Brussels, 22 March 2013

SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE MEETING
EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES

ALBERT BORSCHETTE CONFERENCE CENTRE
22 FEBRUARY 2013

MINUTES

Participants:

Employer representatives

Mr Martin Isles, UEPG, United Kingdom
Ms Miette Dechelle, UEPG, Belgium
Mr Zygmunt Borkowski, EURACOAL, Poland
Ms Rozka Bozova, EURACOAL, Bulgaria
Ms Gitta Hulik, EURACOAL, Belgium
Mr Brian Ricketts, EURACOAL, Belgium
Ms Marina Schneider, EURACOAL, Germany
Ms Atanaska Srebreva-Vachoska, EURACOAL, Bulgaria
Mr Zhivko Zhelyazkov, EURACOAL, Bulgaria
Ms Cecilia Anderson, EUROMINES, Sweden
Mr Ferdinand Gens, EUROMINES, Germany
Ms Corina Hebestreit, EUROMINES, Germany
Mr Tomasz Osadczuk, EUROMINES, Poland
Mr Manfred Steinhage, EUROMINES, Germany
Mr Rafał Szkop, EUROMINES, Poland
Ms Claire Lanne, IMA-Europe, Belgium
Ms Michelle Wyart, IMA-Europe, Belgium

Employee representatives

Mr Jean-Pierre Damm, FNEM FO, France (in the chair)
Ms Corinna Zierold, IndustriALL, Belgium
Mr Ralf Patrick Bartels, IG BCE, Germany
Mr Lars-Erik Folkesson, IF METALL, Sweden
Mr Dariusz Potyrała, ZZG, Poland
Mr Ferenc Rabi, BDSZ, Hungary
Mr Bernhard Rothleitner, PRO-GE, Austria
Mr Károly Stanitz, BDSZ, Hungary

European Commission

Mr Murad Wiśniewski, DG EMPL, Belgium

1. Adoption of the agenda

The draft agenda was approved with four amendments: point 5 was moved to point 3, point 4 was deleted, and a presentation on the track and trace directive as well as an update on NEPSI were included under any other business.

2. Adoption of the minutes

The draft minutes of the last SSDC meeting of 29 November 2012 were adopted without amendments.

3. EU-OSHA OiRA tool

Ms Julia Flintrop of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) presented the first operational Online interactive Risk Assessment (OiRA) tool in the leather and tanning industry. She explained that the OiRA tool had principally been developed for companies with less than ten employees. However, as a free and open-source software, it could be adapted to the needs of any sector, just like EU-OSHA had adapted it from a tool that had originally been developed in the Netherlands. The OiRA tool could be translated by the national social partner organisations from English into their respective languages. Once every year, there was a review to determine if a tool was being used. If this was not confirmed, it would be taken offline.

Probed by Mr Martin Isles on responsibilities and deadlines in the OiRA action plan, Ms Flintrop explained that EU-OSHA was still working on the details, but that Excel sheets containing individual responsibilities would be extractable from the tool in the future. Prompted by Mr Károly Stanitz on whether the tool could account for risks stemming from damages on the surface, she confirmed that all risks could potentially be included. Mr Murad Wiśniewski referred to his exchange with Mr Lorenzo Munar of EU-OSHA at the last liaison forum on 28 January 2013, during which the latter had described the tool as particularly useful for service sectors. However, Ms Flintrop pointed to the example of leather and tanning as an industrial sector in which the tool was already in operation. Nonetheless, Ms Corinna Hebestreit expressed her doubts about its usability in a sector like mining, given that risks were much more complex and most companies were large. Whilst upholding that the content of an OiRA tool could on principle be adapted to any needs, Ms Flintrop conceded that it had been conceived for companies with up to 50 staff. Mr Ralf Bartels outlined that most mines in Germany were large and had existing risk management tools in place. They could examine the possibility of including the OiRA tool on a company basis, but not for the entire sector. Mr Isles enquired whether individual sub-sectoral organisations could adopt the tool, which Ms Flintrop confirmed, as long as both sides of industry were involved.

