

Social Partner Dialogue of the European Chemical Industry



Biannual Working Programme 2005 / 2006 of the Social Partner Dialogue of the European Chemical Industry

The European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers Federation (EMCEF) and the European Chemical Employers Group (ECEG), in order to fulfil its joint aim laid down in the Joint Declaration on the establishment of a formalised Sector Dialogue Committee for the European Chemical Industry signed on September 27th 2004 on February 3rd 2005 agreed in the Plenary Meeting of the Social Partner Dialogue of the European Chemical Industry upon the following biannual Working Programme for the Dialogue.

Education / Training / Lifelong Learning

EMCEF and ECEG agreed on a Joint Position paper on Training, Education and Lifelong Learning in September 2004. This paper is attached to these Working Programme. As a part of these joint position paper both Social Partners already agreed to form a Working Group on "Education, (Vocational) Training and Lifelong Learning)".

This group will now be formed as a Working Group within the framework of the formalised Social Partner Dialogue. It has the task to analyse the existing information in this area (e.g. reports of previous projects like Trilaterale, activities of Cedefop on sector levels, etc.), taking any previous results of such projects into account and to cooperate with the important institutions in this area in Europe in order to

- (1) draft an analysis of the status quo regarding skills, qualifications, vocational (further) training and lifelong learning within the industry and to
- (2) facilitate an exchange of information and good practice of the different national systems of education, vocational (further) training and lifelong learning in order to support the further development in these areas.

The draft analysis named in (1) should be presented in the form of a report to the second Plenary Meeting of 2006.

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The Working Group will be formed of experts in Training, Education and Lifelong Learning and in national Social Partner relations. Each side may nominate up to 7 members for this Working Group plus one Chairperson.

Further to the work to be done in this Working Group ECEG and EMCEF may follow some specific projects in this area, e.g. in the form a Social Partner Conference of the Chemical Industry, studies or analyses of certain aspects to be carried out together with the EU Commission and / or other relevant European institutions. These could be related, for example, to demographic changes, possible future skills shortages, employability in cases of restructuring or other subjects agreed upon between both Social Partners..

Responsible Care

Already back in May 2003 a Memorandum of Understanding on Responsible Care was signed between EMCEF, ECEG and Cefic. This paper is attached to this Working Programme. The Memorandum founded a Joint Monitoring Group on Responsible Care of the three organisations which met several times since then. In the new framework of the formalised Social Partner Dialogue the work of this Joint Monitoring Group Responsible Care will be continued in the form of a Working Group of the formalised Social Partner Dialogue. The principle tasks of this group will be, as has been agreed between ECEG, Cefic and EMCEF in the original Memorandum of understanding on Responsible Care, as follows:

- (1) Review of the improvements in the safety, health and environmental performance of the chemical industry
- (2) Identification of training needs to develop Responsible Care programmes
- (3) Employee training and education practices in safety, health and environmental areas
- (4) Development of a simple procedure to exchange information relating to product concerns and on significant HS&E accidents in the chemical industry
- (5) Share information on the best practices to improve relations at national level on Responsible Care and to promote an active contribution from employees and their representatives
- (6) Means to assist the Social Partners in the new central and eastern European member countries to enable them to play their role in improving performance in safety, health and environment

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The first focus of the work should be on sharing information on best practices regarding employee involvement (see (5) above). In this area work has already been done by the Joint Monitoring Group on Responsible Care in the past two years, hearing reports on the subject from Spain, Germany and Italy. In the upcoming meetings additional country reports should be presented. For the first Plenary Meeting in 2006 the Working Group should prepare a report on good practice of employee involvement on the national level. The report should be based on the presentations of the country reports to the group.

ECEG, Cefic and EMCEF do understand Responsible Care as a continues process. It is intended to give Responsible Care, as an important voluntary initiative of the Chemical Industry, a stronger European dimension through the work with the Social Partner Dialogue.

