

Minutes

Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee on Gas

24 February 2026

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

The Chair welcomed the attendees and asked for adoption of the agenda. The agenda was adopted without objections.

2. CO2 markets and infrastructure

Presentation of the European Commission: see PPT.

A French Trade Union (TU) representative asked the Commission representative about the social impacts that were not included in the presentation, specifically relating to the costs and workers.

The EU Commission representative replied that workers are important, but a lot will depend on national regulation. In terms of cost, it will be passed onto the end user but the Commission is of the opinion that solutions will emerge as CO2 markets and infrastructure are built up which will lower the cost.

Presentation of Eurogas: see PPT.

Intervention of IndustriAll Europe: acknowledged that the development of CO2 markets and infrastructure presented a number of opportunities but highlighted the lack of recognition of the social impacts as well as the limited attention given to the risks.

Intervention of EPSU:

- EPSU said that despite the potential of CO2 markets and infrastructure, much of the technology remains unproven and undeveloped. Highlighted concerns about overreliance on technology for decarbonisation and the need to continue to diversify solutions.
- EPSU also argued that there is a need to ensure protections for workers in terms of stability and job security. They said that relying on national regulation for workforce issues is not the solution as the markets and infrastructure will be cross-border and so there is a need for European coordination and oversight.
- In terms of funding, EPSU mentioned that reliance on the markets risks socialising the costs while privatising the gains. Therefore, they argued that it is important to include social conditionalities in procurement procedures to

ensure public funds do not go to companies that don't have collective bargaining agreements, good working conditions, and companies that are engaged in tax avoidance practices.

- Digitalisation of permitting processes can be used to make the process quicker but must not lower standards.

The presentations were followed by a discussion.

A French TU representative agreed generally with the points of Eurogas. The representative also repeated concerns about job security for workers and questioned whether CCUS should be a priority for the EU considering the EU is responsible for a very small proportion of global greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, he raised concerns about the necessary investments required to install CCUS, while EU industries are already struggling to compete globally. Another French TU representative stressed the need for regulation to ensure that public funds are not used for private companies to profit but for the benefit of the whole population.

Eurogas replied that the possibility for the EU to become a global leader on climate change should not be forgotten. At the same time, the EU needs to be pragmatic and look at what is actually feasible. There is a need for easier rules to comply with. Hydrogen is another solution for the EU's climate goals but the regulatory framework is not fit for purpose and drives costs higher which doesn't help with affordable energy. Eurogas also stressed that CCUS is particularly relevant for maintaining industrial activity in Europe while reducing emissions, notably in sectors where emissions are difficult to abate.

A French TU representative agreed with the need for regulation and conditionalities, but also with the need for flexibility and de-risking. The required investment for the development of CO₂ markets and infrastructure is huge so the need for derisking is understandable, especially as the aim is to keep European industries alive and competitive. But the most important thing is that the value of new markets and infrastructures is shared with citizens as these are projects of community interest, and it is not easy to explain to citizens. They argued that at the beginning, when building out infrastructure (storage sites and infrastructure), the benefit will not be commercial. They said that priority should first be to secure employment and jobs. Another problem is that all countries have different regulatory barriers/processes.

The EU Commission representative responded that whilst Europe's share in global emissions are going down, and whilst CCUS will require significant investments from companies, the EU has a robust political agenda which says that we need to be carbon neutral, therefore some industries need to bring down carbon emissions. The EU needs forward looking investments if we are to reach 2050 goals. At the beginning it will be more costly, but we can establish a competitive framework if we start now. In relation to social dialogue, workers issues (training, safety etc) need to be dealt with.

It is clear that this needs to be done at a totally different scale as we have today, but it is not entirely uncharted ground – the skills required are similar to those in the gas sector already meaning we have a good starting point and transporting liquid CO₂ is already common practice, for example it happens every day with transport of CO₂ for use in the food industry (e.g. fizzy drinks), but would need to take a totally different scale. Some specificities will be learnt along the way but we do have regulation and rules for many of the different aspects.

3. IEA Report on World Energy Employment Outlook 2025

IEA presented the [World Energy Employment Outlook 2025](#).

See PPT.

Key points from IEA:

- Global energy employment has expanded rapidly since 2020, growing twice as fast as the wider economy. The development is driven particularly by the power sector, which has accounted for three-quarters of all energy job additions since 2019.
- Employment growth is strongest in emerging economies and in China, while growth remains muted in advanced economies.
- Across all IEA scenarios to 2035, energy jobs continue to grow, with the power sector remaining the main engine of job creation.
- The energy workforce is highly skilled and dominated by applied technical workers, representing 54% of all energy jobs.
- Demand for technically skilled trades is accelerating, with occupations such as electricians, welders, solar PV installers, line workers, pipe and gas fitters, battery technicians, and HVAC installers seeing the fastest increases. Many of these roles are also where skills shortages are most acute, reflecting a shortfall in qualified workers. Many employers report difficulties finding skilled workers.
- Women are underrepresented in the energy sector. Less than 20 % of the workforce are women. Women account for less than 5% of critical roles, such as welders, electricians and grid line workers.
- The energy workforce is aging, raising concerns regarding replacement of skilled workers. Education must rise to prevent skills shortages from worsening.
- Policymakers have the tools to attract more workers into the energy sector. Need more collaboration between stakeholders, well-designed and accessible training, and quality jobs.
- What are fossil fuel workers' priorities when transitioning to jobs in the clean energy sector? Fossil fuel workers prioritise fair wages, safe workplaces and remaining in the energy sector when considering transitioning to clean energy.

Reskilling these workers can ensure a just transition and address skills shortages.

- Ensuring decent work can make energy jobs more attractive with mechanisms such as social dialogue and collective bargaining leading to improvements in job quality in some countries.
- High share of workers in the EU gas sector is covered by collective agreements.
- AI will be a big topic in the upcoming employment report 2026.

The presentation was followed by a discussion.

A French trade union representative stressed that a just transition is essential for the gas sector. He recalled that unions and employers in the SSDC had negotiated a just transition agreement, but employers ultimately refused to sign. He emphasised that workers are the sector's strongest asset, and their involvement should be at the centre of transition planning.

He highlighted persistent gender imbalances: although companies report around 25% women overall, the share of women in technical roles is significantly lower. Women are mostly found in engineering or back-office functions, while technical training programmes fail to attract women. It is changing but progress is slow. IEA acknowledged the issue, pointing to work-life balance constraints and a possible perception that the sector is not sufficiently child- or women-friendly, which discourages female participation.

The union representative also raised concerns about the impact of AI and data centres, noting that they are expected to drive significantly higher energy consumption and could have implications for employment.

Another union representative expressed interest in having a dedicated hydrogen analysis, noting that hydrogen is a central component of the European industrial strategy and should therefore be better reflected in future work of the IEA.

He highlighted significant difficulties facing the gas sector in France where the public sector and public debate often portray gas as having no future, focusing almost exclusively on electrification. As a result, gas is not perceived as part of the long-term energy landscape. This narrative discourages women and young people from considering careers in the gas sector, creating challenges for recruitment and attractiveness.

He also suggested creating an Erasmus programme for the energy sector that could allow young people to see how the energy transition is unfolding in different countries, improve understanding of diverse energy systems, help broaden perspectives and attract more young talent.



End of the meeting

The EPSU secretariat raised a question regarding the structure of future social dialogue meetings. One possibility discussed in the TU preparatory meeting was to have more focused topics for the different working group meetings, and to prepare common social partner issues that could be raised with the EU Commission in advance of the meetings. This could help the social partners get more concrete outcomes from the social dialogue.

Eurogas responded that this could be discussed in the future.