



9 May 2011

SOCIAL PARTNERS DIALOGUE ON CLIMATE CHANGE 13 MAY 2011 SPEAKING NOTES FOR PHILIPPE DE BUCK

PART II - THIRD DIALOGUE (10H50)

Key message 1: All sectors needed for the shift towards a low-carbon economy

- The shift towards a low-carbon economy will affect all sectors. Likewise, the potential to contribute to cutting carbon emissions spans across all sectors.
- Consequently, a horizontal approach is needed when developing the jobs and skills base for a competitive low-carbon economy. Measures to update and upgrade skills, incentives to invest in research and innovation etc., in view of the climate challenge must apply to all sectors.

Key message 2: Skills shortages jeopardize EU competitiveness

- The severe lack of people skilled in science, technology, engineering and mathematics are currently hampering companies in a broad range of sectors (ranging from metal industries and automotive industries to the renewable energy sector) from bringing new innovative solutions to the table on how to combat climate change.
- This will have negative consequences not only on the prospects of succeeding with tackling the challenge, but also on EU competitiveness. As our competitors move ahead, Europe needs to be fit to take part in the technological race.
- Half of the companies in the renewable energy sector in the UK reported difficulties in finding specialist technicians in a 2008 survey. There are important shortages in the field of technology and production at large. In Austria for instance, 77% of companies in these fields reported difficulties in recruiting workers with the right skills. The overall shortage of professionals in science, technology, engineering and mathematics in Germany stood at 117,000 in February 2011.
- The European Commission should therefore put pressure on national governments to prioritise educations in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The Commission could also make better use of EU level programmes, and establish industrial PhD schemes.
- We need a skilled and adaptable workforce to make sure that innovative goods and services are not only invented but also produced in Europe rather than companies having to leave Europe to this end.

**Key message 3: Social partners have a key role to play in facilitating transitions**

- Restructuring processes following from climate change adjustment policies will have an impact on the sectoral composition of employment as well as on specific occupations.
- For the EU to succeed in an efficient transition that safeguards the competitiveness of European companies, a good framework for restructuring is needed. BUSINESSEUROPE is concerned about the timing and context of the Commission's consultation on restructuring. We cannot have this interfering with social partners' negotiations on working time but we also need a much more proactive approach to restructuring. Otherwise, we run the risk of driving companies out of Europe and investments being made elsewhere.
- Flexible labour markets are key to reduce adjustment costs for companies and individual workers related to the transition to a low-carbon economy. But Europe will need skilled workers to take the jobs that can be created through more flexible labour markets.
- The social partners can play an important role in facilitating the transition by supporting the implementation of the flexicurity principles. European social partners re-iterated their support for this approach in the joint statement on the Europe 2020 strategy.
- Moreover, in their joint project on climate change, numerous examples of bipartite collaborations between social partners and partnerships with public actors were identified that aims at improving work force skills, contribute to a sustainable development and facilitate transitions.
- One such example is the project called "competence map" run by the Bulgarian Industrial Association (BIA) with money from the European Social Fund and in partnership with the trade union confederations CITUB and Podkrepa. The aim of the project, which involved almost 2000 companies, is to develop tools and systems for competence and skill assessment in view of a transition towards a low-carbon economy.
- Another example is the non-profit, non-governmental organisation created jointly by employers and trade unions in the Romanian construction sector. The organisation functions as a discussion forum to help define the appropriate national training policies needed to cope with the need for more energy efficiency among other challenges.