



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES DG

Social Dialogue, Industrial Relations

**DRAFT**

Subject: Minutes of the meeting

Meeting: Sectoral social dialogue committee, chemical industry  
Plenary

Time and place: 3 May 2006  
Centre Borschette, 36 Rue Froissart, Brussels

- 1) Welcome by the Chairpersons and the EU Commission**
- 2) Approval of the Agenda**

The agenda is presented by the chairman and approved unanimously.

- 3) Social Dialogue**
  - Conference of the European Commission on Sector Social Dialogue on 13 March 2006 in Brussels**
    - a. Report from the ECEG and EMCEF Chairpersons of the Plenary Meeting
    - b. Point of view of the EU Commission
    - c. Discussion

Mr Morin presents the latest developments in the area of social dialogue.

On March 30 the tripartite summit dealt with the strategy for employment and growth.

The interprofessional social partners have adopted a new work programme.

On March 13 the Commission organised a conference that reunited the social partners of all sectors, the new General Director Mr Van der Pas and Commissioner Spidla. This meeting allowed an exchange about the ongoing works, problems and recent results. The Commission had proposed to focus on the three issues of enlargement, training and demography. Mr Van der Pas wants to organise a follow-up event and repeat the exercise. The Commission has prepared a questionnaire for the participants and awaits a response

from the chemical industry. The presentations of the conference are available on the social dialogue website of the Commission.

Other important developments are:

- the autonomous agreement of several sectors on crystalline silicates
- the applications of the gas, steel and hospital/health sectors to create a social dialogue committee
- the consultation of the social partners on the inclusion of disadvantaged persons in the labour market
- the consultation on the new health and safety strategy 2007-2013
- for the social dialogue budget line 110 project proposals have been received, ca. 30 have been accepted
- a new communication on CSR

discussion:

- Morin: The exact role of the multi stakeholder forum on CSR has yet to be defined. The social partners should take actions in spite of the reestablishment of the forum.
- Reibsch: The issue is under discussion in the ETUC.
- Clerinx: RC and health and safety issues already deal with CSR themes.
- CSR is also a global issue, cooperation with other actors is needed, e.g. the ILO. The pharmaceutical industry has a specific responsibility in the third world. Global codes of conduct should be promoted.
- In Hungary there are still problems with social partnership in the gas sector, there is no employers organisation
- Morin: The global level can not be an excuse not to take actions in Europe. Social and environmental issues are more and more included in development cooperation strategies of Europe. The textile sector has developed a code of conduct that includes relations to suppliers from third countries.
- Reibsch/Clerinx: The sectoral conference was appreciated as an opportunity for exchange. The exercise should be continued.

#### **4) Relocation and Industrial Relations**

##### **- EIRO Report of the Dublin Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions of the European Union**

- a. Presentation of the Report by **Ms Demetriades**, Dublin Foundation
- b. Discussion and Reactions from the Chemical Industry Social Partners – Relevance for Chemical Industry
- c.

Mrs Demetriades delivers a presentation of a study on relocation. See attached file.

The study focuses on the aspects of internal restructuring and the benefits of relocation. The results are inflows and outflows broken down to regions, countries and sectors. Reactions from social partners in the EU, Japan and the USA are included.

discussion:

- Van Dongen: Employers focus on international competition more than on sustainable development.
- In EWCs there is only information, but no consultation.

## 5) Demography

### - Green book of the European Commission on Demographic Change

- a. Presentation of the Green book by **Julius OP DE BEKE**, European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
- b. Discussion
  - i. Content of Green book on Demographic Change
  - ii. Effects of Demographic Change on the European Chemical Industry
  - iii. Actions of European or national Social Partners

Mr Op de Beke presents the Commission's thoughts on demographic developments.

