

SGIEU.24/AC.08-GA.09
21 JUNE 2024

**SGI EUROPE STATUTORY MEETINGS
17 JUNE 2024,
09.00-13.00**

**EESC
99 Rue Belliard – 1040 Brussels
Room JDE 62**

In person ONLY meeting

DRAFT MINUTES

**MEETING OF THE ADMINISTRATION COUNCIL AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY TOGETHER WITH
THE CHAIRS, VICE CHAIRS AND GENERAL RAPPORTEURS OF THE BOARDS AND TASK FORCES**

ITEM	DOCUMENT	ACTION
1. Draft agenda	SGIEU.24/AC01-GA02	Approved
2. Draft minutes 6 December 2023	SGIEU.23/AC23-GA23	Approved
3. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL		
3.1 <i>SGI Europe Financial Situation as 31 December 2023</i>	SGIEU.24/AC03-GA04 Explanatory note SGIEU.24/AC04-GA05	The General Secretary presented the Financial Situation as at 31 December 2023 based on the <u>attached PPT</u>, as well as the explanatory note. She added that the fundamentals of the positive result for 2023 are substantially related to the analytical transfer of the projects, as well as a reduced staff. However, we cannot

		transform ourselves into a project making machine or we might lose the credibility in the face of the EU Institutions. The Financial situation as at 31 December was recommended by the Administration Council to the General Assembly for approval. The General Assembly approved the Financial Situation The General Assembly approved the financial situation as at 31 December 2023
3.2 Reports of the auditors for 2023	BDO Report BNB Report	The President welcomed the Auditor, Furkan Atelsi, who presented the report. There were no issues to quote. The President recalled that we have no legal obligation to undergo an audit. The Administration Council recommended the accounts for approval by the General Assembly. The General Assembly approved the accounts
3.3 Exoneration of the - President - General Secretary - Auditors Nominations/Resignation		The Administration Council recommended the exoneration of the President, General Secretary and Auditors for approval by the General Assembly Manca Pocivavsek asked who the official signatory is. The General Secretary confirmed that it is still, as per SGI Europe Statutes, the President and General

		Secretary in case of legal dispute and the General Secretary and the Office Manager for daily management and in court (if needed). Rachel de Wouters was already appointed as official signatory by the Administration in December 2023. The resignation of Manuela Mattiello as legal and financial signatory, since she retired in April 2024, was approved.
3.4 SGI Europe Financial Situation as at 30 April 2024	SGIEU.24/AC05-GA06 Explanatory note SGIEU.24/AC06-GA07	The General Secretary presented the Financial Situation as at 30 April based on the <u>attached PPT</u>, as well as the explanatory note. The General Secretary added that we will only feel the financial impact of the departure of the Spanish section as from 2025. Therefore, the main priority is to rebuild the Spanish section by 2025 with motivated members ready to pay the fee in full. She thanked the members for having paid a more consequent part of the fees than last year at the same time of the year. Vice President Liebing recalled that the commitment made in 2023 by all sections/sectoral members to reach the new category fees in 2025 must be respected. He then asked if there was any sign from any of them that this would not be the case.

		The General Secretary answered that there have been no such signs for the moment, but that should any arise, we need to know as soon as possible. The President recalled that we indeed took important measures to ensure that we reach the aim set in 2023 to strengthen SGI Europe's finances, which are indeed still fragile. He added that it is important that we can continue to carry out our important mission.
<i>3.5 Update of the Rules of Procedure to include urgent decision-making procedure as approved in the General Assembly of 8 December 2020</i>	CEEP.20/GA.22 Minutes of the GA of 8 December 2020 Draft revised Rules of Procedure	The President mentioned the La Hulpe Declaration and the work done by SGI Europe in its drafting. However, there were concerns regarding the commitment of other employers' organisation, which would have put SGI Europe in a complicated situation if we were the only employers signing up to the Declaration. In such a situation and considering the very short deadlines faced in that context, the need to formalise an urgent decision-making process within SGI Europe had arisen. The President recalled what was decided in 2020: that in exceptional cases, the Presidential Team is able to take decisions without having to refer to the AC, GA or ACGA beforehand (which is democratically valid, as the

