

Extractive Industries Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee

MINUTES

12 October 2021

Participants:

Employer representatives:

- Rolf Kuby, Vice-Chair, Euromines, Belgium
- Cynthia Mestanza, Euromines, Belgium
- Veronika Sochorova Euromines, Belgium
- Ákos Zoltay, Hungarian Mining Association, Euromines, Hungary
- Beata Staszów, Polish Copper Employer's Association, Euromines, Poland
- Rafal Szkop, Polish Copper Employer's Association, Euromines, Poland
- Asa Dahlfors, Swedish Association of Industrial Employers, Euromines, Sweden
- Vicente Gutierrez Peinador, CONFEDEM, Euromines, Spain
- Florence Lumen, IMA-Europe, Belgium
- Aurela Shtiza, IMA-Europe, Belgium
- Brian Ricketts, Euracoal
- Vladimir Budinsky, Euracoal
- César Luaces Frades, Federación de Áridos, Spain
- Sergiu Scolobiuc, European Aggregates Association, UEPG, Belgium

Employee representatives:

- Jean-Pierre Damm, Chair, FO Energie et Mines, IndustriAll
- Sophie Grenade, IndustriAll
- Patrick Mathieu, FO Energie et Mines, France
- Ralf Bartels, IGBCE, Germany
- Marie-Odile Martiat, IndustriAll
- Víctor Fernández Vázquez, UGT FICA, IndustriAll
- Jesus Ignacio Crespo Torres, CCOO de Industria, Spain
- Karoly Stanitz, BDSZ, Hungary
- Ferenc Rabi, BDSZ, Hungary
- Jean-Michel Pourteau, CFE-CGC Métallurgie - FCMTM
- Desislava Kancheva, Podkrepa, Bulgaria
- Vladimir Topalov, Podkrepa
- Ewa Buzón, NSZZ Solidarnosc SGIE

European Commission:

- Peter Handley (DG GROW)
- Sander Happaerts (DG REGIO)

1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda and the minutes

Jean-Pierre Damm (Chair) opened the meeting. The draft agenda was adopted. The minutes of the meeting held on 3 May 2021 were adopted. No objection.

2. Transition pathways of the energy intensive industries and impact of the Fit for 55 Package

Peter Handley (DG GROW) confirms that the Fit for 55 package was finalised in July and is currently being discussed by the EU Parliament and Council. He agrees with the panel that gas and electricity prices have increased – painfully impacting households and industries. He states that people outside the EU are experiencing similar effects. He confirms that energy disruption is also impacting supply chains. He elaborates on this issue, and gives an example: “that there will be a shortage of fertilisers for farmers to use next year”. Peter mentions that it is important to discuss what should be in the transition pathway; what it needs for this ecosystem to “go green and go digital”, as well as remain resilient and competitive

during the green transition. He explains that one area of concern is skills. He gives the example of the Chinese government's investment in schools and universities (40 technical universities), and thus, expresses that there is no surprise that they have young people continuing in specific sector jobs and skills. He affirms that it is important to invest in trainings and skills.

Sophie Grenade (IndustriAll) questions how employees can effectively be involved in the green transition (more structural collaboration). Following this point, Jean-Pierre Damm (Chair) asks how this dynamic can be created again where countries, for example France, have technical/mining schools. He underlines the importance and crucial need to have these skills for an effective green transition. Regarding the transition phase, he asks the Commission for more information regarding the emission directive and whether the regulations will become stricter. Rolf Kuby (Euromines) expresses that we need to discuss how we can focus on supply chains. Peter Handley (DG GROW) responds that the Fit for 55 package is a large and regulatory package, but not yet complete. The outcomes from the Commission in the following months will complete the package, meaning that we do not currently have the full picture. Regarding skills and training, he states that it is worth discussing investment; there are small pockets of strong academic trainings in Europe, but it is a question of doing more, as in China these industries are much cheaper and cannot compete against European prices. He mentions that digitilisation should not be forgotten, and should be part of the discussion for extractive industries going forward. He provides the example of China building on its digitalisation to obtain more control of their supply chains in different sectors (involvement of AI too).