- The predicted fertility rate for Europe for 2020 is 1.6, but with a lot of uncertainty. All the world will follow the European trend of ageing sooner or later.
- Ageing means risks for public finance. Reforms are under way but they must be maintained.
- Demographic change is happening at different speeds in the EU.
- Migration can help, but entails a brain drain. 75% of migration are family reunification and therefore low skills migration.
- Black market economy attracts illegal migration.
- Possible actions:
  - most of the authority lies with the Members States
  - more attention for family policies
  - couples would like to have more children than they actually do have
  - in October there will be a demographic forum with an exchange of best practices
  - more gender equality and sharing of workload of raising children
  - better reconciliation of work-family life; active ageing policies in companies
  - no mandatory retirement age

- active ageing after retirement, "silver economy"

Discussion:

- Older workers are not employed if there are younger candidates.
- Exceptions from an increased retirement age must stay possible.
- Op de Beke: Early retirement policies were an error. The attitude of employers has to be changed. A problem is that the wage levels of older workers are higher. Many new jobs are low skilled jobs.
- Demetriades: The Dublin Foundation is preparing a report on youth at work

**6) Chemicals Policy**

**- Status of GHS implementation into EU Community Law**

- a. Presentation by **Graham WILLMOT**, EU Commission, DG Enterprise and Industry
- b. Discussion and Reactions from Chemical Industry Social Partners

Mr Wilmot is giving a presentation on GHS (globally harmonised system). See attached file.

**7) Industrial Policy**

**– Proposed High Level Group for the Chemical Industry**

- a. Presentation by **Luc DE MEYER**, EU Commission, DG Enterprise and Industry
- b. Discussion and Reactions from Chemical Industry Social Partners

- At the end of last year the Commission adopted a new Communication on Industrial Policy dubbed “A policy framework to strengthen EU manufacturing – towards a more integrated approach for industrial policy”
- This Communication was the result of a detailed screening exercise we conducted previously on the competitiveness of 27 individual sectors of manufacturing industry.
- As a result of this screening exercise we launched 7 major cross-sectoral policy initiatives namely : 1. An IPR and Counterfeit Initiative, 2. HLG on Competitiveness, Energy and the Environment, 3. External aspects of Competitiveness and Market Access, 4. New Legislative Simplification Programme, 5. Improving Sectoral Skills, 6. Managing Structural Change in manufacturing, 7. An Integrated European approach to Industrial Research and Innovation
- In addition to these cross-sectoral initiatives we saw however the need to a number of new political sector-specific initiatives as a result of the specific nature or particular importance of the concerned sectors. One of these sector-specific initiatives is the setting up of a HLG on the Chemicals Industry in 2007.

- The idea to set up such a group is not new. In fact, the industry has been asking for some time to establish such a HLG similar to initiatives in the automotive, textiles, aerospace, shipbuilding industries, and pharmaceuticals. The Commission has always been rather reluctant however because of the very likely interference of such a group with the work on REACH. But with the envisaged final agreement on REACH by the end of this year there is no more a risk for such interference since the HLG will actually start in 2007.
- Consequently, and this should be clear from in the beginning, there is no intention to reopen the discussion on REACH or other recently adopted legislation on chemicals in this HLG. We think that there are a number of other important issues which touch upon the competitiveness of the industry and which merit proper attention.
- Since we have still more 8 months in 2006 before the first official HLG we decided to use this period to prepare the HLG as good as possible. Therefore, next week on 10 May we will have Brainstorming Session on the HLG within the Commission. The idea of this initiative, as the name suggests, is to informally exchange views on the different aspect of the HLG (issues to be discussed, objectives, deliverables, working arrangements, etc.). We have invited basically 2 types of participants for this brainstorming session: official from national administration who have done similar exercises in the past or at the moment; people from industry that have been doing some thinking on the long-term competitiveness of the European chemicals industry (e.g. company strategists, etc.). The main purpose of the group is to get the orientation right from the beginning.
- Indeed, the actual HLG requires a formal Commission decision (establishment of the Group, composition, terms of reference). It would be premature to elaborate on these issues at this stage.
- The Commission has some experience with other HLGs and from this we know that such groups normally meet 3 or 4 times, its members are CEOs of relevant companies, commissioners (Enterprise and Industry, Trade, RTD, Competition), Ministers from MS, sometimes MEPs, other stakeholders (Trade Unions, NGOs , consumers, etc). There will normally also be a 3-level structure (HLG; sherpa, working group)

#### Discussion:

- Pelin: The French experience shows that it is important to have a small team and to make concrete recommendations and roadmaps.
  - In Italy there is a tripartite body, an observatory. ECEG and EMCEF should be involved in the HLG and the HLF should have links with REACH.
  - Trade unions should participate in the brainstorming session and in the HLG.
  - De Meyer: EMCEF is welcome to appoint a participant to the brainstorming session.
- The conclusions of the HLG are expected after 1-1.5 years.

