



Project: Identifying common interests for Social Dialogue in the waste industry

Seminar on health and safety in the waste industry

28 November 2011

ITUH, Room B

Blvd. Roi Albert II, 5 – 1210 Brussels

Summarized Report

On 28 November 2011 EPSU organized a seminar on **health and safety in the waste industry**. The seminar is part of a project that aims to identify common interests for workers and employers in the waste services industry, and to seek avenues for cooperation through social dialogue.

Around 20 people participated in the seminar. Presentations were given by Aida Ponce (ETUI) on health and safety in various sectors, Jerry van den Berge (EPSU) on developments in the waste sector, Eric Harle (Suez) on health and safety policy in Suez-Environment, Stefan de Jong (Sita/ VA-federation of waste companies, Netherlands) on behalf of FEAD, the private sector employers federation in the waste industry, Ingrid van der Wal (Abvakabo FNV) on covenants on working environment as a tool to improve health and safety and Jan Willem Goudriaan (EPSU) on Social Dialogue experiences of EPSU .

Jerry van den Berge (EPSU) gave a presentation on the waste sector in general and the importance the sector has for EPSU. He stressed the transformation of the sector and told that “re-valuation of waste” should include “re-valuation of the workers and the job they do”. Waste services will be at the core of a green economy and this should be reflected in higher respect for workers, including decent work and working conditions.

Aida Ponce (ETUI) pointed at the transformation of the waste industry and the greening of the economy that has an impact on jobs. She stated that the waste industry is a complex sector. Occupational accidents are higher in the waste industry than in other sectors. They vary between the different types of waste services. In collection it is the number of truck/van accidents that is the highest. In the waste incineration plants it respiration problems and other illness caused by dust. In landfill illness is caused by handling unknown components, bio-waste and also by dust. In handling of electronic waste illness is caused by heavy metals.

Eric Harle (H&S director, Suez Environnement) gave a presentation on the H&S policy in the company. He showed several examples (videos) of health and safety risks and policies to reduce the risks and he showed the shortcoming of regulations for example in the increased number of obliged mirrors in trucks. This is no longer helpful to avoid accidents because it is simply impossible to look into six mirrors. It has become a risk in itself. He showed the numbers of lost working days and the accident rates that are overall 50% higher than in other sectors.

Ingrid van der Wal (H&S advisor, Abvakabo FNV) gave a presentation on Dutch practices to reach covenants between employers and trade unions on specific issues. The history in

the Netherlands showed that legal obligations on working environment often were not obeyed, but control by labor inspection appeared very difficult.

Stefan de Jong (Sita/FEAD) gave a presentation about the European federation of private waste management and environmental services providers (FEAD). He signaled the transformation of the sector and said this is a focus area for FEAD. Also Health and Safety is a focus area for FEAD. Their main goal is to inform about EU legislation and policy and influence EU policy.

Jan Willem Goudriaan (EPSU) made the final presentation on experiences in EPSU in Social Dialogue and in Health and Safety. He signaled that circumstances in the waste industry at this moment are very similar to the circumstances in the electricity sector at the time EPSU started the discussion on health and safety with the employers federation in the electricity sector.

In the **discussions** many of the participants gave examples of H&S policies and experiences in each of their companies and countries. Several recommendations were made to improve H&S. These recommendations addressed both company level (training, awareness raising, voluntary measures, company rules, planning, etc) and EU or national level (legislation, covenants, procurement rules, control on subcontractors, ban on landfill, incentives, social dialogue and more). This seminar was considered very useful as exchange platform and appreciated as a learning moment by all participants.

Next seminars will be on 14 February 2012 (also on Health and Safety) and on 14 June 2012 (on Skills and skill needs).