



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

Employment and Social Governance  
**Social dialogue**

## **SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE CHEMICAL INDUSTRY**

**Working Group Meeting  
Meeting 20 June 2019**

### **Minutes**

Chairs: Dimitra Penidis (industriAll Europe) & Paolo Cuneo (European Chemical Employers Group)

#### **1. Opening and welcome**

The agenda of the meeting was approved.

#### **2. Passerelle Clause**

Annelisa Cotone reviewed the Commission communication on 'more efficient decision making in public policy', adopted on 16 April 2019. In the field of social and employment policies, there are 5 areas where the unanimity rule is applied and where the Parliament is not taking decisions on equal footing with the Member States. Social security and social protection of workers or issues related to non-discrimination are some of these fields. Due to the unanimity rule, which applies to these fields, there are gaps in the regulation although reforms are needed. The communication aims to reduce the gaps by providing clarity on the use of the passerelle clause. It analyses the 5 areas related to employment and social affairs, where the clause could potentially be applied. For non-discrimination, there is currently no consistent legal framework, despite equality being a fundamental value. Similarly, in the field of social security and social protection of workers, there is a scope for action, given the large differences between Member States and the increasing need for reforms and convergence of Member States. In a nutshell, the passerelle clause foresees that upon agreement by the Parliament and upon notification of the national parliaments, the unanimity rule can be replaced by qualified majority for the area where the use of the clause was decided. The issue of taxation is dealt with by a different communication by the Commission, where the situation is more difficult. Annelisa Cotone stated that a shift in procedure would not take any power away from the social partners.

#### **3. Sustainable Finance Follow-up**

Kevin Flowers from DG ENVIRONMENT gave an overview over the Sustainable Finance agenda, focusing on the taxonomy proposals. The Commission created a high level expert group in 2017 on sustainable finance. It elaborated an action plan, which foresees three legislative proposals, one of them was the taxonomy proposal. It is currently still under negotiation. The Parliament has put forward its first reading, the Council is in the middle of its debates, which will possibly be finalized under the Finnish presidency. Trilogue negotiations have yet to start. A technical expert group, composed

experts of the financial industry and academia, is in the meanwhile working on the details of the proposal. Based on the 21 sectors existing in the NACE classification system, the expert group identified the most emission intensive sectors and potential measures and activities to mitigate emissions. The taxonomy reflects technology and policy developments. It facilitates the transition of polluting sectors to greener technologies. Mr Flowers underlined that activities, which are not considered green, are not automatically considered harmful. Once established, the taxonomy will be a tool, supporting stakeholders in the financial sector in evaluating companies in terms of their environmental sustainability. It allows investors to understand the environmental risk a company causes and take investment decisions accordingly. The taxonomy is particularly relevant for green bonds.

#### **4. Social Partners' Project – Our Future Workplace: Digital transformation in the chemical industry**

Maike Niggemann (industriAll Europe) and Katharina Göbel (ECEG) gave an overview of the state of play of the project. The report on the project survey has been published on the websites and distributed among the social partners' memberships. It already became a basis for discussions at several levels. The project steering group's meeting held in Milan discussed and developed an action plan for the next few months. Based on the insights from the survey, the secretariats of the social partners will prepare joint statements and recommendations. This work will relate to changing tasks and work organisation, or training schemes and propose possible ways forward. For other areas, such as health and safety or change management further insights are needed. These knowledge gaps shall be filled in the next conference, which will take place in The Hague on 7-8 November. Social partners will carry out further activities also beyond the end of the project. These activities should be taken onto the next work programme.

#### **5. Social Partners' work programme 2020 onwards**

The secretariats identified three main topics that are key issues for the coming years: lifelong learning and training, attractiveness of the industry, and health and safety. Also, digitalization will be further explored. (A specific question in this context is the increasing energy demand.) Overall, the national members were satisfied with the proposals and reiterated the importance of life-long learning. The secretariats of industriAll Europe and ECEG will draft a work programme for the coming years and present it to the plenary in November. A further issue raised by the members was related to occupational health and safety and the fight against cancer related to workplace activities. Sustainable finance shall also be followed.

#### **6. Horizon 2020**

Edward Ricketts from the DG Research and Innovation presented the next research and innovation investment programme. The programme aims to strengthen the EU's scientific and technological basis, boost Europe's innovation capacity and its competitiveness. The structure of the programme is based on three pillars: excellent science under which scientists can apply for funding (1); tackling global challenges (2) and innovative Europe (3). A European Innovation Council will be created to help innovators to create markets for their innovations. Another novelty is the research and innovation missions, which are predefined actions to be fulfilled in a given timeframe. The new programme aims to simplify the approach of partnerships, such as partnerships between researchers and industry. Funding and cooperation will be possible with stakeholders worldwide. Open access to publications will be encouraged. However, safeguards to maintain intellectual property in case of need are foreseen. The implementation of the Horizon Europe will be steered by a strategic plan, which will focus in particular on the 'Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness' and which will be based on input by stakeholders. The plan will then be developed until the end of this September and presented at the conference named 'Research and Innovation Days'.

#### **7. Future of ECHA/REACH**

Michael Flüh, Head of Unit in DG Grow, presented the future of ECHA and REACH. 15 months ago the Commission reviewed REACH and concluded that it was operational and functioning. Mr Flüh underlined that ECHA will not become a self-financing. For the next MFF, a budget of 67 million per year is under discussion. In the area of pesticides and food safety there were conflict of interest

allegations against the experts assessing for EU agencies. Mr Flüh explained that ECHA has adopted a strong policy to encounter such conflicts and therefore this is less of an issue. Related to Non-compliant dossiers ECHA has developed an action plan together with the Commission, which has been endorsed by the management board of ECHA on 19 July. ECHA will make an assessment of groups of substances - those with a need for further data generation will be the focus. Mr Flüh furthermore explained that ECHA is making recommendation at least every two years to Commission for substances to be put on the ANNEX 14 list in the framework of the future substance program. Currently, the 7th and 8th recommendation are being addressed, and in the Committee in July, a number of additional substances will be proposed. Another topic discussed by Mr Flüh were micro plastics. ECHA will launch a process to restrict the micro plastic intentionally added to products until beginning 2020. The dossier is currently under public consultation until September. Once opinions by stakeholders are received, the Commission has to put forward a proposal on how to restrict micro plastics. The Commission's presentation was integrated by Mr. Mentzel (ECEG, VNCI) who illustrated REACH and the main challenges faced by chemical companies when it comes to its compliance.

Annexes:

Agenda item 2: Passerelle Clause

Agenda item 3: Taxonomy proposal

Agenda item 4: Horizon Europe

Agenda item 6: Future of ECHA/REACH

Participants 01/03/2019:

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