



Your **trusted partner**
in the **European**
chemical sector



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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Dear reader,

Welcome back to the ECEG's newsletter! This edition marks our bimonthly *rendez-vous* where we unveil the latest updates from the ECEG, its members' and partners' while offering insights into the latest initiatives from the EU institutions.

This issue delves into the latest developments of the ChemSkills project and explores highlights from the ECEG's meetings and events. From discussions on STEM, the closing ceremony of the European Year of Skills to the Budapest Conference on skills and competences for the future of chemistry and much more to uncover.

Enjoy your read!

ECEG's Team



ChemSkills project

What is the ChemSkills project?



The ***ChemSkills project: Enabling the green and digital skills transformation of the chemical industry*** is a collaborative initiative co-funded by the EU. Its primary objective is to address current green and digital skills requirements while fostering expertise in producing “safe and sustainable by design” chemicals.

With a consortium comprising 33 project partners, including educational institutions, public entities, trade unions and industry representatives, the ChemSkills endeavours to meet future skills needs. It aims to develop a roadmap outlining potential future scenarios while delivering advanced training courses and innovative curricula.

Recent developments include the **second consortium meeting** held on 16-17 April in Brussels, hosted by [ETRMA](#). During these two days, participants engaged in robust discussions to strengthen the project’s roadmap.

On the first day, the Project Officer of the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) participated, reaffirming the European Commission’s support for the project’s advancement. Subsequently, project partners provided updates on progress within their respective Work Packages and outlined upcoming activities. The second day featured parallel brainstorming sessions.



The Future Skills Survey

The Future Skills Survey is currently open for submissions until **27 October 2024**. Initiated in February 2024, this first round of surveys seeks to gather extensive data on digital and green skills within the chemical industry. Specifically targeting plastics, consumer chemicals, fertilizers, rubber, pharmaceuticals and petrochemicals.

If you are a stakeholder engaged in any of the aforementioned sub-sectors, please, participate by completing our survey.

Your input is invaluable in shaping future strategies and initiatives aimed at addressing skills needs in the chemical industry.

Future Skills Survey

To stay up-to-date with the latest news and developments of the ChemSkills project, make sure to register for the [project's newsletter](#), visit the website and follow the official social media accounts!





ECEG's Meetings

European Conference for a Just Transition

04 March 2024, Brussels

On 04 March, the ECEG contributed to the [European Conference for a Just Transition](#), organised by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2024.

The conference convened diverse stakeholders to explore various facets, including:

- Delving into the social dimension of the European Green Deal;
- Marking a profound change in the EU's Strategic Agenda 2024-2029.

During the event, ECEG's Director General, Emma Argutyan, elucidated the challenges confronting the chemical industry amidst the **twin transition** and spotlighted exemplary practices in **Circular Manufacturing**, exemplified by [Green Oleo s.p.a.](#), led by Beatrice Buzzella and Francesco Buzzella.

Heartfelt gratitude to the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2024, the European Commission and Business Europe for extending the invitation.

Social Partners' seminar: "Youth Employment"

14 March 2024, Brussels

On 14 March, the ECEG participated in the seminar "**Youth employment**" hosted by the European cross-sectoral social partners, [BusinessEurope](#), [SMEUnited](#), [SGIEurope](#) and [ETUC](#).

The seminar provided a platform to delve into the pressing issue of **youth employment**, focusing on aspects such as work-based learning, including apprenticeships and traineeships. Additionally, discussions revolved around **strategies to enhance basic skills** during initial education, recognising its pivotal role as a foundation for adults' labour market participation.

Integral to the seminar was the presentation of the **PISA 2022 results** by the Commission. This comprehensive overview served to inform and guide further deliberations on shaping effective policies and initiatives to address the challenges facing youth employment in Europe.

ECEG - Ceemet - industriAll Europe joint event: “STEM Strategy: from the EU to the national and regional levels”

19 March 2024, Thon Hotel EU, Brussels



On 19 March 2024, the ECEG, [Ceemet](#) and [industriAll Europe](#) convened an evening event in Brussels to address the crucial issue of **STEM talent development** within the chemical and MET sectors.

