



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG

Social Dialogue, Social Rights, Working Conditions, Adaptation to Change
Social Dialogue, Industrial Relations

Brussels, 26 July 2006

SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE "CHEMICAL INDUSTRY"

WORKING GROUP MEETING

held on 10 July 2006 in Brussels

DRAFT MINUTES

Chairperson of the Working Group "Education, Training, Lifelong Learning" (morning session): Reinhard REIBSCH (EMCEF)

Chairperson of the Working Groups "REACH and Health & Safety Management" and "Responsible Care" (afternoon session): Jean PELIN (ECEG)

Commission representative: Dirk HADRICH (DG EMPL)

MORNING SESSION:

1. Welcome to the Working Group "Education, Training, Lifelong Learning"

Dirk Hadrich was introduced as the new coordinator in DG EMPL for this Committee.

2. Agenda

The Agenda was approved.

3. Report on the development of the Erasmus project supported by EMCEF and ECEG by Prof. Leo Gros (FH Fresenius)

Prof. Leo Gros was not available for this meeting. However, there is hope that the project will be accepted very soon.

4. Information on the results of the ECEG-EMCEF Social Partners Survey on national Education, Training and Lifelong Learning Systems

Simon Marsh and Jeanette van Dongen gave a presentation (annex 1) on the survey that delivered an assembly of data from which the purpose was to create European advice and not to prepare orders to national organisations. It was found that a majority of pupils does not decide to study science already at school. The decision to study science is more often taken at a later stage because it doesn't seem to be popular and attractive for pupils. Furthermore, it was found that women seem to be a group with an unfavourable opinion about science and industry. It became clear that jobs cannot be offered for all of the working life. However, training and learning can be offered and much of this is education by experience.

During the discussion it was emphasised that EU should carefully analyse the findings and results and it should consequently develop the right framework conditions to address the issues.

On 1 September the draft report should be presented to the working group and the final report should be presented to the plenary session on 26 October. It was agreed that Sylvain Lefebvre and Alfons De Potter would help Jeanette Van Dongen concerning this presentation.

5. Preparation of the Krakow EMCEF-ECEG Social Partner Conference of 27 October 2006 on "Training, Lifelong Learning and the Mobility of Workers"

It was decided that the Polish colleagues should prepare together with Simon Marsh and Lutz Mühl a draft agenda to be presented in the working group on 1 September.

6. Information from the EU Commission on a Conference on "Workers' mobility - what role for the social partners?" in Brussels on 14 September 2006

Dirk Hadrich explained that DG Employment is currently putting a lot of efforts in the "Workers' Mobility conference" in the framework of the European Year of Workers' Mobility 2006. This conference will take place on 14 September and all SSD Committees are invited to join. The purpose will be to have an open debate, to consider facilitating factors relevant for geographical and occupational mobility and as well to reflect on future contributions and initiatives of the social partners. A platform shall be established where tools can be presented and experiences can be shared. Further information can be found on <http://ec.europa.eu/workersmobility2006>.

AFTERNOON SESSION:

1. Welcome to the Working Groups "REACH and Health Safety Management" and "Responsible Care"

2. Agenda

The Agenda was approved.

3 and 4. Responsible Care: Summary of the presentations and discussions during the meetings since 2003 and preparation of the report to the Plenary Meeting of October 2006

Wolfgang Goos summarised the latest discussions and developments concerning 'Responsible Care'. He proposed to establish a brochure describing the Responsible Care initiative in the framework of the social dialogue and summarising the experiences with drawing main conclusions. This brochure would help to build capacity and understanding for the new Member States. It should show how industry, social partners and the public can constructively work together with concrete examples.

It was decided to establish this brochure "Good practice guide on Responsible Care" by small working group coordinated by Wolfgang Goos and Jeanette van Dongen. Major input is expected from Germany, Italy and Spain that have the most experience in this field. The timeframe for the work on this brochure shall be 6 months. Hopefully, colleagues from Belgium, Czech Republic, Slovakia and CEFIC will contribute to this work. The deadline to inform about coming contributions was set to end August.

