



Newsletter No. 10

January-February 2024

Dear reader,

Welcome back to the ECEG's monthly newsletter! This is our monthly *rendez-vous* where we share the ECEG's, its members' and partners' activities, as well as provide insights on the latest developments in the EU institutions.

In this new issue, you will discover more about the most recent developments of the ChemSkills project, along with the ECEG's involvement as an official partner in the EU OSHA campaign "*Safe and healthy work in the digital age*".

... additionally, we will delve into ECEG's participation in several meetings, including the European Industrial Summit, the Belgian Presidency Conference on "*Mental Health and Work*" and ECEG's Steering Committee and WG Education & LLL.

Enjoy your reading!

ECEG's Team

ChemSkills project

What is the ChemSkills project?

“*ChemSkills: Enabling the green and digital skills transformation of the chemical industry*”, is a project co-funded by the EU. Its aim is to meet the **current green and digital skills needs**, while fostering expertise in producing “**safe and sustainable by design**” chemicals.

With a consortium of 33 project partners, including education providers, public entities, trade unions and industry representatives, the project is delving into **future skills needs**. It will develop a roadmap of potential future scenarios while delivering advanced training courses and innovative curricula.

What are the recent developments?

The Future Skills Survey

The ChemSkills project partners have recently launched the [Future Skills Survey](#), which aims to collect comprehensive data on **digital** and **green skills in the chemical industry**, with a specific focus on plastics, consumer chemicals, fertilizers, rubber, pharmaceuticals, and petrochemicals.

The survey’s goal is to **evaluate current trends** and factors driving change while **identifying the skills** and **competencies** required. Additionally, the results will help identify discrepancies between the skills needed and the training and courses offered by various educational institutions. Ultimately, it will inform the development of **tailored courses** for upskilling, reskilling, and new, innovative curricula for the chemical industry.

If you are a stakeholder working in one of the chemical industry’s sub-sectors (plastics, consumer chemicals, fertilizers, rubber, pharmaceuticals, and petrochemicals), please, take the time to fill-in in the survey. It will really help the project partners in identifying current trends and needs in terms of skills and competences.

[Future Skills Survey](#)

Upcoming in-person meeting in Brussels (16-17 April 2024)

The ChemSkills consortium is gearing up for its **second in-person meeting** in Brussels, hosted by [ETRMA](#). The project partners will meet on 16-17 April for two days of intensive discussions, focusing primarily on the activities of various working groups and outlining future actions.

To stay updated, be sure to register for the [project's newsletter](#), visit the ChemSkills website and follow the official social media accounts!



ECEG's Meetings

Cedefop's event:

“Greening VET: What does it mean and what does it take?”

25 January 2024, online

ECEG took part in [Cedefop's](#) virtual get-together event ***“Greening VET: What does it mean and what does it take?”***.

The meeting focused on the **green transition** and **its impact on job growth**, emphasising the need for workers and learners to receive training or to be re-/up-skilled to adapt to evolving job roles.

In this scenario, Vocational Education and Training (VET) assumes a critical role in providing EU workers and learners with the right skills, while facilitating a transition towards a more environmentally conscious mindset. Thanks to the participation of representatives of VET institutions, skills stakeholders and policymakers from EU Member States, the event explored how the integration of greening is already influencing VET programmes and discussed future steps in the EU green agenda.

Belgian Presidency's Conference: “*Mental Health and Work*”

30-31 January 2024

The Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU recently hosted a dedicated conference focusing on “***Mental Health and Work***”. The two-day event brought together a diverse array of experts and stakeholders from the EU Commission, EU-OSHA, the Belgian Government, and EU Social Partners.

The conference was divided into two parts:

- On the first day, it was dedicated to the **primary prevention** efforts, such as shielding workers from exposure to psychosocial risks in the workplace.
- The second day delved into strategies for implementing a cohesive approach to **preventing work incapacity**. Different methods of fostering inclusivity in the labour market at the EU level while facilitating employment opportunities for individuals dealing with mental health issues were discussed.

Throughout the conference, there was a broad support for concrete actions regarding mental health in the workplace, with the understanding that these actions would likely be addressed in the next legislative term. The European Commission’s **peer review** of the existing health and safety legislations is to be completed in June 2024. This review aims to evaluate the extent to which mental health at work is covered within the current legislative framework.

The Val Duchesse Social Partners’ Summit

31 January 2024

The **Val Duchesse Social Partners’ Summit** convened to discuss strategies for addressing key economic and labour challenges by bolstering social dialogue. The European Commission, the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, and European cross-sectoral social partners signed the joint declaration whereby addressing labour and skills shortages by recognising the **need for skilled workers** and **quality jobs** to enhance the **EU's competitiveness**.

The Commission pledged to present an action plan to tackle labour and skills shortages in spring 2024. The declaration called upon reinforcing social dialogue, establishing a dedicated European Social Dialogue Envoy and launching a Pact for European Social Dialogue.

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European Employers Network hosted by BusinessEurope

01 February 2024, online

The **EEN** gathering convened representatives from employers' associations across multiple sectors. The agenda addressed the post-Val Duchesse Summit actions, which included significant resolutions on social dialogue.

We delved into the ramifications of **artificial intelligence** (AI) on the job market, followed by a discussion on the challenges and prospects arising from AI's integration in workplaces. Moreover, [Ceemet](#), [FIEC](#), and ECEG introduced their **Transition Pathways**, developed in collaboration with DG GROW.