The event brought together **over 60 stakeholders**, including employers’ representatives, trade unions and EU institutions, and it discussed the **need for a European STEM Strategy**.

Beginning with a panel discussion focusing on the challenges encountered by the chemical and tech industries concerning STEM competences and a skilled workforce, the discourse progressed to

explore European initiatives supporting regional and national endeavours.

Furthermore, emphasis was placed on the imperative of enhancing mutual cooperation among these initiatives.

Integral to the event was the presentation of the joint paper by [ECEG-Ceemet-industriAll Europe](#) titled “***Europe needs to make its STEM strategy a reality now***”. This document encapsulated **key actions** and **recommendations** for the European Commission, the Member States and the Social Partners to catalyse STEM talent development. It delineated roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders in the field.

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We embark on a journey of innovation and progress. Together, we forge pathways for job transitions, prioritize quality STEM education and invest in reskilling endeavours. By fostering inclusive participation, promoting collaboration with industry leaders, and leveraging digital platforms for outreach, we hope to inspire the next generation of STEM enthusiasts.

Emma Argutyan
ECEG's Director General



Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee's meeting on skills

22 April 2024, Brussels/Online

On 22 April, EU Chemical Social Partners (ECEG and [industriAll European Trade Union](#)) convened a Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee meeting, with a keen focus on skills.

The hybrid event co-chaired by Anni Siltanen (ECEG) and Dimitra Penidis (industriAll Europe) saw a dynamic exchange of ideas and initiatives among Social Partners. Key highlights include:

- ECEG presented updates on the **ChemSkills project**, co-funded by the European Commission. Additionally, its German member association, [BAVC](#), unveiled insights from its latest research, the **Future Skills Report 2.0**. This AI-driven analysis illuminates the anticipated skills' needs in the chemical and pharmaceutical industry in Germany.
- industriAll Europe shared its endeavours in **training and advocating for quality jobs**. Notably, efforts include position papers addressing skills shortages and enhancing sector attractiveness. They also highlighted concerns regarding the working conditions of the migrant workforce.
- The European Commission provided updates on **ongoing initiatives as part of the [European Year of Skills](#)**, set to conclude on 9 May.

The next online meeting of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee of the chemical industry is scheduled for 27 May.

ECEG's Board meeting

23 April 2024, online

On 23 April, ECEG held the first annual Board meeting. Besides the internal matters, reflections on the outcomes of the **La Hulpe high-level Conference and Declaration** were central to the discussion. Additionally, the upcoming **Antwerp Social Dialogue**, scheduled for 15 May 2024, garnered attention, particularly concerning the signature of a joint declaration among the European sectoral social partners.

The Antwerp Social Dialogue aims to delve into the social aspects outlined in the initial Antwerp declaration, which is to pave the way for the new European industrial deal endorsed in February 2024. This forthcoming dialogue signifies a pivotal moment for addressing crucial social dimensions within the industrial landscape, underlining the commitment of all stakeholders to foster a sustainable and equitable future.

Closing Event of the European Year of Skills: “*The European Year of Skills - What comes next?*”

30 April 2024, The EGG, Brussels



The European Commission organised and hosted the closing event of the European Year of Skills, titled “**The European Year of Skills – What comes next?**”, on 30 April. [Link to the event.](#)

In collaboration with eight other employers' associations, [Ceemet](#), [FIEC](#), [Hotrec](#), [IRU](#), [Geopa](#), [EBF](#), [Eurocommerce](#) and the Commission, ECEG co-organised a discussion group focused on **addressing skills shortages**. The discussion aimed to explore innovative solutions to tackle this challenge prevalent across various sectors in the EU labour market.

The debate delved into several key areas, including:

1. Enhancing the **attractiveness of STEM** fields and the development of **efficient VET systems**;
2. **Matchmaking skills needs** with those available in third countries;
3. **Upskilling & reskilling initiatives** to navigate the green & digital transitions.