5. REACH and Health and Safety Management: Report from Social Partner Conferences in Prague and Bucharest

Reinhard Reibsch reported on 2 conferences of the social partners that took place in Prague and Bucharest (annex 2). Both conferences were funded by the Commission. The REACH debate took place already in the 90ies but mainly in the old Member States and in the new MS there was no intensive debate on this subject. However, the involvement of the social partners is considered to be very crucial for the future debates in the new Member States. The intention of the 2 conferences was to improve the social dialogue on REACH but also in general in the new Member States. In conclusion this intention was reached and the exchange of view between the different countries was very much appreciated because there were not so many opportunities for such discussions. A high need was also identified for the social partners to discuss industrial policy. The Czech colleague added that the social dialogue in his country is developing more and more and that the discussions on the alarming consequences of REACH especially for SME have been very useful. These results were published in the Czech Republic only for the first time.

6. REACH and Health and Safety Management: Short update on the REACH timetable and the work in the European Parliament and the Council

Thomas Jostmann updated the working group concerning the REACH process. The Common Position of the Member States has been formally adopted in the Council on 23 June 2006. This document will now be the starting point for the 2nd reading in the co-decision procedure. CEFIC welcomed this position mainly because the substitution principle was very carefully worded and the review of granted authorisations was set on a regular basis and not on a limited basis. However, the fine-tuning of the authorisation process is not yet done and will only start in future. The pre-registration and information requirements for lower volumes have been changed to facilitate the work of SMEs. An increased responsibility was given to the Chemicals Agency. A big problem in terms of competitiveness will be the non-authorisation of safely managed substances. Subjects of the future negotiation will be the duty of care (that was not really reflected by the Council), registration packages, handling of confidential information, access to information, responsibilities of the Chemicals Agency, authorisation time limits, substitution principle etc. Further information can be found in the presentation document which is attached to the minutes as annex 3.

The second reading could be finished by EP Plenary vote in October/November 2007. Probably, the EU institutions want to avoid conciliation with unpredictable results. CEFIC expects that REACH will enter into force during the first half of 2007.

The RIP developments and the technical guidance documents governed by the Commission have already a significant delay and the documents will not be available in due course. The recruitment process of around 500 people for the Agency is also delayed. Many hurdles have still to be taken at national and at European level.

Another joint position document was considered by the group because the risk of an unworkable REACH could damage the image of the sector. The added value of such a joint document could be to show what can go wrong if REACH will be adopted as currently drafted. There was no common agreement on the substitution principle as defended by CEFIC. However, it was finally decided that ECEG prepares a draft paper that will be investigated by EMCEF concerning its acceptance. The paper should not bring the impression that the sector would be acting against legislation. It should comment on the new elements that have been brought into the debate since the 2nd joint position was issued and it should help to make REACH workable and intelligent.

7. REACH and Health and Safety Management: Report on state of play on the joint initiative of the Social Partners of the European Chemical Industry regarding downstream user industries

Some examples of downstream user cases have been gathered and a document has been drafted (annex 4). There are examples showing that risks can be reduced if chemicals are used by sufficiently educated people. The example no. 6 on formaldehyde is new. It would be the intention to agree this document in the working group on 1 September. Therefore, reactions and comments should be sent not later 7 August. Finally, a joint brochure "Working with chemicals" shall be established.

8. REACH and Health and Safety Management: Information on a planned ETUC Conference on REACH in September

ETUC has planned a REACH conference on 19 September and EMCEF will give a presentation. A common view on the latest REACH developments would be very useful to have. CEFIC is ready to contribute.

9. Any other business

The deadline to inform about coming contributions to the Responsible Care brochure was set to end August.

Next meetings:

1 September (WG) 10h00

26 October (PL Krakow)