A second item for the Working Group during the 2005 / 2006 period should be the safety, health and environmental performance of the Chemical Industry (see (1) above). An exchange of national experience of programmes to improve the performance in this area should take place, which may include training programmes for employees and their representatives in these areas. ECEG and EMCEF anticipate work in this area will continue beyond the timeframe of the 2005/2006 bi-annual Working Programme.

Reach and Health Safety Management in Chemical and Downstream Users Industries

In 2003, ECEG, Cefic and EMCEF issued a joint statement on the new European Chemical Policy Review (REACH), which is attached to this Working Programme.

ECEG, Cefic and EMCEF, recalling that sustainable development is based on the three pillars of environmental, social and economic needs, share the opinion that it is possible to make the proposed Chemical Policy Review compatible with the need for competitiveness and with the Lisbon goals. In this regard, ECEG, Cefic and EMCEF are supporting European chemical product legislation proposals promoting coherence, workability and effectiveness in line with the principle of sustainable development.

However, they consider that the Chemical Policy Review is unlikely to further reduce chemically induced occupational diseases within the chemical manufacturing industry

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as it is already well regulated in this area and employees in the sector are adequately protected as the relatively low level of occupational diseases in chemical industry compared with other industries demonstrates. Reasons for this low record are, beside others, the good practices developed between authorities, industry and employees and especially the ongoing commitment of both social partners to look together for continuous improvements of health and safety conditions.

Nevertheless, as improvements are always possible, especially in downstream user industries, the Social Partners create a Working Group of the Social Partner Dialogue of the European Chemical Industry in order to identify the good practices of information and training of the employees for the use of chemicals especially in downstream industries.

The working group will aim at defining the ways to

- (1) Promote information and training of the employees inside the chemical industry and downstream industries on the safe use of chemical products
- (2) Diffuse best practices in the chemical and downstream industries
- (3) Participate in and contribute to the evaluation of the efficiency of regulations by the authorities in this area
- (4) Fully involve the new EU-Member States taking into consideration the additional burden for their industry in this area.

The Working Group will ask for support from the relevant institutions and regularly present their progresses and proposals in the framework of the Social Partner Dialogue at the Plenary Meetings. Furthermore the Working Group may propose to the Social Partners special projects in this area, e.g. the organisation of meetings, workshops or conferences especially focussed on the matters related to the tasks of the Working Group.

Follow-up of the EU enlargement in 2004 and preparations for possible next steps of enlargement

ECEG and EMCEF may follow some specific projects in this area, e.g. the organisation of meetings, workshops or conferences especially focussed on the exchange of experience between the Social Partners of the EU member countries which have joined the EU in 2004, the candidate countries for further EU enlargements (Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia) and the members of the EU15 regarding all subjects of social affairs agreed upon between both Social Partners.

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The EMCEF and ECEG member organisations from these countries are invited to come forward with specific proposals for such projects. ECEG and EMCEF will furthermore get into contact with the relevant Social Partner organisations of the candidate countries named above to see which possible projects might be helpful from their point of view.

Furthermore EMCEF and ECEG might organise specific projects in the form of conferences, workshops or studies looking after certain aspects of high importance for “sub sectors” and / or certain parts of the Chemical Industry, as it took place for example already in the past in the PVC sector. The relevant representatives of the interests of these sectors and their employees are invited to come forward with any specific proposals.

General Points

Both Social Partners agree changes to the subjects identified to be part of the work of both organisations within the framework of the formalised Social Partner Dialogue will be possible. They will have to be approved by the Plenary Meeting. In due time before the end of 2006 the Social Partners will discuss the subjects for a follow-up Working Programme for the formalised Social Partner Dialogue from 2007 onwards.

Regarding the Working Groups founded with this Working Programme by both Social Partners it is agreed in addition to the nominated members and the chairpersons of these groups the chairpersons of the Plenary Meeting and one more representative from the staff of the organisations have the right to participate in all meetings of the Working Groups.

This Working Programme was approved by the Plenary Meeting of the formalised Social Partner Dialogue of the Chemical Industry on February 3rd 2005 in Brussels.

Brussels, 3rd February 2005
The Chairpersons

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