



ECEG / EMCEF / Cefic Common Declaration on

“Framework conditions for a sustainable chemical industry in Europe”

The representatives of the European social partners in the chemical sector – ECEG, the European Chemical Employers Group, and EMCEF, the European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers’ Federation – together with Cefic – the European Chemical Industry Council – have agreed on the following common declaration.

They share the view that the chemical industry plays an important role to meet the challenges of the future as a major enabler of economic, environmental and social progress by contributing to the sustainable development objectives as defined in the Europe 2020 strategy, especially Innovation Union, Youth on the move, Resource efficient Europe, An industrial policy for the globalisation era and an agenda for new skills and jobs.

Environment: Efficient use of resources and eco-responsibility

The expected growth of the world’s population to 9 billion people by 2050 requires solutions to save energy and water, to reduce emissions, and to produce food and goods while protecting natural resources, biodiversity and the environment in general by continuously improving the processes and the life cycle of the products of the chemical industry, in cooperation with the suppliers and customers.

On sustainability, the European social partners and the industry will engage with key stakeholders and then lay out a pathway towards a sustainable balance. The initial focus will be on the efficient use of resources and sound waste management, including industry-wide long range goals.

ECEG, EMCEF and Cefic share the view that the voluntary Responsible Care programme offers the possibility to constantly make improvements in safety, health and the environment, and to communicate in an open manner. In 2003 we signed an agreement on Responsible Care and hereby reinforce our commitment to the initiative and to developing the existing partnership further.

Society: Decent working conditions, lifelong learning and sustainable employment

High standards of health and safety in all of our activities at the workplace, social responsibility, efficient and high-level education and vocational training as well as quality employment are priorities and responsibilities shared by the chemical industry in cooperation with workers' organisations and the relevant authorities. As a recent study has shown¹, the chemical industry will be particularly affected by demographic change. ECEG, EMCEF and Cefic are well aware that strategies have to be developed to mitigate the expected skills shortage. The European chemical social partners are supporting actively a second EU project on the impact of demographic change on our sector, and in some Member States social partners have developed a variety of strategies to mitigate the consequences of demographic change.

If the chemical industry in Europe wants to maintain and improve its competitiveness at global level, employers *and* employees need to be taken on board. A highly skilled, motivated workforce, safe and decent working conditions are the preconditions for success of a knowledge-based industry like the chemical industry.

Improving employability, namely through the development of skills and tools to facilitate the entry (in particular of young people), retention and reemployment in the labour market, plays an important role. A first and important step in this direction has been the conclusion of a "European Framework Agreement on Competence Profiles for Process Operator and First Line Supervisor in the Chemical Industry" signed on 15 April 2011.²

The Framework Agreement of the European social partners in the chemical industry is the main contribution so far to the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs under the Europe 2020 strategy and to the overall EU policy creating instruments of transparency, mobility, and diversity in the area of education, vocational training and lifelong learning. Our next goal as social partners is to run a feasibility study to assess the pertinence of a European Sector Skills Council in our industry. In general, we seek to achieve a higher degree of coordination between the social dialogue of the chemical industry at EU level and the sectoral social dialogues taking place at national level.

Furthermore education and training will have to focus on the needs and demands of the market to ensure that trained young workers find sustainable employment rather than become economically inactive.

Economy: Competitiveness and innovation

The European chemical industry has to remain competitive worldwide in order to meet its growth objectives. Innovation, from raw materials and production processes to new products and services on the market, is our key asset to achieve sustainable growth, to support the improvement of living standards and to also address a number of needs and expectations of society.

Competitiveness is crucial for an industry. On the one hand for growth and achieving profitability and on the other hand to protect and develop jobs and the terms and conditions of the workforce including wage growth. We share the need for additional efforts, including the strengthening of the European social dialogue as well as investment in technology and research for process and product innovation.

¹ See <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/eventsCom.do?language=EN&body=EMPL&product=EOT>

² See <http://www.emcef.org/euproj8.asp?job=baetIII#20110415>

It is important both to create good overall framework conditions for the European industry and to consider individual sectors. The recommendations of the High Level Group on the Competitiveness of the European Chemicals Industry do in fact form a strategic agenda for areas such as innovation, intellectual property, regulation, energy and climate change, logistics and trade policy. We note that most of these recommendations still await implementation and call upon the European, national and regional authorities to work on their swift implementation.

We are confident that if Europe gets it right with the effective implementation of a holistic and integrated industrial policy, our industry can remain a world leader and continue to play its role as an enabler of sustainability. Such a holistic industrial policy is also the precondition for maintaining a high level of quality employment not only in our sector.

ECEG, EMCEF and Cefic therefore call on the national and European decision makers to implement the recommendations of the High Level Group on the Competitiveness of the Chemicals Industry with a particular emphasis on:

- Education and VET, especially in the fields of natural sciences, mathematics, ICT, and technology
- Incentives to Research and Development and support to innovation initiatives
- Partnership in energy, climate change and resources efficiency policies
- Efficient and workable regulation; consistency and simplification will reduce costs and bureaucracy
- Industrial policy promoting and safeguarding a competitive manufacturing industry in Europe.

The chemical industry can then fully meet societal, economic and environmental expectations for jobs, growth and solutions to climate change.

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