



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

Employment and Social Governance  
**Social dialogue**

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

**Working Group Meeting – virtual conference**

**Meeting 23 September 2020**

### **Minutes**

Chair: Jaana Neuvonen (ECEG)

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

The agenda of the meeting was approved.

#### **2. Towards a joint statement on the Chemical Strategy for Sustainability**

Maike Niggemann (industryAll) explained that ECEG and industryAll consider this Strategy to be the biggest challenge but also the biggest opportunity, apart from the topic of decarbonisation. It is important that the social partners approve a joint position. The following five key points were identified: - the positive role of chemical industry for shaping the future as an enabler of transition; - REACH is a success and model for regulatory system worldwide; - the chemical industry delivers good jobs and innovation relies on skilled and motivated people; - social partner want to discuss individual elements of the Strategy, when it goes to the details of its implementation; - welcome tougher stand on imports and enforcement, especially when it comes to level playing field and standards of producing in Europe. It is important to come up with a strong joint statement as soon as possible.

Jochen Wilkens (ECEG) mentioned that REACH meant a considerable financial expense but was successful, there is a worldwide interest in the data created through REACH and Europe needs to be very vigilant on this. As regards chemicals in value chain, there has been clear progress as regards prevention of negative impact on workers and environment, emissions on a global level are falling significantly. On the other hand, currently in the time of crisis, Europe is much more significantly impacted in comparison with USA or Asia. And the chemicals industry proved that it is able to address the supply situation, for example as regards disinfectants. This can only continue if we retain the production in Europe. We see new emerging production in Asia and USA resulting in overcapacity, new technologies and investment is in Asia and USA. Germany managed to increase efficiency and remained

competitive at international level. The European industry needs a positive commitment from the policy makers for innovation and also for existing production. European Green Deal is positive, but unfortunately it contains a zero pollution target, which would mean no production. For example in Northern Germany a company could not register a new product due to NGOs concerns because new chemical means deterioration. This zero pollution objective causes problems with the authorisation process. One dimension of sustainability is environment, but economic and social dimension is also important, to sustain jobs, secure new investment. We need to have balance between environment and healthy and future-proof jobs and companies – currently climate protection is much more prominent. But in terms how this objective can be made acceptable for society, there is unfortunately no response from policy makers.

Social partners concluded that they will work in mutual cooperation on the draft joint statement to have it ready preferably by the end of October.

### **3. Commission's Communication "European Skills Agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Fairness and Resilience"**

Felix Rohn (DG EMPL) gave a presentation on the subject of the European Skills Agenda. The reasons for approaching this topic at the European level are especially green and digital transitions, lessons from Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent recovery. Skills development features prominently at the EU agenda. Europe needs skills policy for jobs in the context of lifelong learning ensuring sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience. The Skills agenda consists of four building blocks – Pact for Skills, Tools for lifelong learning (including Individual learning accounts), Skilling for a job (including STEM graduates or VET) and Framework for MSs and private investments. For example the following topics are contained in the Communication: European approach to micro credentials; industry specific needs recognisable by the future employer; minimum requirements; assured quality of the institutions giving the training or cross border recognition. The Skills agenda contains quantified objectives. Involvement of MSs, regional authorities, education and training providers, social partners is important in the implementation. Public funds can also incentivise private investments and funds. The Skills agenda refers to the industrial strategy covering 14 industrial ecosystems highlighted as important, among those also chemical industry. Furthermore it wants to build on existing EU initiatives. All 14 industrial ecosystems are encouraged to join the Pact for Skills.

In the subsequent discussion, the following issues were raised: linkage of the Skills agenda and the European Green Deal objectives; link with digitisation; need of reskilling and upskilling measures; implementation of the proposed initiatives at national or European level; validation of transversal skills; Individual Learning Accounts and burden sharing; increase of STEM subjects graduates. Felix Rohn informed further that the Commission has launched already call for proposals on centres of vocational excellence. Important is the integration of new training content in national systems. Core profiles or vocational profiles should be agreed between partners in different countries as has already been done under the Leonardo Da Vinci programme or under Erasmus projects; or for example the European

building and woodworkers' federation developed that. On validation of transversal skills acquired through informal way, there is since 2012 a recommendation to MSs to establish points and institutions where people can make their informally gathered skills validated. Progress in MSs on that issue differs, very advanced is in France for example. The European Alliance for Apprenticeships invites companies and institutions to make pledges. The Commission is only starting the process of exploring the Individual Learning Accounts, including the level of readiness in MS, then in the Recommendation, at the end of the process, there will be ideas how to implement. The Commission intends to facilitate training also through financing. On STEM, there is for example in Netherlands the so called National STEM coalition. Commission is willing to support national initiatives.

#### **4. Digitalization and Equality**

Vessela Karloukovska (DG CNECT) reported on women's participation in digital economy. The Commission adopted in March its general Gender equality strategy. The effects of digitisation are gender dependent. The design of digital products remains male dominated, there is a low share of women graduates in TEC subjects. Number of obstacles identified in a recent study (jobs with male profiles, inflexible work schedules, pay gap etc.). DG CNECT is raising awareness of these problems on the basis of their study and articulates a strategy on women in digital – boosting their digital skills, addressing digital gender stereotypes, encouraging to take up TEC education, taking up digital entrepreneurship. MSs signed ministerial declaration of commitment on women in digital – to implement a number of listed actions (for example national plans on women's participation in digital sector, promote non-discriminatory work culture and work conditions, better monitoring). Several CEOs also signed a specific declaration with commitments (on company culture, proper promotional pathways etc.). Signatories are for example Google, Proximus, Dell, Spotify, European Banking Union etc.

Social partners discussed the subject of gender equality including also the topics of algorithms for development of recruitment procedure, which are sometimes designed in such a way that automatically disqualify women or facilitation of inclusion of women, for example through much more flexible working conditions concerning working hours.

#### **5. Any other business**

The social partners foresee to revisit the framework of action between the European social partners on sustainable employment signed in 2017. Members are invited to share good practices until end of November in order to update the existing toolbox.

Annexes:

Agenda item 3: European Skills Agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Fairness and Resilience

Participants 23/09/2020:

Delegation	Last name	First name	Representing:
ECEG	ARGUTYAN	Emma	EU
	ASKELOF	Lars	SE
	CUNEO	Paolo	IT
	DOMBALOVA	Liliana	BG
	HENSEL	Elisa	DE
	ISOPO	Eleonora	EU
	LAENENS	Koen	BE
	NEUVONEN	Jaana	FI
	SUROVA	Silvia	SK
	WILKENS	Jochen	DE
industriAll	DELLA VECCHIA	Andrea	BE
	DIMECH	Rita	MT
	GRAY	Frank	UK
	GUILLEMOT	Solène	EU
	NIGGEMANN	Maike	EU
	PENIDIS	Dimitra	BE
	REINIKAINEN	Taru	FI
	SIMOES	Alberto	PT
	SZÉKELY	Tamás	HU
	TOMAS MACARRO	María Isabel	ES
	ULJAS	Jenni	FI
	WOLF	Iris	DE
European Commission	KARLOUKOVSKA	Vessela	
	ROHN	Felix	
	HRUDOVA	Jitka	EC