### **8) Social Partner Dialogue Working Group on REACH and Health and Safety Management**

- a. Update on the progress of the REACH proposal after the decisions in the first reading in the European Parliament and the Council  
by **Jean-Claude LAHAUT**, CEFIC

- b. Report from the ECEG-EMCEF European Social Partner Conference of the Chemical Industry on REACH and Health and Safety in Central and Eastern Europe in Prague on 23 / 24 March
- c. Report on the preparations of the Workshop on REACH and Health and Safety in candidate countries in Bucharest on 29 / 30 May 2006
- d. Project with and for downstream user industries on Managing Chemical Substances and Health and Safety  
by **Jean-Claude LAHAUT**, CEFIC
- e. Proposal for a renewed joint position paper of ECEG / Cefic and EMCEF to be agreed for the second reading of REACH in the European Parliament and the European Council
- f. Other items

a. Results:

- A joint position on the legislative process was adopted.
- The social partners engage in health and safety matters, notably in downstream industries
- The conference in Prague focused i.a. on REACH

Legislative process:

- In December 2005 the Council reached a political agreement that was endorsed by the Commission. The Council will adopt the agreement as a common position.
- Mr Sacconi said that it is unclear when the discussion in the EP will start, the EP has 4 months to decide. The Plenary will make decisions with absolute majority.
- Differences between the 1<sup>st</sup> reading in the EP and the Council position are mainly about authorisation, registration, evaluation and duty of care

b. Prague conference:

Pelin: the level of preparation for REACH in the new member states is low.

- The conference was a success. In Hungary a forum for REACH will be created.

c. Mr Reibsch presents the state of preparation of the Bucharest workshop. Participants will be 4 from EMCEF, 4 from ECEG, speakers and further participants at their own costs.

d. Mr Lahaut makes a presentation of the cooperation with downstream users. See attached file. The OSHA will be asked to support the initiative. Mr. Reibsch adds that the OSHA had already agreed in Prague to lend support. The participants stress that SMEs and interim workers have to be addressed by the project.

e. Participants agree that an update would be a logical step. UNICE and ETUC should be approached too. The REACH WG should make a proposal, possibly at the July 11 meeting. The initiative could be presented in the rooms of the EP in order to have more impact on the main fractions of the EP.

**9) Social Partner Dialogue Working Group on Education, Training and Lifelong Learning**

- a. Survey of national education, training and lifelong learning systems: Update on progress of work and first ideas for report to be adopted by October Plenary Meeting
- b. Joint (Comenius-) project with external researchers: Presentation of final project layout and report on next steps
- c. Other items

Ms Van Dongen reports that the overview over the questionnaires is under preparation and will be presented at the next WG meeting. In the end the social partners should make a joint statement. A project has been proposed in the framework of the COMENIUS program on the basis of the work of Prof. Gros. The focus is on school education. The social partners will add a module on labour relations in the industry.

**10) Social Partner Dialogue Working Group on Responsible Care**

- a. Update on the work done so far and the proposed report to be adopted by the October Plenary Meeting

Mr Clerinx reports on the presentations from ES, DE, IT, FI, SV and the UK. The next step is a synthesis report. At the July 11 meeting a brochure/checklist should be discussed.

Pelin adds that a global charter of RC is being developed. It is signed by 26 countries already. The focus is on product stewardship.

**11) Any other item**

The next working group meeting is on July 11.

Chairman of the meeting: Reinhard Reibsch  
Commission representative: Markus Handke