Brian Ricketts (Eurocoal) expresses that there are shortages and that the message from the Commission is unclear. He states that raw materials should be reinstated in Europe, as at the moment, many come from Asia. He underlines that Eurocoal are not against the EU green deal but Eurocoal has comments, amendments and proposals, and believes that these should be taken into account. Brian explains that all energy and technology resources should be considered (e.g. nuclear, gas etc.) as 80% of all energy is produced from fossil fuels; if Europe is too far ahead in its de-industrialisation, it will lose its competitive agenda. He states, therefore, that countries must be allowed to have their own pass ways and it is important for them to be able to make some decisions regarding the transition. This is also important for social dialogue; to have sectoral positions, trade unions and representatives at national levels.

Patrick Mathieu (FO Energie et Mines, IndustriAll) expresses his concern regarding the increasing price of gas in Europe. He emphasises that Europe is currently facing the consequences of China's industrial growth. He also mentions that there are no appropriate regulations/mechanisms in place to protect workers. For instance, he states that two years ago, the French government closed two CO2 storing facilities and now the Minister wants to increase these type of factories. Patrick states that there needs to be a certain level of gas maintained as Europe cannot transition to hydrogen overnight. He further communicates that it is not possible to let countries do what they like for their industries, and rather European measures are needed to protect everybody.

Peter Handley (DG GROW) responds to Eurocoal and expresses his uncertainty of the outcomes in winter, however there will be shortages in the international market; no one wants a rebound to a higher use of fossil fuels. He also encourages our coal colleagues to consider coal waste and how this could be developed into another industry, as this waste contains a lot of raw materials which could be extracted and used. This potential business model could also create jobs.

Rolf Kuby (Euromines) asks COM about mining data, for example in France. He mentions that stakeholders could build a database to examine the real potential for Europe if it were to use its raw materials. Peter Handley (DG GROW) explains that some Member States do not have this kind of data at national levels such as France and Germany, however data is available for the Nordic countries. He adds that green NGO's are against the use of mining, but they are interested in potentially remediating old mining sites and using this waste in a useful way; he questions how a good database on waste materials could be developed.

3. Just Transition Territorial plans: update

Jean-Pierre Damm (Chair) states the importance of social dialogue and having the opportunity to exchange opinions on various issues. He encourages more members to participate in the meeting today.

Dr Sander Happaerts (DG REGIO) gives a presentation on 'Just Transition Fund and Territorial Just Transition Plans'. He states that there is a great willingness to exchange and learn from Member States. He adds that just transition fund is also available for carbon intensive industries, and economic diversification and skills should be the biggest priority for all the plans.

Representative from Hungarian trade union BDSZ were unable to present due to technical problems.

Víctor Fernández Vázquez (UGT FICA) asks the Commission for clarification regarding proposals and their eligibility. He adds that negotiations need to start in order to establish what can be done for these proposals.

Desislava Kancheva, (Podkrepa, Bulgaria) shares her concerns about energy supplies during the winter. She states that documents have been sent to DG REGIO, but no response has been received. She explains that there will be a protest tomorrow (13/10/2021) jointly organised by both trade union confederations (Podkepa and CITUB) in support of coal mining jobs.

4. Health and Safety: update from social partners

Florence Lumen (IMA-Europe) provides a presentation on New NEPSI Tools'. She explains that the core of the agreement is the good practice guide consisting of general and specific task sheets. All the tools are not translated in all languages, but a new budget for this to be completed has been requested. She explains that there are training packs for new workers and that e-learning platforms can be accessed remotely via phones, tablets or laptops. Workers can receive a certificate of completion for e-learning courses.

5. Workprogramme 2022

Sophie Grenade (IndustriAll) explains the new workprogramme for 2022. She states that this committee is at the heart of developing a new European strategy on raw materials and wants to keep it in 2022. She also expresses that there are a variety of topics to cover: circular economy, value chain, international trade and extracting raw materials in Europe. She also mentions that she will attend a seminar in November with Rolf Kuby (Euromines) on sustainable mining for Europe. She believes it is important to have this on the agenda and to increase dialogue on this topic next year. She expresses that it would be good to ERMA more involved and to build on what they are doing. ERMA is also keen to invite social partners and increase social dialogue. She also described the other subjects for the workprogramme 2022: follow up of the Green Deal, monitoring of the implementation of the Just transition mechanisms, Health and Safety, skills and competences.

6. Any other business and end of meeting

Social partners agree that they need to ensure that Hungarian colleagues are able to contribute and speak next time without any technical and language difficulties. They also concur that industrial transition is at the core of their social dialogue. Social partners agree and emphasise the importance of having a vivid exchange with the Commission (particularly with DG Clima) and would welcome conveying their messages to DG Clima.