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Joint Strategic Framework for Sustainable Just Transition Leadership for Employers and Managers in the European Chemical, Pharmaceutical, Rubber and Plastics Sector

Preamble

The chemical industry is one of the cornerstones of the economy of the European Union, and its importance cannot be overemphasised. In the words of EU Commissioner Stéphane Séjourné, Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy: “Chemicals is the mother of all industries, with over 96% of manufactured goods relying on chemicals.”

The chemical, pharmaceutical, rubber and plastics sectors are undergoing far-reaching transformation driven by sustainability objectives, technological change, evolving market expectations and economic pressures. These changes affect production processes, skills need, work organisation and employment structures across the sector. Managing this transition responsibly and proactively is essential for succeeding with a just green transition, safeguarding both short- and long-term competitiveness and resilience, supporting innovation and maintaining trust within companies and workplaces.

At European level, the Clean Industrial Deal (CID), introduced by the European Commission in February 2025 as a flagship strategy to accelerate the decarbonisation of European industry while enhancing its global competitiveness, marks an important political signal. The targeted “Chemicals Industry Package” under the CID, aimed at modernising rules, streamlining procedures and fostering innovation, represents a first constructive step toward reducing unnecessary administrative burdens and strengthening Europe’s industrial base. Cutting bureaucracy and simplifying regulatory frameworks is essential for Europe’s chemical, pharmaceutical, rubber and plastics industries to remain strong, and competitive, and be anchored in Europe in the future.

A resilient industrial base safeguards high-quality employment, innovation capacity, strategic autonomy and sustainable value chains. In a global environment characterised by intense competition, rising energy costs and geopolitical uncertainty, Europe must avoid regulatory fragmentation and excessive red tape that risk driving production and investment outside the EU even further.

In this context, the project partners underline that social partners themselves are best placed to shape responsible and practical solutions at sectoral and company level. Employers and managers play a decisive role in shaping how the transition is planned, implemented and

experienced, and a stable and coherent regulatory environment can support them to better operate. Leadership decisions taken at company and operational level have a direct impact on employees, organisational performance and long-term resilience. A sustainable transition therefore requires leadership approaches that combine environmental ambition with fairness, inclusion, dialogue and economic viability.

This Joint Strategic Framework represents one of the main results of the “Just Transition Leadership” project, co-funded by the European Commission, and showing a strong and voluntary leadership commitment to ensure that the transition is managed in a just, responsible and competitive manner. Through this framework and the accompanying “Just Transition Toolbox”, employers and managers are provided with practical guidance to implement just transition principles without creating additional administrative burdens. This is designed to support companies of all sizes, including small and medium-sized enterprises, by offering concrete tools that facilitate implementation, strengthen resilience and help avoid unnecessary bureaucracy.

By taking proactive joint responsibility through this framework, FECCIA and ECEG highlight the importance of sectoral social dialogue to deliver effective and balanced solutions. This framework provides a cooperative, flexible and industry-driven approach for the European chemical industry that supports competitiveness, reduces red tape and ensures that the green transition is both economically sustainable and socially just.

Five high-level principles for Just Transition Leadership

1. Commitment to Social Dialogue

ECEG and FECCIA commit to open dialogue throughout the transition processes, to be developed according to national traditions, industrial relations systems and legislation regarding information, consultation and involvement.

2. Just and inclusive workforce transition

A sustainable transition places people at its centre. Employers and managers commit to anticipating skills needs¹ and employment impacts and to prioritising reskilling, upskilling and internal mobility wherever possible. Transition measures should be inclusive and accessible for employees.

¹ As exemplified in the results of the two long-term projects jointly undertaken by FECCIA and ECEG, and co-funded by the European Commission:

- *Identifying and meeting digital skills needs in the European chemical, pharmaceutical, rubber, and plastics industry – Social Partner initiative to prepare the sector now and for the future (2020 – 2023)*
- *ChemSkills: enabling the green and digital skills transformation of the chemical industry (2023 – 2027)*

3. Responsible and Transparent Leadership Decisions

Transition-related decisions should be taken on the basis of sound information and balanced consideration of economic, social, environmental and organisational impacts. Employers and managers commit to fair processes, clear and transparent communication of decision rationales and constructive engagement with affected stakeholders.

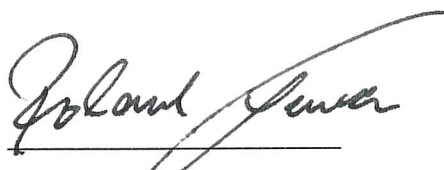
4. Sustainable competitiveness and innovation

The transition must strengthen and go hand-in-hand with the competitiveness and resilience of the sector, especially in times of economic and geopolitical challenges. Employers and managers commit to supporting innovation in technologies, processes, skills and work organisation that enhances sustainability, productivity and quality employment. Collaboration across functions and value chains is essential to achieving these objectives.

5. Leadership culture based on trust and respect

Successful transition depends on leadership culture. Employers and managers are committed to fostering trust, respect and learning within organisations. Leadership behaviours should encourage open dialogue, recognise contributions, support continuous development and enable constructive engagement within the necessary change.

The signatories endorse these high-level principles as a shared basis for cooperation, supporting employers and managers in leading a fair, sustainable and competitive transition across the European chemical, pharmaceutical, rubber and plastics sector.



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