



Press Release

Social partners in Gas Sector warn European Commission:

Demographic Change and Skills to be taken seriously when developing European energy policy.

Both employers and trade unions are concerned about the ageing profile of the workforce with many workers retiring in the next 5-10 years in the European gas sector. This poses particular challenges to ensure the level of competencies and skills which is important to maintain a high quality service, to develop the gas infrastructure, to ensure security of supply and to respond to technological developments and climate change.

Natural gas should be able to fully play its role as a highly efficient and clean energy source in the future low carbon economy.

Peter Gentges, President of the Social Dialogue Committee for the European Gas Sector and representing Eurogas stated in his conclusions: *We urge the European Commission to take account of the demographic change and competency developments in the European gas sector and seek a common approach with the European social partners to promote jobs and a high skilled work force.*

Didier Baur, vice-president, EPSU added: *Without a focus on the workforce of tomorrow, the risk is high that the sector can not deliver on maintaining high service quality and security of supply. It might then also not be able to play its role in the transition to a low or zero carbon economy.*

Martina Ifflaender, vice-president, Eurogas: *The study and toolkit underline the importance of investment in the work force of the sector. The many cases presented underline how the social partners are contributing to the development of skills and we will encourage use of the toolkit.*

Reinhard Reibsch, EMCEF continued: *It is vital for the companies and the trade unions to use the study and the toolkit in the companies and national sector bodies and to consider what further steps are needed. We need an active approach now.*

The European social partners for the gas industry organised a joint conference on the challenge of Demographic Change and Competencies in the European Gas Sector, 4 November 2009, Brussels

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The Conference received financial support from the European Commission, DG Employment.

The results of a joint study

Despite the increase in its share of the overall total energy market - the gas sector will see its usage decline among its residential and commercial customers over the coming decades. Occupations fundamental to the generation of power will require a greater number of workers in the coming years. There will therefore be an increase in the demand for engineers and other power plant occupations in the future. In addition the amount of investment required by the gas sector over the coming years is €210bn and it is required in all sections of the gas supply chain—exploration and development, transmission systems (which include Liquefied Natural Gas infrastructure), distribution, storage, etc.

The study presents the results of a joint survey. From the responses it is clear that employers and trade unions need to set aside time and resources to properly study the effects of the sector's ageing workforce and adequately address them jointly. The survey responses indicate that there is a lack of discussion and bargaining on demographic change and competencies.

The study highlights the specific jobs that will be affected such as meter readers, engineers, plant operators, and workers in customer services, distribution and exploration.

The study was presented by **David Tarren** of the Working Life Research Institute of the Metropolitan University of London.

The joint toolkit

The toolkit seeks to raise awareness of the impact of demographic change on skills and competencies in the gas sector. It identifies challenges facing gas companies and how they can be resolved. It demonstrates how companies can benefit from the skills and motivations of different age groups in the workforce and seeks to provide guidelines, information and good practice approaches for key stakeholders. There are several case studies which exemplify joint company/ trade union approaches, including in the sectors main companies. The toolkit underlines the case for the role of the social dialogue in the management of demographic change

The toolkit was presented by **Jane Pillinger**, an independent consultant working from Ireland.

Others speakers at the Conference included:

Hubert Manuel, of DG Employment, European Commission. He presented the results of the European Commission study on The Future of Jobs and Skills and in particular how this affects the energy and utilities sector.

Helene Donoghue, of DG Energy, European Commission. Mrs. Donoghue explored with participants the future context of European energy policy and the role of the gas sector in European energy policy.

Robert Anderson, of the European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions (Dublin). He underlined the many challenges demographic change and the ageing of the population poses to employers and trade unions, urging them to seek common solutions.

A series of case studies were presented by:

Mr. **Chvatal**, Vienna Gas company, Austria

Mr. **Musoi**, Gaz Rom trade union, Roumania

Mr. **Beck**, RWE Vertrieb/ Trading, Germany

Mr. **Wærdahl**, Fabricom, Norway (trade union/ joint)

Mr. **Ciampi**, ENI, Italy

The presentations and studies will be made available at : <http://www.epsu.org/a/5699>