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Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG

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

Brussels, 5 October 2006

SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE "CHEMICAL INDUSTRY"

WORKING GROUP MEETING

held on 1 September 2006 in Brussels

DRAFT MINUTES

Chairperson of the Working Groups "REACH and Health & Safety Management" and "Responsible Care" (morning session): Reinhard REIBSCH (EMCEF)

Chairperson of the Working Group "Education, Training, Lifelong Learning" (afternoon session): Simon MARCH (ECEG)

Commission representative: Dirk HADRICH (DG EMPL)

MORNING SESSION:

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

2. Agenda

The Agenda was approved.

3. Responsible Care: Presentation of further ideas for the report proposed at the Plenary meeting of October 2006 and of the Working group meeting on 10 July 06

Mr Goos recapitulated on the purpose of this report and on the added value of this report for the readers (annex 1). The 4 chapters of the report should cover: General information, the history of responsible care, country reports on experiences / examples and finally the

documentation of agreements. Some findings on the different ways of handling RC in different countries, recommendations and lessons to learn were discussed. It was considered that the report could be a good propaganda for the social dialog but not for responsible care as such. It was decided to name participants for drafting of the text within 2 -3 weeks.

4. Responsible Care: Short update on the renewed global Responsible Care charter

CEFIC updated on the renewed global responsible care charter that was first launched 1985 in Canada (annex 1). A task force had been active to further develop the responsible care and its commitments. The global product stewardship was described as addressing many society concerns. It was mentioned essential that companies implement responsible care and that the associations help during the implementation. Brochures in EN and FR have been distributed during the meeting. The social partners want appearance at global level that there is joint action of the social partners at EU level with enhanced and strong commitments.

5. Short update on REACH timetable and the work in the European Parliament and Council

The vote in the European Parliament's Environment Committee is expected for October 2006 and the Plenary vote for November 2006. Consequently, REACH could enter into force during the first half of 2007 if there is no conciliation phase.

6. Possible renewed joint position paper on the 2nd reading of REACH between EMCEF and ECEG/CEFIC

The newly presented text contained a few new elements that focus more on the situation in the Council and less on the situation in the European Parliament. It was stressed that the Finish presidency has an important role and the text should therefore refer to the Finish presidency. It was concluded that the authorisation should induce substitution but there should be no automatic procedure. The risk and its reduction was considered as the problem and not the danger. Substitution could take place if the risk cannot be reduced, if an alternative substance is available and if the socio-economic condition would allow this step. It was decided to work on the document and to agree the common position internally before 8 September so that the Plenary on 27.10. could adopt a joint position.

7. Report on the state of play on the joint initiative of the social partners of the European chemical industry regarding downstream user industries

The new version of 30.8. was presented by Mike Jeffs and discussed (annex 2). It was emphasised that the summary should be seen as a sort of conclusion and it should be used to stimulate the further dialog. It was agreed to send comments or changes before 8.9. so

that the brochure could be printed before end September. Funds for printing and translation would be needed.

8. Information on the ETUC conference on REACH on 19 September and the contribution of the chemical industry sector

The agenda of the conference can be found at www.ETUC.org . There will be one part chaired by R. Reibsch concerning experiences of the social dialogue in the chemicals industry. As the first ETUC conference on REACH it should be considered of high importance.

9. Presentation of the work done by the working group at the upcoming plenary meeting on 26 October in Krakow

The next plenary meeting of the sectoral social dialogue committee will be held on 26 October 2006 in Krakow and its programme was discussed.

10. Any other business

No issue.

AFTERNOON SESSION:

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

2. Agenda

The Agenda was approved with item 6 directly after 2.

3. Presentation of the UK trade union approach regarding contribution to lifelong learning and training in the workplace

Tom Beattie from the UK Amicus trade unions explained that the EU could fall behind Asia if knowledge and skills become obsolete and if there is no increased investment in education. Working together of the social partners would be very important to support employers willing to train. The employer's commitment, the assigned time for training and the approach to train with people rather than to people would be essential for success. It makes business sense if workers can take part in the decision making process especially concerning training. Employers should work with union learning representatives thereby ensuring the participation of individuals in their own learning and training. This would be the important key where people would feel a certain level of ownership of their learning and training which they want and could do. Vocational training, communication training, language learning and IT skills should be given consideration. Often there is sharing of costs and time between employers and trade union e.g. that employers pay the costs and unions offer the time.

4. Report on the development of the CITIES Comenius project supported by EMCEF and ECEG

Prof. Leo Gros (FH Fresenius) described the professional education, attitudes and awareness of teachers in chemistry as found during the CITIES Comenius project (Chemistry and Industry for Teachers In European Schools). It is about the development of course modules for secondary school teachers to advance chemical education but it can also be seen as means to change attitudes and to increase awareness of teachers. The project is based on needs for industry. One aim is to improve the image of the chemicals industry sector. Young students often have the impression that the sector is covering businesses working not very clean and is dealing only with cryptic formula. Therefore, the sector would not be interesting and attractive for young students. The training includes secondment of teachers to industry companies. Another aim is to get teachers to better feelings for industry facts. The teacher training programme should be delivered on CD Rom in 5 languages. The social partner organisations and their affiliates are invited to submit any kind of information that should be included in one of the modules of the training programme.

5. Presentation of further advanced proposal for the report on the results of the survey regarding education and vocational training in the European chemical industry

Jeannette van Dongen and Simon March have put together some information to update on the survey. The survey was done since the social partners wanted to discuss the issues of training, education and lifelong learning and hence they called for joint responses.

By end September the draft report should be distributed to the SSD group and the plan is to agree any final changes on 6 October before the final report shall be presented and published in the plenary on 26 October.

The structure of the report was described: The issues of education and lifelong learning should be set in the context of the chemical industry. Developments in the market of the chemical industry in Europe will be looked at. Facts, figures and consumer issues should also be contained. The importance of the social dialogue, the work of the SSDC Chemical industry and the EU decision making process will be described.

Finally, conclusions from the survey will be drawn and suggestions should be made of what could happen next.

6. Preparation of the Krakow EMCEF-ECEG social partners conference of 27 October 2006 on "Training, Lifelong Learning and the mobility of workers"

A first draft programme was distributed in the meeting. The layout of the meeting will be similar to the meeting in London in 2005. There will be reports of the 3 working groups about their work over the previous months. On the next day there is the project conference on mobility of workers and the links to training and lifelong learning. On 18 September a task force will meet in Krakow to prepare the event. It was suggested to add a discussion on "workers rights to information and consultation" since new rules have

been implemented recently in Poland and there would be only few information (e.g. on the scope of the economic information) in Poland.

7. Any other business

Next meetings:

26 October (PL Krakow)

8 December (WG)