The meeting concluded with an update on the latest social affairs developments.

The European Industrial Deal: Antwerp Declaration

20 February 2024, Antwerp



Photo credit: Frederik Beyens

The **Antwerp Declaration**, spearheaded by approximately 70 CEOs primarily from energy-intensive sectors, aims to establish a **European Industrial Deal** with an objective to harmonise the environmental goals of the Green Deal with economic growth. It underscores the necessity for reduced regulations, the establishment of transitional investment funds, and the provision of access to competitively priced low-carbon energy sources.

The declaration contends that the pursuit of climate objectives should not impede economic progress and advocates for legislative measures that attract investment and safeguard employment.

The Antwerp Declaration will be further discussed at the European summit in April.

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Liaison Forum

20 February 2024, online

ECEG participated in the online **Liaison Forum**, the recurrent meeting between the European Commission and the European sectoral social partners.

The agenda covered:

- The outcomes of the Val Duchesse Social Partners summit;
- The new setting of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee meetings in 2025;
- The revision of the EWCs Directive;
- Social policy updates;
- Data protection policy for the European Social Dialogue Committees and
- Update on the calls for proposals.

ECEG's Steering Committee meeting

21 February 2024, online

ECEG held its first **Steering Committee** (SC) meeting of 2024 on 21 February. Chaired by Elisa Hensel, the team shared insights on recent legislative developments in the European Parliament and the Council. Additionally, SC members provided updates on socio-economic developments at the national level and expressed their anticipations for the forthcoming EU elections. The discussions encompassed critical topics concerning employment and social affairs at both Member States and EU levels.

ECEG's WG Education & LLL meeting

21 February 2024, Online

ECEG hosted its **Working Group Education & LLL** meeting online.

Chaired by Anni Siltanen, members exchanged on the following topics:

- Priorities of the Belgian Presidency in the field of Education & LLL;
- EU initiatives on [EU Talent Pool](#), Long term residents and the Single Permit Directives, and quality traineeships;
- Upcoming EU Elections and
- The latest updates on the Co-funded Blueprint [ChemSkills project](#).

ECEG's team warmly thanks all the participants for their active engagement.



ECEG's Activities

EU-OSHA campaign 2023-2025

“Safe and healthy work in the digital age”



The safeguarding of workers stands as a priority within our industry, and employers are committed to addressing health and safety risks posed by digital technologies in the workplace

Jonas Hagelqvist
President of the ECEG



On 06 February, ECEG became an official **campaign partner** of the [EU OSHA's 'Safe and healthy work in the digital age' campaign 2023-25](#). The campaign promotes **prevention culture against health and safety-related challenges** and **risks** associated with the **digital technologies**. The objective of the campaign is to raise awareness, provide tangible resources and bring stakeholders together.

ECEG will contribute by leveraging the existing expertise, sharing related data with other stakeholders, and by learning from our counterparts.

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Institutions

Commission's proposal for a revision of the European Works Council Directive (EWCs)

24 January 2024

The European Commission published its proposal for a **revision of the European Works Council Directive**. According to it, the legal standing of EWCs is set to be reinforced, penalties increased, and longstanding allowances for established bodies revoked.

ECEG expressed its views in the [press release](#), while raising concerns on the:

- grandfathering clause,
- presumption of transnationality,
- disclosure of confidential information by companies and
- information and consultation process.



The EWC's rights to information and consultation on company decisions must maintain a sensible scope for organization and exercise. We see a need for action in the overdue digitalization of EWC working methods [...] This is the only way to ensure that opinions are formed in a timely and broad manner

Petra Lindemann

Chair of the ECEG's WG
Competitiveness, Employment
& Industrial Relations



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EU Talent Pool

After the publication of the proposal, the **co-decision legislative procedure** started. The European Parliament has designated both the LIBE and EMPL Committees as responsible for handling the file and the LIBE Committee published its [draft report](#) on 06 February, with MEP Ms Abir Al-Sahlani as Rapporteur (Renew, Sweden). However, both Committees decided not to vote on the file and to postpone it to the next legislative mandate.

Net-Zero Industry Act

[Coreper](#) approved the provisional agreement on the **Net-Zero Industry Act** (NZIA) on 16 February, which was followed by the Industry Committee, ITRE's [voted](#) on 22 February in the European Parliament. The majority of the committee members voted in favour of establishing a framework of measures for strengthening Europe's net zero technology products manufacturing ecosystem. The votes were casted on the provisional agreement resulting from the inter-institutional negotiations.

The final vote of the European Parliament will take place during the last plenary session in April.

Amongst others, the proposal establishes **European Net Zero Industry Academies** to:

- Address skills shortages in the net-zero technology industries.
- Develop learning programs covering various aspects of net-zero technologies and occupational health and safety.
- Create credentials, including micro-credentials, to facilitate skills recognition, enhance workforce mobility, and promote matching with quality jobs.
- The Commission will support the launch of the academies by seed-funding and will encourage voluntary use of their learning programs, content, and materials by Member States and training providers.



Next meetings

- **19 March 2024**, Brussels
Ceemet-ECEG-industriAll Europe event on “STEM strategy: from the EU to national and regional levels”
- **16-17 April 2024**, Brussels
ChemSkills project in-person meeting (project partners only)
- **22 April 2024**, Brussels/Online
SSDC Working Group meeting
- **23 April 2024**, Online
ECEG’s Board meeting

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