

GREENET
SECOND EUROPEAN LEVEL WORKSHOP
(28-29.10.2024)
MINUTES

Marta Trawinska, ISP

Barbara Surdykowska, ISP

Date, place and format of the meeting

The meeting was held on-line on 28-29 October 2024.

Participants:

33 experts and representatives of the project partners (see Participants list)

The key points of the agenda

The key points of the agenda included:

- Presentation of survey results in EU countries on the European Green Deal (EGD),
- Mapping by participants of examples of negotiating the EGD,
- Exploration of new areas and new approaches for social partners' actions in this field,
- Presentation of further examples of EU initiatives related to the EGD.

The key points of the meeting

During the first day of the training, discussions continued on the involvement of social partners in the Green Deal.

In the first part, Barbara Surdykowska highlighted opinion polls, and provided participants with links to sources where participants could find more detailed data:

<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3173>

https://climate.ec.europa.eu/citizens/citizen-support-climate-action_en

Europeans think climate change is a serious problem

- European citizens identify climate change as the third most serious problem facing the world after poverty, hunger and lack of drinking water, and armed conflicts.
- A quarter of Europeans are most concerned by the interlinked climate, environmental and pollution crises. 1 in 4 chose either climate change, deterioration of nature or health problems due to pollution as the single most serious problem we face.
- 93% of EU citizens see climate change as a serious problem and 77% see it as a very serious problem.
- The survey reveals that citizens consider **promoting the circular economy as the most effective way** of tackling environmental problems in 11 Member States, followed by **restoring nature** (considered the most important in Greece, Portugal, Spain, Estonia, Cyprus, and Bulgaria).
- Generally, there is a **readiness towards more sustainable consumer behaviour** with almost **six in ten respondents willing to pay more for sustainable products** that are easier to repair, recyclable and/or produced in an environmentally sustainable way. As part of a more circular economy, citizens support reducing the amount of waste by sorting their waste for recycling correctly and using reusable packaging.

More than four in five respondents (84%) are worried about the impact of harmful chemicals present in everyday products on their health, while a similar proportion (84%) are worried about the impact of such chemicals on the environment. 72% of Europeans also state that they take into account the chemical safety of products when making purchases. Over half of Europeans (52%) consider that the actual level of protection of human health and the environment from harmful chemicals is too low and should be increased.

During the meeting, data were presented on a country-by-country basis.

It was also pointed out that questions in opinion polls run away from raising the question of whether respondents are willing to pay certain costs (higher heating costs, costs of home upgrades, home insulation) and, above all, that the questions run away from agreeing to change the pattern of everyday behavior (e.g., related to transportation).

In the next point, the speaker tried to show the processes that were taking place in the change of rhetoric (especially in the run-up to the European Parliament elections) involving an increasing emphasis on the importance of maintaining the competitiveness of the European

economy. She pointed to open questions about the transformation in the Green Deal under the influence of the geopolitical situation (such as the US presidential election)

In January 2024, Belgian Prime Minister De Croo launched the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU by [telling](#) the European Parliament that “**we need an Industrial Deal alongside the Green Deal**”. A few weeks later, together with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, he unveiled the [Antwerp Declaration](#), which calls for an **Industrial Deal to be at the heart of the EU’s next political agenda** and has been signed by more than 500 companies from energy-intensive industries.

The Antwerp Declaration calls for the creation of a clean technology financing strategy, the provision of renewable and affordable energy, a focus on sustainable and digital infrastructure, an increase in the EU’s supply of raw materials and a boost in demand for net-zero, low-carbon and circular products, among other things.

The push for an Industrial Deal in its current form appears to be largely a **business-friendly move to appeal to those right-wing political parties and interest groups** across Europe that have increasingly portrayed the European Green Deal as [harmful](#) to businesses and workers.

Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, “To keep industrial production here with us in Europe, we need an Industrial Deal alongside the Green Deal,”. His speech was meant to kickstart Belgium’s presidency, which will make the country an influential power broker among the bloc’s capitals for six months.

“The climate policies of China and the U.S. contain an abundance of carrots for their industry,” he added, “While we, here in Europe, all too often grab for the stick.”

De Croo’s comments are unsurprising, given that right-wing parties have pounced on a perception that the EU’s Green Deal — which aims to make the bloc climate neutral by 2050 — is too burdensome for workers and businesses.

https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/forests/deforestation/regulation-deforestation-free-products_en

<https://www.eurozine.com/whats-next-for-the-european-green-deal/>

The next part of the meeting addressed the topic of collective bargaining:

- Greening the workplace as a performance space (e.g., energy-efficient light bulbs, more precise waste segregation than required by law, green transportation for commuting and business travel)
- Question: are (should be?) unions agents of change in this area
- Classic negotiations
- Training
- Remote work
- Right to disconnect
- Restructuring
- Automation/application of AI - how much the right to information and consultation and how much the subject of negotiation The speaker also showed the progress of implementation of Article 4 in individual member states <https://wage-up.etuc.org/>

Participants mapped their previous experiences in the area of negotiations concerning the twin transition. They presented insights from their respective industries and countries. The discussion also addressed the challenges related to negotiations and the difficulties faced by social partners. Additionally, participants explored possibilities for going beyond traditional negotiation topics and conventional approaches to social partner engagement in negotiations. Here are some key takeaways:

- The right to information and consultation is not being implemented in a satisfactory way.
- Social dialogue in some countries is weak, sometimes superficial, and social partners (especially trade unions) see themselves as the weaker side, fearing they may not be able to sufficiently protect workers' interests and ensure that the transition is genuinely fair.
- There are few examples of twin transition negotiations, with examples mostly related to remote work, right to disconnect, occupational health and safety (e.g., in the context of heat waves). Negotiations still tend to focus on traditional topics (wages, working conditions, leave policies, etc.).
- Some participants expressed a willingness to move beyond traditional approaches, for example, by running social campaigns and forming alliances with NGOs or academic

institutions. However, challenges include a lack of communication skills (e.g., using social media) and difficulty reaching non-unionized groups (e.g., students).

- There is also a recognized need to strengthen the expertise within social partner organizations by developing in-house experts instead of relying on external specialists.
- Social partners are concerned about whether adequate funding for the twin transition will be available, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Participants see a significant role for the state in providing transparent information to the public about the goals and principles of the twin transition.