		Presidential Team is the emanation of the General Assembly). It was now necessary to transcribe that agreed procedure into a specific article of our RoP, hence the proposed addition to Art 22 RoP. The proposal was accepted, with the addition of the word “exceptional” as requested by the Nordic Sections. The <u>attached revised Rules of Procedure</u> were approved.
3.6 Synchronisation of mandates: ACGA mandate June 2021 to June 2024 to be prolonged until June 2025 to be synchronised with the Presidential Team’s mandate	SGIEU.24/AC02-GA03 Explanatory note	The General Secretary explained that the respective mandates of the Presidential Team and ACGA do not come to an end in the same month to ensure a continuity and allow the ACGA to support the process of the elections of the Presidential Team. The revised mandate of the ACGA was approved
3.7 Appointment of replacement of outgoing ACGA German member	Manca POCIVAVSEK - CV	The General Secretary explained that the replacement needs to be formally approved. Vice President Liebing added that this replacement is taking place further to the departure of Lea Heinrich from the German section and her replacement by Manca Pocivavsek. It was therefore natural that Manca Pocivavsek took over this position. The appointment of Manca Pocivavsek as member of the ACGA was approved

3.8 Appointment of Chairs and Vice Chairs 3.8.1 Appointment of the Chair and Vice Chairs Transport Task Force	SGIEU-24/CORR-02 Letter to the sections and TRA members	The General Secretary explained that the stepping down of Monica Unterholzner was indeed the first linked to the non-compliance with SGI Europe statutory fees but unfortunately did not serve as a wake-up call for the Austrian section. Following up on the call for application to renew the management of the Transport Task Force, The General Secretary was happy that there was interest in this position, as well as in the positions of Vice Chair, and she presented the various candidates (see CVs sent ahead of the meeting) The President added that there was a particular situation with the Polish candidate. Ms Popielek is not from the same field as the other members of the task force, since she is active in the field of road freight (which is not a core services of general interest). However, she is very motivated and can bring a different perspective, as well as improve gender balance in the Task Force. Jérémie Pélerin took note of her application but stated that we should remain cautious, especially with regard to the opening to new modes of
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3.8.2 <i>Substitution of Mr Prosiecki as Vice Chair of the Communications Task Force</i> 3.8.3 <i>Appointment, based on spontaneous application, of a Vice Chair for the Social Protection Task Force</i>	Letter from the Polish section CV of Maciej Legutko Letter from the Swedish section CV of Mr Johannes Isaksson	transport in our activities (in this case: freight transport). The President was nevertheless confident that the balance in the transport task force will be maintained, all the other members representing SGIs. If that will not be the case of course the mandate will be reviewed as appropriate. The appointment of Mihai Chirca as Chair of Transport Task Force was approved The appointments of Martin Schäfer and Johanna Popiolek were approved The General Secretary explained that Maciej Legutko is SGI Europe's correspondent within the Polish section and therefore has a good overview on our activities. The General Secretary explained that Johannes Isaksson, not present today, is a longstanding member of SGI Europe, especially in the Social Protection Task Force. The General Secretary strongly recommended the approval of both appointments. The appointment of Maciej Legutko as Vice-Chair of the Communications Task Force was approved The appointments Johannes Isaksson as Vice-Chair of the
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		Social Protection Task Force was approved The President concluded by thanking all the Chairs and Vice chairs for their remarkable work that is essential for our credibility.
<i>3.9 State of play on membership recruitment and retention</i>		The General Secretary explained that the main issue is the Spanish section, who resigned during the Christmas break after the General Assembly of their section. A number of the section's members do not seem to have been directly involved or, in few cases, made aware of the decision and attempted to join the meetings of SGI Europe's boards and/or task forces (and were turned down by the Secretariat). The positive result of this bad news is that we learned that some organisations (Correos and ONCE in particular) are very keen and saw the necessity of being present in Brussels, and these are considering how to rebuild the section on new grounds. However, this will take some time. The General Secretary really hopes for a positive outcome by December. Those organisations already know about the membership fees, and they made no comment, so it should not be an obstacle.

