



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

Employment and Social Legislation, Social Dialogue
Social dialogue, Industrial Relations

SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE CHEMICAL INDUSTRY

Working Group Competitiveness, Employment and Industrial Policy

Meeting 9 February 2015

Minutes

Chairs: Jochen Wilkens and Sylvain Lefebvre (am)/Alfons de Potter (pm)

1. Opening and approval of the draft agenda

The chairs welcomed the – relatively limited number of – attendees, pointing out that quality obviously prevails over quantity.

The draft agenda was approved.

2. Re-industrialisation and its impact on the chemical industry

Jochen Wilkens (JW) introduced the topic by referring to the study on the "Evolution of competitiveness in the European chemical industry: historical trends and future prospects"¹, carried out for Cefic by Oxford Economics, which shows that the industry and the Commission share common concerns.

Reinhard Büscher (RB) stressed the importance of linking the concerns of the chemical industry to the cross-cutting strategic initiatives of the new Commission, such as Energy Union and the Circular Economy Package, and he explained the main features of the 315 BIO Investment Plan for Europe.

In order to stimulate investments in the chemical industry, DG GROW proposes two main axes of action: making better use of available feedstock (oil, gas, biomass, waste, CO₂) for chemical production and fostering innovation. Proposed priorities for the chemical industry under the Investment Plan include bio-refineries, water treatment and recycling, transformation of CO₂ into chemical substances, gas import terminals. A new deal between private investors and public authorities – removing the (legal) barriers on the basis of an analysis of its cumulative costs – is needed.

¹ <http://www.cefic.org/Documents/PolicyCentre/Competitiveness/Oxford-Study-2014.pdf>

Responding to delegates' questions/remarks, RB added that: regions play indeed an important role, which is why the Commission has proposed to identify, through a call for proposals, 6 "model demonstrator regions" that have the ambition to develop the chemical industry; due attention is given to energy costs, as an important element of competitiveness; the overall industrial fabric must be taken into account, including the role of the chemical industry in energy storage and supply; the costs of the precautionary principle vis-à-vis a hazard-based approach are part of the cumulative cost assessment that is being carried out; a REFIT evaluation of the chemical legislation will be launched; the creation of a competitiveness "observatory" is being prepared.

In this context, the trade unions stressed the need to pay due attention to issues of reskilling/reorientation of workers in view of changing professional profiles, and of the attractiveness of the sector for young job seekers.

3. Road to Paris: "A Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy" – Social partners' vision in the context of the European Council conclusions of 24 October 2014

Sylvain Lefebvre (SL) presented the main elements of industriAll Europe's position paper on the 2030 Framework for Energy and Climate Policies², highlighting amongst others the importance of the link between energy and climate policies and competitiveness, and the need for an international regulatory level playing field.

JW deplored the negative impact of energy costs and climate regulation on investments in the chemical industry in the past decade, and the apparent contradiction between climate and industrial policies.

The social partners agreed to elaborate a joint position on the issue in view of the upcoming Paris climate conference.

4. European Social affairs – Strengthening of social dialogue at European and national levels

Sigried Caspar highlighted the increased focus on social issues and fairness of the new Commission. She presented the topics that will be addressed at the high level conference on 5 March, which intends to give a "new start" to social dialogue³.

The social partners welcomed this initiative, but did express some concerns about a perceived lack of attention for the sectoral social dialogue and reduced support (number of meetings), and the fact that social partners' joint opinions are not always sufficiently taken into account by the European institutions.

Social partners expressed a joint interest in taking stock of sectoral social dialogue at the national level.

² <http://www.industrial-all-europe.eu/committees/IP/PolPaper/PP2014-02-Energy-EN.pdf>

³ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=479&eventsId=1028&furtherEvents=yes>

5. TTIP: a reasonable and balanced free trade agreement with the United States

Ulrike Schmülling (US) gave a comprehensive presentation on the ongoing negotiations on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, pointing amongst others to the more controversial elements such as investment protection (ISDS) and regulatory cooperation (see presentation in [annex](#)). The EU negotiating can be found on the Commission website⁴.

While both employers and workers are broadly supportive of TTIP, they did express a certain number of concerns, and conditions, notably on the workers' side⁵. US insisted that the debate should be based on facts, looking beyond preconceived ideas.

JW welcomed the exchange as a good start for further debate, proposing that the two sides would identify more precisely their points of consensus and divergence.

6. Pharmaceutical industry: update on stakeholders meeting in Rome in October 2014

This point was postponed to a later meeting.

7. Roadmap 2015-2020 – Update on project progress

Stefaan Ceuppens (SC) introduced the topic by explaining the new features of the calls for proposals – under which the Roadmap project had been successfully submitted –, their rationale and their impact. Under the "social dialogue" call, high priority is given to projects that implement parts of the work programmes of the sectoral social dialogue committees.

Emma Argutyán and SL presented the main features of the 3-years project, including the objectives, the topics covered and the main project events. The first major conference will take place in Helsinki in October. Delegates will be kept informed about the steering committee meetings.

Reacting to questions/remarks, SC insisted on the complementary use of "standard" committee meetings and projects as means to implement the SSDC's work programme, and to avoid duplication of activities under these means; and he informed the committee that for the time being no overall evaluation study on European social dialogue is scheduled anymore, notably in view of the "new start" process.

8. Any other business

None.

Annexes

- Point 5 – Presentation TTIP
- Point 7 – Presentation Calls for proposals

⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/in-focus/ttip/>

⁵ See industriAll's position paper on TTIP: <http://www.industrial-europe.eu/committees/IP/PolPaper/PP2014-03-TTIP-EN.pdf>

Participants

Employer representatives

Ms Emma Argutyán-Kahlmeyer (EU)
Ms Katharina Göbel (DE)
Ms Ruth Steinhoff (DE)
Mr Simon Marsh (UK)
Ms Katia Sohler (EU)
Mr Jochen Wilkens (DE)

Employee representatives

Mr Jason Deguara (MT)
Mr Alfons De Potter (BE)
Mr Sylvain Lefebvre (EU)
Mr Alberto Paulo Simoes (PT)
Ms Taru Reinikainen (FI)
Mr Franz Stürmer (AT)
Ms Iris Wolf (DE)

European Commission

Mr Reinhard Büscher (Head of unit GROW.I.2 – Chemicals Industry)
Ms Sigried Caspar (EMPL.B.1)
Mr Stefaan Ceuppens (EMPL.B.1)
Ms Liliana Popescu (GROW.I.2 – Chemicals Industry)

Other participants

Ms Ulrike Schmülling (Verband der Chemischen Industrie)