4. The future of the ETS

Mr Brian Ricketts presented an update on the Emissions Trading System (ETS), with a focus on the back-loading of emissions trading allowances. He raised the question whether to accept the already heavy regulatory burden and criticised that additional burden was in the pipeline by the Commission. Mr Ricketts argued that prices for allowances were presently low because the economy was not growing. Thus, the Commission proposal to back-load part of the allowances was an indication that it foresaw growth to remain down rather than to stimulate the economy. Furthermore, Mr Ricketts criticised the fact the update was presented by him and not by a representative of DG CLIMA.

Mr Wiśniewski informed the committee that the first discussion on the future of the ETS after 2020 in the college of Commissioners would only take place on 26 February and that DG CLIMA would hold a stakeholder consultation forum on 1 March 2013, to which the social partners in extractive industries would be invited. Hence, DG CLIMA had proposed to address the committee at one of its next meetings this year, when more substantial information could already be shared.

Mr Wiśniewski also reminded the committee of the new Commission communication on industrial policy and the high-level group to rescue the steel industry as examples of action to boost growth in sectors that were of particular relevance to extractive industries.

Mr Zygmunt Borkowski reaffirmed the point made my Mr Ricketts on back-loading and criticised the inconsistency of policies by the member states that had led to this Commission proposal. While backing this criticism, Mr Manfred Steinhage held that Commission DGs had not been consistent either, with DG ENTR pushing for a reindustrialisation of Europe, but other DGs interfering in markets and undermining this effort. Mr Ferenc Rabi pointed out that basic industries were barely mentioned in the new communication on industrial policy. He criticised subsidies for renewable energy, not all of which could be considered environmentally friendly, given that dangerous chemicals remained when some appliances reached their end of use or that deforestation was a consequence of wood being considered a renewable source of energy. He further criticised that many solar panels and windmills for use in Europe were being built in China. Mr Jean-Pierre Damm stressed that not only labour costs, but also energy costs were lowering the competitiveness of European industry.

Mr Wiśniewski explained that policies by Commission DGs might at times appear inconsistent, as each DG had a different focus, but reassured the committee that they were all working to increase the competitiveness of European industry and highlighted action by DG EMPL as well as DG ENER to this end. Mr Bartels clarified that the criticism had not been aimed at DG ENER, but at stimulating a general debate on energy policy to complement climate policy, and stressed that the situation had much improved after the creation of DG ENER. However, Mr Ricketts warned that DG CLIMA was moving faster and was about to publish a green paper on "A 2030 framework for climate and energy policies" in March 2013. Mr Wiśniewski responded that the green paper was only the beginning of the policy-making process and committed himself to referring the concerns expressed by the social partners to the relevant Commission services.

Ms Michelle Wyart stated that the issue of ETS back-loading had gone beyond coal and proposed to move quickly and jointly on this issue, rather than to spend too much time on a general debate on energy policy, given the time constraints. It was decided to draft a short joint opinion and to circulate it among the secretariats in the coming days.

5. Safer by design

Mr Isles informed the committee that no further developments had taken place since the last committee meeting.

6. Any other business

Ms Miette Dechelle held a presentation on the track and trace directive, focusing on the work of the task force on explosives for civil uses, and invited contributions from all committee members. Mr Damm expressed an interest in this work on behalf of IndustriALL, and invited Ms Dechelle to give an update on this issue after the next meeting of the task force in October 2013.

Ms Claire Lanne presented an update on the European network on silica (NEPSI) and informed the committee that the financing of the NEPSI Council on a permanent basis by DG EMPL was not possible. Thus, other Commission budget lines operated by DG RTD and DG SANCO had been explored, but deemed unsuitable. Ms Lanne reported a proposal made by Mr Norbert Schöbel of DG EMPL at a NEPSI meeting after the last liaison forum on 28 January 2013 for the NEPSI Council to convene for about half an hour at the end of SSDC meetings in the metal and extractive industries. As this time span was deemed too short for participants who had to travel to Brussels especially for the NEPSI Council, Ms Lanne proposed to exceptionally sacrifice three hours of the next committee meeting. The proposal was accepted and it was decided to address a letter to Mr Jean-Paul Tricart at DG EMPL, requesting an additional full-day meeting for the NEPSI Council without travel reimbursement but with interpretation each year from 2014.