

Minutes

Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee on Gas

20 November 2025

Presence

Social partner	Name	Organisation
Employer (Eurogas)	Marte Røv	Equinor
	Andreas Guth	Eurogas Secretariat
	Constance Long	Eurogas Secretariat
	Laura Ponikelska	Eurogas Secretariat
	Verena Hof	Uniper
Union (EPSU)	Tuscany Bell	EPSU Secretariat
Union (IndustriAll)	Jonathan Herlitz	IndustriAll Secretariat

1. Welcome by the Chair (EPSU) & adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without objections.

2. Narrative, perception and role of gas

Before starting with the first session, social partners agreed that the gas sector has a compelling story to tell about its shift to greener gases, but this is not visible enough externally. There is a shared need to rethink the language around gas, as the term carries a relatively negative public perception that does not reflect the sector's transition.

EPSU, Eurogas and industriAll share the view that gas has an important role to play in the climate and energy transition, including by making electrification possible. Two

union representatives stressed that gas is critical to secure the system and that full electrification without gas is unrealistic.

3. Gas sectoral developments: EU Grids Package

Seán Dunleavy, Policy Advisor at Eurogas, presented Eurogas' recommendations on the upcoming European grids package, expected on 10 December 2025:

- Electricity alone cannot deliver the transition; electricity, hydrogen, renewable gases and CO₂ networks need to work together.
- Hydrogen and CO₂ infrastructure are essential to decarbonise hard-to-abate industries and keep them competitive in Europe.
- Repurposing existing gas grids is cheaper, quicker, and protects and reuses the skills of the current gas workforce.

Seán further underlined the importance of Gas Distribution System Operators (DSOs), which connect up to 100% of the industrial and commercial customers to the grids and deliver about 50% of the gas consumed by EU industry for energy purposes. Given their importance, DSOs play a central role in decarbonising gas consumption of EU industry.

Following, Seán elaborated the challenges that the Grids Package needs to address, such as permitting delays, fragmented infrastructure planning, lack of harmonised technical standards, and outdated financing and cost sharing rules. Finally, he highlighted the need for the Package to support integrated multi-energy planning, accelerated permitting, stronger cross-border coordination, and fair and predictable financing.

IndustriAll and EPSU echoed many of the above recommendations. They further added workforce as an important pillar in the debate, alongside aging grids infrastructure. To maintain and upgrade networks requires a large, skilled workforce with adequate health and safety, while further investment to connect renewables and expand the grid sustainably are also needed. They also raised the need for coordinated EU and national actions.

EPSU and IndustriAll's recommendations were:

- Industrial policy framework: advocate for a resilient European energy value chain supported by a strong industrial policy and high-quality jobs.

- Funding and investment: need for combining public and private funding with social conditions to finance grid modernisation.
- Public sector role: strengthen public sector involvement in planning, financing, and regulating electricity grid infrastructure.
- Worker involvement: highlight the importance of workers' skills development, health and safety, and social dialogue in the energy transition.

EPSU/IndustriAll concluded that the energy transition must prioritise public good, sustainability, and quality employment over mere profitability. Trade unions demand strong EU coordination and active involvement in energy planning and decision-making. Combining industrial policy, funding, public leadership, and workforce development creates a resilient energy system. A just energy system supports climate targets while ensuring social justice for all citizens and workers.

The unions further raised the need for new training and skills, due to the green and digital transitions, ageing infrastructure, extreme weather, and rising cybersecurity threats.

Finally, attraction and diversity are key: the energy workforce is ageing, especially in transmission and distribution; more young workers and women are needed (renewables in the UK cited as a positive example).

4. European Commission Work Programme 2026

Ettore Bucci from DG EMPL, European Commission, presented the European Commission's Work Programme for 2026, and DG EMPL's priorities and upcoming initiatives. The 2026 Work Programme, titled "Europe's Independence Moment", contains 38 new policy objectives. 25 out of 47 legislative initiatives from the programme have a significant simplification dimension.

Relevant initiatives for 2026 include:

- EU Anti-Poverty Strategy – Q2 2026
- Fair Labour Mobility Package – Q3 2026
- Strengthening the European Labour Authority (ELA) - Q3 2026
- Skills Portability Initiative – Q3 2026
- Circular Economy Act – Q3 2026
- European Climate Adaptation Plan – Q3 2026
- Quality Jobs Act - Q4 2026

5. Regulatory framework, investment and business case

A separate discussion emerged on perceived lack of new decarbonisation projects in the gas sector.

Andreas Guth underlined that many decarbonisation projects (CCS, low-carbon hydrogen, RFNBOs) lack a viable business case due to the current regulatory framework and compliance costs (e.g. hydrogen production costs and RFNBO rules). He stressed that once a workable framework is in place, companies will be able to invest in such projects.

6. Cross-sectoral dialogue: case study

IndustriAll shared an overview of their cross-sectoral [Antwerp Dialogue on Quality Industrial Jobs in Europe](#), which resulted in a [statement](#) with sectoral employers' representatives. With this initiative, industriAll's goal was to highlight the importance of maintaining quality jobs in Europe. 4 main pillars were at the centre of these joint recommendations for the Clean Industrial Deal:

- Ensure a just transition for our industries and workforce
- Develop a re-skilling and up-skilling agenda
- Promote social dialogue and social partners' involvement
- Ensure a stable and coherent regulatory environment for our industries

The additional value of this exercise was bringing together employers from different sectors to exchange on the situation in their industries. Most struggle with similar challenges because of technological and geopolitical change that go beyond sector-level. In the future, if interest is there, social partners could organise a cross-sectoral dialogue with organisations such as Eurelectric, Wind Europe, Nuclear Europe, Solar Power Europe, etc.

At the end of this intervention, industriAll announced their new [study](#) which highlights the industrial decline in Europe and the risk of losing millions of good industrial jobs.