

Press release

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The international breakthrough of "design made in Germany" à la Wilkhahn started in 1980 with the launch of the FS-Line office chair design classic. Photo: Wilkhahn

New standard for the office furniture industry:

Wilkhahn and IG Metall (Metal Workers Union) agree on worldwide minimum standards of working conditions

IG Metall, Building and Woodworkers International and the office furniture manufacturer Wilkhahn from Bad Münders signed an international framework agreement. The company undertakes therein to comply with the exemplary standards in respect of the working conditions for all workers at its domestic locations and in particular, those abroad. Wilkhahn is the first company in the entire furniture industry in Germany to actively support the implementation of international employees' rights together with IG Metall.



The Wilkhahn production pavilions, designed by architect Professor Frei Otto, are exemplary in terms of combining economy, ecology, aesthetics and humanization of the world of work. Photo: Wilkhahn

Frankfurt/Main. With the conclusion of international framework agreements, unions and correspondingly oriented companies are pursuing the goal of securing employees' rights based on transnational provisions, and protecting workers in multinational companies and their suppliers from exploitation and wage dumping. This is to be achieved through compliance with the minimum standards of working conditions, which are based on the so-called core labour standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The first chairman of IG Metall, Berthold Huber, assessed the finalized agreement with Wilkhahn as a joint acknowledgement of social responsibility in a global economy. "In a time in which the downside of self-indulgent competition is obvious, the agreement stands for a common interest in social values and for the necessity of regulation in the interest of the employees. The rights of employees in a global



The production halls, built according to plans by architect Professor Thomas Herzog, stand for the consistent realization of a "green roof", utilization of daylight and the use of the renewable raw material of wood as a key building component. These halls are regarded as a model of excellence for ecologically focused industrial architecture. Photo: Wilkhahn



The state-of-the-art combined heat and power unit supplies Wilkhahn with electricity and heat, and results in a CO₂ reduction of 78%. Photo: Wilkhahn

economy have to be respected everywhere. The agreement is a step in the right direction", explained Huber. He made particular mention of the procedure at Wilkhahn designed to monitor compliance with the agreement. "These regulations clearly demonstrate the genuine interest of the company in implementing the agreement and they are excellent", declared Huber.

On the part of Wilkhahn, Dr. Jochen Hahne as executive majority partner, emphasized the importance of this milestone in the more than 100-year old history of the family business: "Here at company headquarters in Bad Münde we have developed a corporate culture geared towards partnership over the last 50 years. Today, this does not only include adequate economic success and the development of excellently designed furniture, but also social and ecological responsibility. The cooperation of Wilkhahn partners, management, works council and employees is a key prerequisite for our success and an integral part of our understanding of design made in Germany." Following the signing the Global Compact in 2007, this agreement is a further step towards underlining our commitment with respect to market partners too and towards embedding the same in management thinking. Particularly in view of current distortions, it is necessary to demonstrate the advantages of a sustainable and social market economy on an international level too. "For export focused companies such as Wilkhahn and for economies such as Germany, it is of paramount importance to establish clearly defined value orientation and rules as fast as possible. Business will then also become predictable. Apart from fundamental ethical convictions, this agreement is therefore an act of economic reason as well that focuses on long-term success."

The agreement is the first of its kind to be concluded in the entire German furniture industry. Within the scope of the organization of IG Metall, the companies Schwan-Stabilo, Faber Castell, Staedtler, Hartmann, Triumph, Volkswagen, Daimler, GEA, Rheinmetall, Bosch, BMW, EADS, Röchling Brothers as well as General Motors Europe and Ford Europe have concluded an international framework agreement and committed themselves to compliance with the minimum standards for all employees.

Wilkhahn



Architecture does not only provide a particularly congenial work environment at Wilkhahn in Germany, but also at the manufacturing facilities in Sydney: the building that houses both production and administration was designed by architect and interior designer Abbie Galvin from the Bligh Voller Nield office and has won many high-calibre awards. Photos: Wilkhahn

Wilkhahn: “design made in Germany” successful throughout the world

Wilkhahn is specialized in manufacturing high-calibre conference and office furniture that present a convincing solution due to modern design, lasting quality and fascinating functionality. The family company, winner of numerous awards, is a model of excellence for “design made in Germany”.

Throughout the world, Wilkhahn has 600 employees (440 at company headquarters in Bad Münden) at three production facilities and in 15 sales companies. In 2008, they generated sales of some 90 million Euros, with international markets accounting for approximately 70% of the total. A company pension scheme has been established at the company since the 1950s. Since the 1970s there has been wide reaching employees’ participation and since the mid-1990s modern, participation oriented forms of work have been in force. Moreover, in the international furniture business, Wilkhahn is regarded as a pioneer of environmentally responsible corporate management.

Socio-ecological milestones

2008 The newly erected combined heat and power unit (CHPU) at headquarters in Bad Münden, using renewable raw materials and ensuring virtually CO₂ neutral production

2007 Membership of the Global Compact: entitled “Conference. Excellence”, selected as one of the “365 places in the land of ideas”

2001 The first company in Lower Saxony to be certified in accordance with EMAS 2

2000 Wilkhahn Added Values. Publication of one of the first sustainability reports in medium-sized companies

1997 Corporate Conscience Award of the Council on Economic Priorities, New York

1996 German Ecology Prize of the Federal German Foundation for the Environment

1995 Federal German Prize of Company Health Insurance Funds for health care

1992 Launch of Picto as the first office chair in the world with a design concept consistently integrating ecological criteria

1989 Start of “Wilkhahn Green” with a policy statement on ecology: “The Administrative Board and Management have decided that ecology issues are to be taken seriously and in case of doubt are to be given priority over quick profit”

Wilkhahn

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