The ECEG had the honour of moderating the first roundtable discussion, which concluded with a poignant statement presented to the plenary session. It emphasised the imperative of forging strong and continuous collaborations between Social Partners and national authorities. Such dialogues are essential to attract and retain a skilled workforce, offer quality employment opportunities, and equip employees with the requisite skills needed for the labour market of the future.



Institutions

EU Action Plan on labour shortage

On 20 March, the European Commission published the [EU Action Plan on labour shortages](#), following up on the Val Duchesse Social Partners Summit held on 31 January 2024.

The document addresses the **pressing challenge of labour shortages** and it outlines **key actions to be implemented** at the EU, national, and social partners' levels in five key areas:

1. Supporting the activation of underrepresented individuals in the labour market;
2. Providing assistance for skills development, training and education;
3. Improving working conditions in certain sectors;
4. Facilitating intra-EU mobility for workers and learners;
5. Attracting talent from outside the EU.

The Commission's plan stipulates that progress on implementing these actions will be closely monitored within the framework of the European Semester. Additionally, Member States are requested to engage in regular tripartite exchanges on this issue through the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee, with the participation of European and national social partners. ECEG warmly welcomes the action plan, which includes many recommendations from the [ECEG's position paper on labour and skills shortages in the European chemical industry](#), as well as in its written contribution to the Commission's consultation.

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Commission's initiative on EU quality traineeships

In response to the [initiative from the European Parliament](#), the Commission published an initiative on **EU quality traineeships** on 20 March.

It comprises two key components:

- An **update of the 2014 Recommendation** on Quality Framework for Traineeship (QFT)
- A **new Directive** aimed at improving and enforcing working conditions for trainees, while also combatting situations where regular employment relationships disguised as traineeships.

Next steps

The proposed Directive from the Commission will undergo discussion by both the European Parliament and the Member States. Upon adoption by these co-legislators, Member States will then have a two-year period to integrate it into their national legislation.

Meanwhile, the Council Recommendation will be submitted to the Council of the EU heads of states/governments for deliberation and approval. Subsequently, the Commission will assist Member States in executing the Recommendation and will request them to furnish updates on national endeavors, reforms, exemplary practices, and statistical data.



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Future talent serves as a crucial strategic pillar for the industry's growth and innovation. Each traineeship opportunity must offer substantial learning experiences. ECEG acknowledges the newfound clarity surrounding the Quality Traineeship Initiative. Proposing a revised recommendation for traineeships in Europe presents a viable solution. The directive will exclusively relate to traineeships with formal employment contracts.

Anni Siltanen
Chair of the
ECEG's WG Education & LLL



European Works Council

On 03 April, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament voted on its [final report](#) on the **revision of the European Works Council Directive** (EWC).

The compromise amendments negotiated among the political groups were adopted with 28 votes in favour, 7 against and 8 abstentions.

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Originally, a mandate from the Parliament for the trilogue negotiations with the Council was also expected to be issued during the EMPL vote. However, this part of the vote was removed from the agenda at short notice as too few MEPs were present. This means that the Parliament does not yet formally have a final negotiating mandate.

The EMPL report represents significant tightening of the already far-reaching Commission proposal. The planned extension of information and consultation rights as well as the expanded responsibilities unduly restrict entrepreneurial freedom. Legal uncertainty arises due to an unclear delimitation of national and European responsibilities. In addition, companies are facing the risk of delays in decisions due to court proceedings.

Next steps

There will be no further EMPL meeting in this legislative period in which the trialogue mandate could be granted. However, due to the lack of the principle of discontinuity at EU level, the referral to the European Parliament can be continued in the next legislative period.

In the Council, work on its positioning (“general approach”) is continuing.

La Hulpe high-level Conference and Declaration

15-16 April 2024, La Hulpe

On 15-16 April, a high-level Conference took place in La Hulpe, Belgium, spearheaded by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, the European Commission, the European Parliament, and European social partners. The European Trade Union Confederation, SGI (Employers in services of general interest) and SMEUnited signed "**La Hulpe Declaration**", delineating the social agenda for the upcoming legislative period.

