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Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG

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

Brussels, 26 July 2007

SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE "CHEMICAL INDUSTRY"

WORKING GROUP MEETING

held on 4 July 2007 in Brussels

DRAFT MINUTES

Chairpersons: Jochen Wilkens (ECEG) and Reinhard REIBSCH (EMCEF)

Commission representative: Dirk HADRICH (DG EMPL)

1. Welcome by the Chairpersons and the European Commission

The Social Partners were welcomed by the Chairpersons and the Commission.

2. Approval of the Agenda

The Agenda was approved.

Commission européenne, B-1049 Bruxelles / Europese Commissie, B-1049 Brussel - Belgium. Telephone: (32-2) 299 11 11.
Office: J54 0/30. Telephone: direct line (32-2) 29+3222993120.

<http://www.ec.europa.eu/socialdialogue>

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

E-mail: dirk.hadrich@ec.europa.eu

3. Outlook on activities of the Working Group within the 2007 / 2008 Working Programme by EMCEF and ECEG Secretariats and discussion

ECEG explained the different activities in detail.

EMCEF underlined the importance to achieve improvements on health and safety and wanted to reinforce its efforts on responsible care. A definition and description of responsible care should be agreed at EU level.

A working group of ECEG, EMCEF, UK-employers, BE-workers and BG-employers was established.

4. Update on European and international Responsible Care developments and activities by Daniel Verbist, CEFIC

Daniel Verbist (CEFIC) explained the most important aspects of responsible care and updated the group on global and European developments (annex 1). The extension of responsible care to product stewardship was described. Parameters to measure performance shall be used in all countries including developing countries. A network was launched to involve better small and medium enterprises (SME).

The chairperson expressed the intention to launch a survey on national collective agreements that include elements of responsible care.

EMCEF wanted to promote the image of the chemical industry and intended to add more value to responsible care through looking for more common elements.

The established working group should further discuss this issue.

5. Good Practice in informing and involving employees and their representatives in national Responsible Care programmes

a) Report of National Experience in Bulgaria

The Bulgarian member reported about fruitful working together, a reduction of occupational accidents at work, indicators of performance, attempts to improve the image, commitment to REACH and lacking engineers (annex 2).

5. Good Practice in informing and involving employees and their representatives in national Responsible Care programmes

b) Project of brochure with good practice examples

The chairperson explained that short cases of best practice examples would be collected and should be presented in December 2007.

6. Project Health and Safety as target for Social Dialogue

EMCEF explained the background of this project (annex 3). There were some doubts concerning the health and safety figures presented in the framework of the REACH adoption and this should be further investigated. Furthermore, the aim is to contribute to the reduction of occupational risks and to the enhancement of competitiveness. During the project and its follow up there are intentions to involve downstream users of chemicals such as hairdressers.

ECEG indicated that the issue of health and safety is the most difficult one for the committee to deal with.

7. Start of REACH and the European Chemicals Agency in Helsinki

Jean-Claude Lahaut (CEFIC) talked about latest developments on REACH. The agency ECHA was born on 1.6.07 and currently there is a recruitment process. The pre-registration period will start on 1.6.08. Furthermore, information on the appeal procedure and on the implementation of the GHS was provided.

Dirk Hadrich added further news on REACH:

- 1) A legislative corrigendum on REACH was published on 29 May 2007. Its objective is to rectify linguistic errors.
- 2) The process of revision of Annex IV has started and a sub group has been created for this revision. The sub group consists of representatives of the Member States, competent authorities and industry (CEFIC, REACH Alliance and CONCAVE).
- 3) The fee regulation should be available by 1 June 2008.
- 4) The guidance website presented in the last meeting on 4 May is now online (<http://reach.jrc.it/>) and it includes a navigator tool to check obligations. Most of the guidance documents are already available. All guidance documents should be finalised by the end of this year.
- 5) The discussion concerning the interaction between the traditional Occupational Exposure Limits (OEL) and the new REACH based Derived No-Effect Levels (DNEL) is still ongoing.
- 6) All Member States have set up national helpdesks and ECHA is also running a helpdesk for registrants. All helpdesks are connected as a network and can provide consistent help (http://ec.europa.eu/echa/reach/helpdesk/nationalhelp_en.html).
- 7) Member States are preparing implementing legislation on penalties when breaching REACH, setting up an overall framework for enforcement and working on a training programme for inspectors. The "informal" sub-group of Member State representatives that was set-up for enforcement issues met for the 3rd time in mid-may. This group will be transformed into the "Forum" for enforcement, created by REACH. The Forum should meet for the first time in end 2007 / beginning 2008.

8. Update from EU Commission, DG Industry and Enterprise on preparations for setting up the High Level Group Chemical Industry by Luc de Meyer, DG Enterprise and Industry

Luc de Meyer (DG ENTR) referred to the Commission Decision of 14 June 2007 setting up the High Level Group on the competitiveness of the chemicals industry in the European Union. It was published in the OJ on 16 June 2007. The first meeting of this group will be chaired by Vice-President Verheugen and is planned for 10 September 2007. DG Enterprise is currently preparing a thought-starter for this meeting on the basis of available information. Further meetings are planned for 2008. End July 2007 the list of members of this group should be published. Minutes of the group's meetings should be available on the internet.

9. Information on new communication on Industrial Policy

Dirk Hadrich informed that a new Commission Communication will be published very soon concerning the mid-term review of industrial policy¹. It should be a contribution to the EU's Growth and Jobs Strategy and it aims to take stock of the achievements since 2005, to highlight the key challenges that confront industry today, and to set out the industrial policy agenda for the period 2007-2009. The challenges are already well known but they have grown in significance: globalisation, technological change and climate change. They put competitive pressure on EU's economy to adjust.

The overall strategy for industrial policy remains focused on ensuring that the framework conditions provide a favourable environment for industry, and takes account of the fact that most businesses are SMEs. Simplifying and improving the regulatory environment and reducing the administrative burden on enterprises will remain a priority for the Commission. Furthermore, the intention is to ensure that the overall policy is designed to create and to exploit synergies between environmental protection, social standards, security of energy supply and a strong and competitive European industry.

10. Emission trading presented by Peter Botschek, CEFIC

Peter Botschek explained the Emission Trading Scheme ETS and its goals to be achieved over the next years (annex 4). Since the Kyoto-protocol expires in 2012 there would be an ETS review and a report very soon. By end 2007, the Commission would intend to propose changes of the regime that should apply after 2012. CEFIC would support the ETS but found an extension of the ETS to countries outside EU essential.

11. Project Restructuring, Managing Change, Competitiveness and Employment

Lutz Mühl explained the timetable and the expected results of this project (annex 5). The social partners should aim to help in restructuring the chemicals industry successfully. During the project empirical findings on restructuring and on possible future

¹ Commission Communication COM(2007)374 of 4.7.07

developments should be presented. In the end, a compendium of good practices should be prepared.

12. White Biotechnology – Renewable Resources, presented by Guiseppe Bellissima, EMCEF trainee

Guiseppe Bellissima explained the situation with non renewable raw materials, the EU import dependency, the challenges of energy policy, the EU action plan on renewable raw materials and the situation of the European industrial (white) biotechnology (annex 6).

13. Any other business

Next meetings:

18 September 2007 (WG)

5 December 2007 (WG)

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