wish to ensure that firms will in future continue to provide sufficient training places and continue to accept young professionals into regular employment once their vocational training has been completed.

(4) In-company occupational training requires permanent structures, improved resources and a training enhancing environment! We call for improvements in company infrastructure for occupational training (quality training resources at the workplace from the point of view of personnel, equipment and rooms), for sound company occupational planning, with job-specific content and programmes designed for the different target groups, and for more professional cooperation with external training centres. We want to see the instruments for systematic assessment of demand and training planning being applied more intensively. The firms for their part will have to provide efficient training management, full acceptance of costs, clear regulations on release of trainees and employees from work duties with continued wage payment and the creation of motivation and training incentives for the entire workforce.

(5) Vocational training must be worthwhile! We demand that the workforce participates and is included in all planning and organisation of vocational training. This includes as far as we are concerned more information and strategic discussions. We want to encourage successful completion of vocational training programmes by having it rewarded with higher salaries and improved opportunities of promotion. This means that it must be possible to incorporate and apply newly acquired skills at the workplace.

(6) Vocational training requires information, participation and codetermination! A sustained "vocational training culture" in the firms can be organised only with the cooperation of the workforce and its representatives. Where this has still not yet been done, we want to define and secure across the entire sector employees' legal entitlement to vocational training based on collective agreements. We also demand company agreements that specifically establish the co-determination and organisational contribution of plant union representatives regarding the company vocational training policy.

If training programmes and suitable and target-based, and organised with participation of plant and trade union representatives, firms will be more ready for the future and for sustained success!

First signatories

Bulgaria Federacija na Profsjuznities Organizacii ot Gorskoto Stopansto i Gorskata Promyshlennost (FSOGSDP)



Czech Republic OS DLV - Odborový svaz pracovníků dřevo - lesy - voda v CR (oblast Morava 1)



Germany Industriegewerkschaft Metall (IGM)



Italy Federazione Italiana Lavoratori Costruzioni E Affini (FILCA-CISL)



Romania Federatia Sindicatelor Libere din Industria Lemnului Romania



Europäische Föderation der Bau- und Holzarbeiter - **EFBH**
European European Federation of Building and Woodworkers - **EFBWW**



Poland Niezalezny Samorzadny Zwiazek Zawodowy „Solidarnosc”
(NSZZ “Solidarnosc”)



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