However, it is noteworthy that Sweden, Austria and BusinessEurope refrained from signing the document. The latter opted out, citing that "the Declaration does not, as it stands, address the current concerns of European companies".

Despite this, the Belgian Presidency signed the Declaration on behalf of 25 Member States. It remains hopeful that both Sweden and Austria and the European business leaders will sign it before the EPSCO Council meeting in June.

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Posting of Workers

On 30 April, the European Commission released a report indicating that, at present, there is no necessity to revise the directive on posted workers, initially adopted in 1996 and revised in 2018. The report underscored that "*Member States' legislation substantially complies with the directive's requirements. However, the Commission has identified various issues of non-conformity of national measures transposing the directive that could be subject to further actions.*"

[essencia](#) represented the ECEG at the dedicated social partner hearing on e-declaration on 29 April. Please, let us know, should you wish to have the meeting notes.

News from Members and Partners

Chemical Vocational Education - ECEG's Hungarian member, MAVESZ

26 March 2024, Budapest



ECEG contributed to the Chemical Vocational Education Conference, which took place in Budapest.

Noteworthy presentations included Gergely Palmay from the Ministry of Culture and Innovation, who delved into the influence of global changes on Hungary's education strategy, emphasizing the necessity for new skills in digitalisation and industrial transformation.

Tamás Boros from the Equilibrium Institute provided insights into Hungary's education system on the international stage.

Discussions with Ministry of Education, university, and industry representatives focused on future green and digital skills needs, followed by panels on digitalization and AI. ECEG's Director General, Emma Argutyan, presented [projects on climate neutrality and digital skills](#) development, while Anni Siltanen introduced the [ChemSkills project](#).

ECEG thanks Csaba Szabo, the CEO of [Magyar Vegyipari Szövetség \(MAVESZ\)](#) for the invitation and the opportunity to contribute.

essencia' Annual Event

28 March 2024, Brussels



On March 28, ECEG's Belgian member, **essencia**, hosted in Brussels its annual event, "**A European Industrial Deal: The Time is Now**".

This initiative emphasized the urgent necessity for a strategic and ambitious industrial policy both in Belgium and in Europe, putting this issue at the forefront of the political and societal agenda.

The event succeeded in fostering inspiring roundtable discussions with prominent industry experts and insightful ideas and policy proposals from **essencia** vis-à-vis transition Plan and the Antwerp Declaration for a European Industrial Deal.

ECEG expresses sincere gratitude for the invitation to the annual event.

The German Federation of Chemical Employers' Associations (BAVC)'s Annual Chemical Employers Day

30 April 2024, Hannover



On 30 April, the German Federation of Chemical Employers' Associations, [BAVC](#), held its annual Chemical Employers Day in Hannover. This year, the event was hosted by [ChemieNord – Arbeitgeberverband für die Chemische Industrie in Norddeutschland](#).

Focused on the theme of revitalising **Germany as a competitive business location**, discussions revolved around strategies for successful transformation and the necessary political initiatives. Distinguished guests included Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Protection, Dr. Robert Habeck, Dr. Rainer Dulger, President of the Employers' Association (BDA), Michael Vassiliadis, Chairman of the IGBCE, and Anja Piel, Executive Board member of the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB).

The event witnessed numerous significant appointments, including the one of Mathias Schöttke as the **new CEO of BAVC**. ECEG eagerly looks forward to continued collaboration and extends heartfelt thanks to outgoing CEO, Klaus-Peter Stiller, for his steadfast support and dedication.

Additionally, the transition saw the outgoing BAVC President, Kai Beckmann, stepping down, and a warm welcome extended to the **newly elected President**, Katja Scharpwinkel. ECEG wishes her success in her new role and expresses gratitude for the leadership of Kai Beckmann.



Next meetings

- **27 May 2024**, Online
SSDC Working Group
- **19 June 2024**, Online
ChemSkills' Workshop on Green Skills
- **20 June 2024**, Online
ECEG's WG Education & LLL
- **17 September 2024**, Novi Sad
ChemSkills' Public Conference

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