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Climate change – implications for and activities of German social partners

Joint European Social Partners seminar on

„How will employment and labour markets develop in the context of a
transition towards a low-carbon?“

Brussels, 1 – 2 March 2011

Overview on actors and aims of climate change policies in Germany

- Climate change and the reduction carbon emissions are central elements of the environment policy of the German government.
- The German government has proclaimed to reduce carbon emissions until 2020 by 40% and until 2050 by 80% (compared to the level in 1990).
- German enterprises are among world leaders in offering innovative, energy efficient machines, goods and services.
- Over 5% of the production of German industry is on environmental friendly products – with the share growing rapidly.
- The German “green” economy is SME dominated. 60% of “green” goods and services are being produced by SME.

Structures and players of German climate change policies

Federal level

- Federal Ministry for the Environment (BMU)
- Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (BMWt)
- Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development (BMVBS)

Regional level with 16 states (“Bundesländer”)

- Consequence: Wide range of programmes, initiatives etc. (a flyer of the BMU lists more than 1000 support programmes for energy saving measures on the federal and regional level).

Role of German social partners

Climate change policies and social dialogue

- **Characteristics of German social dialogue:**
 - A fundamental right guaranteed in the German constitution (Art. 9 GG)
 - Strictly bilateral structures (only employer federations and unions)
 - Main competence: The organisation of core working standards (wages, working time, holidays etc) mainly via collective agreements.

Social partner initiatives

- There are hardly any initiatives of German social partners on „green employment“ at the national level because of the regional and sectorial structures of social dialogue in Germany.
- **However**: There are countless „green“ initiatives of German social partners together with public institutions on the national, regional and local level.

Past and present examples of climate change initiatives

■ Alliance for environment and employment

→ In 1999 the German government together with the social partners (BDA and DGB) set up the “alliance for employment” (Bündnis für Arbeit). In this context the DGB put forward the idea of complementing the alliance for employment with the issue of environment. However, as the alliance for employment was called-off because of unbridgeable differences between employers and unions, the alliance for environment and employment suffered the same fate.

■ German Government Climate Change Programme for the Building sector (CO₂-Gebäudesanierungsprogramm)

→ Set up in 1999, the CO₂-Programme is since 2005 integral part of the general National Climate Change Programme. Since its start, the government has provided 7.1 billion Euros of funds, thereby creating or securing approx. 340.000 work places.

“Green” initiatives with social partner / business organisations participation



- “The craft sector (**ZDH**-German Confederation of skilled crafts) together with the **KfW** has initiated various programmes for the energy-efficient building and renovation of houses.
- The **ZDH** together with the **Federal Environment Foundation** (Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt) has launched in 2009 a project “Energy-saving housing – profits for all” with the aim to qualify craft employees to perform energy checks for private homes.
- “Partnership for climate protection”, an initiative of BMU, BMWi together with the **DIHK** (Association of German Chamber of industry and commerce) launched in 2009 with the aim of qualifying employees to “energy managers” in 3.300 enterprises.
- “Business and climate protection”, an initiative of **BDI** (Federation of German Industries) of 2009, in which 40 large enterprises and federations promote diverse energy saving measures.

Overall employment effects of environment protection measures

- BMU states that in 2006 nearly 2 million persons were working in the “green” economy in Germany (an increase of 4% compared to 2004).
- There is a direct link between climate protection measures financed by public authorities and job creation.
- Especially support programmes for energy-efficient housing trigger additional investments by private consumers with a ratio of 1 to 9.
- The political and economic challenge: Need to strike the right balance between the appropriate level of public financed climate protection measures, the overall tax burden for companies and citizens as well as sound public budgets.
- Federal government has just announced to cut subsidies for energy efficient housing programmes by two thirds – employment effects?

Thank you for your attention!

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