



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG

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

Brussels, 31 July 2008

SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE "CHEMICAL INDUSTRY"

WORKING GROUP MEETING

held on 7 July 2008 in Brussels

DRAFT MINUTES

Chairpersons: Reinhard Reibsch (EMCEF) and Catherine Beudon (ECEG)

Commission representatives: Marina Moser, Dirk Hadrich (DG EMPL), Sylvie Grajales (DG ENTR), Anne Theo Seinen (DG ENV)

1. Welcome by the chairpersons and the European Commission.

The social partners were welcomed by the chairpersons. Reinhard Reibsch opened the morning session by reminding the relevance of qualifications for the future of the chemical sector. He recommended focusing the discussion on possible joint initiatives, common positions, and on how to participate in the various projects.

2. Approval of the agenda.

The draft agenda was approved with item 5 cancelled.

3. Update on CITIES project and contributions from Social Partners

Catherine Beudon reported about the developments of the CITIES project running from 2007-2009 (annex 1). Over the next months, a project website for more specific public information and materials for teachers should be established. The 2008 interim report was well received though it could be better disseminated. It was pointed out that social partners have a role in supporting dissemination.

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http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_dialogue/sectorial37_en.htm

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Social partners had previously agreed to deliver some materials and contributions: (a) country overview of chemical industry – incl. statistics on companies, branches, products, etc (b) company / product profiles (c) personal statements (see also slides). Some information was received but more should be sent to Leo Gros. Simon Marsh and Tomas Nieber committed to provide some input. Personal statements should comprise experiences from both, SMEs and bigger companies. They should reflect diversity in the industry (men/women, young/old, different positions). Deadline should be end August. It was also agreed that social partners should write a short statement endorsing the CITIES project which should be then be published on the website.

4. Report on SusChem activities – focus on "skill needs project"

Riita Juvonen presented the European Technology Platform for Sustainable Chemistry (SusChem) and its "skill needs project" (annex 2). SusChem aims at boosting chemistry, biotechnology and chemical engineering research, development and innovation in Europe. The SusChem education database is on www.suschem.org . A new project should collect information on skill needs of the next 10 years focussing on sustainable chemistry technologies. The project should soon be presented to the SusChem board.

It was remarked that not all workers in the chemical industry are university graduates and high qualified people. Many need nevertheless to improve their skills in terms of technical skills, environment, H&S, to suit needs arising from longer careers and changing technologies.

It was agreed that although this initiative has no direct link to the work of the social partners, it is important to be informed about activities in the field of skill needs. A table with an overview of initiatives should be compiled and sent around by the secretariats. Riita Juvonen offered to serve as a link between SusChem and the Social Dialogue.

5. High Level Group Chemical Industry – Common declaration of Social Partners on Human Resources

With respect to research, development and human resources the social partners were not satisfied with the approach and outcome of the High Level Group Chemical Industry.

The social partners saw the need for a human resources project and agreed to develop a text proposal in this respect.

6. Discussion on joint project activities following the decision of the Plenary Meeting on 21 May 2008

Mirjam De Jong (VAPRO) and Philippe Verneau (Interfora) presented the possible project "European competence profile", its objectives, methodology, partners and expected outcome (annex 3). The project should identify, assess and validate competencies of chemical operators. Validation standards should be recognised by the social partners. Benefits for companies, workers and federations would be that they should easily be able to find transparent information on how people are trained in different countries with the aim to promote the competence development.

The project ideas were supported by the social partners. The project financing needed to be developed.

7. REACH implementation – report on the status quo / start of the Helsinki agency

Sylvie Grajales (DG ENTR) presented detailed information on the ECHA activities, Committees, the network of enforcement authorities, the REACH start-up and additional Commission initiatives (annex 4).

8. GHS – report on status quo

Jean-Claude Lahaut (CEFIC) reported on the globally agreed UN convention on classification and labelling of chemicals and the agreement reached under the Slovenian Presidency. By end 2008 the respective legislation should be in place.

9. Emissions Trading System

Jean-Claude Lahaut (CEFIC) explained the next steps in the procedure of the ETS proposal of the Commission. Votes in the EP Committees are expected for September/October 2008. European energy intensive industries could be in danger to pay high prices and therefore incentives would be needed to hold these industries investing in Europe. Carbon leakage effects could lead to increased emissions worldwide. Social partners feared that the social consequences would not yet have been fully understood.

Anne Theo Seinen (DG ENV) presented the content of the adopted Commission package, the objectives, the scope, the allocation principles, the determination of carbon leakage sectors, the approach to avoid carbon leakage, the auctioning system, etc. (annex 5). The Commission fully shares the view that carbon leakage must be avoided and its proposals contain the necessary and effective measures in this respect. It would be of utmost importance to reach an international agreement. In June 2011 there would be a further assessment of the Commission on what needs to be done.

The social partners discussed the possibilities of benchmarking with a rewarding strategy and the risks to lose innovation advantages in Europe.

Simon Marsh had prepared a draft joint position paper with an interim statement on the Commission proposal. The social partners decided to examine the draft paper before 22 July and to do more research over the summer. A special working group would further deal with the issue. In addition to the joint position paper, the social partners wanted to prepare a joint brochure to further explain the ETS effects.

ETS should be one the most important issues on the agenda of the Committee's Plenary meeting on 29 September. The idea was to adopt the joint position paper and the brochure.

10. AOB

Next meetings:

29 September 2008 (PL)

5 December 2008 (WG)

The annexes can be downloaded from the "library" on the website of the SSDC Chemicals Industry: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_dialogue/sectorial37_en.htm