		No specific news on Ireland and Slovenia (talks but nothing concrete) A discussion should be organised with Benjamin Gallèpe and Camille Boulat before their planned study visit to Portugal (in the context of the regular activities within FedEpl), since recruitment and retention is a mission for all of us here and the dynamic favoured by a visit of French LPSEs to the Portuguese counterparts might instil new motivation in our Portuguese membership/ The National Sections and Sectoral members reported about new developments/ members Vice President Cieplak explained that he had some good first contacts with Romanian organisations but further talks will be needed. The President added the need to further enrich our membership to guarantee the necessary financial stability that SGI Europe needs to be able to continue to efficiently carry out its activities. Vice President Liebing stressed that we must also look forward to the next year. In the German section, changes and decisions only enter into force from the beginning of the following year, leaving room for discussion and
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		avoiding the same situation as with the Spanish section. In the German section's statutes, members are required to give sufficient notice before such a decision can be taken. The General Secretary realised that the Spanish section, who knew the Statutes very well, sent their letter before the end of the year accordingly. We should envisage to revise the Statutes to avoid this from happening again. Luigi del Giacco explained that the Italian section recently simplified the procedure in their statutes to accept new members. He added that it is not easy to find new members, notably due to membership fees. Arjen Frentz from the Benelux section said that as they recently lost some members, recruitment and retention is indeed an important issue. Stefan Chaykov explained that the Bulgarian section's membership is rather stable and that despite the present political situation, they were able to continue work as usual. Vice President Cieplak said that the Polish section is stable. Bjarte Rørmark said that the higher fees are putting a strain on the Norwegian section but
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		membership nevertheless remains stable and is “advertising our precious work” The President thanked the assembly for their reporting
4. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION		
4 <i>Stocktaking of SGI Europe’s activities of the 1st Semester and preparation of the 2nd Semester</i> - <i>Report from the President and General Secretary</i> <i>Report from the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the boards and task forces</i> - <i>Report from the National Sections</i>		The General Secretary reported on the main activities and achievements of the first semester 2024, with the support of the <u>attached PPT</u>. She also announced the <u>availability of the online interactive Activity Report 2023, accessible also via the QR code included in the attached PPT</u>. She presented the work done by SGI Europe ahead of the EU elections, as well as the next steps. The General Secretary also highlighted that currently SGI Europe appears to be the only Social Partner with a genuine motivation to deliver on the commitments undertaken during the Val Duchesse Summit. The chairs of the boards and task forces presented their achievements during the first semester of 2024 with the support of the <u>attached PPT</u>. Jeanette Grenfors reported on the Social Affairs Board activities and gave the floor to Tor Hatlevol, chair of the Macro-Economics Task Force, and to

		Pawel Langowski, chair of the Health & Safety Task Force, who reported the activities of their respective task forces during the first semester of 2024. The President thanked Jeanette Grenfors and the whole Social Affairs Board for their excellent work, even on issues on which it is not easy to reach a consensus. Nadine Fischer reported on the Internal Market Board activities and gave the floor to the vice chairs, Luigi Del Giacco and Benjamin Gallèpe. Nadine Fischer also presented the main takeaways and key messages of the Opinion on the contribution of SGIs to the EU competitiveness, which is currently being finalised and will be SGI Europe's contribution to the Draghi Report as well as to the Strategic Agenda 2024-2029 to be approved by the European Council on 28 of June. The General Secretary highlighted that the Internal Market Board is the place in SGI Europe where the strategic agenda will be set in the next months. This agenda includes the need to develop clear positions on key topics such as EU competitiveness and the Green Single Market. This work follows on the outcomes of our contribution to
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		the Letta report (through the event on 7th December and further written inputs developed on that basis). The General Secretary encouraged members to actively take part in the work of the Internal Market Board and thanked the Social Affairs Board, which has already coordinated their inputs to the work of the Internal Market Board by sending at least one representative to the latest IMB Meetings. When it comes to the draft opinion on SGIs for sustainable competitiveness outlined by the chair Nadine Fisher, the General Secretary reminded that this is only a first step in ensuring that SGIs are identified as key actors in EU competitiveness. As this Opinion will be the core of SGI Europe's contribution to the Draghi report, a swift adoption would prove crucial, also in line with our activities to ensure that SGIs are part of the next EU Strategic Agenda (to be approved by the European Council on 27-28/06). It should be another element in our strategy to have a clear recognition of SGIs as a core component of the EU social and economic model (in line with the Val Duchesse and La Hulpe Declarations and the conclusion of the COMPET Council of May 2024, where for the first time ever we did obtain a clear reference to SGIs). Those references also increase our
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		chances of obtaining the setting up of an EP Intergroup on SGIs. Vice President Liebing underlined that this is indeed very significant. We have three important key documents for decision-making at the EU level, and our role now is to ensure that our opinion is reflected there. The Letta report includes the importance of SGI provision, and there have been several discussions recently on the next steps. As such, there are indications as to what direction the Draghi report will go: we are keen to see structural changes but see a danger regarding the focus put on supporting “European Champions” and large players. Whilst there is a need for the EU to become stronger in the global competition, many issues must be dealt with at local and regional level, and respecting the diverse structures put forward by Member States. Vice President Liebing continued, highlighting that it is nonsense to say that boosting the relevance of the EU in the global economy must mean that our decentralised structures should be changed. We as SGI Europe should clearly draw the red line and say STOP. Recently, following the start of the Russian war of aggression, Ukraine decided to change their approach, moving away from centralised approach to their energy system and moved
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		towards a more decentralised system, which provides better protection. The choice should remain up to each Member State. What is valid in this case for energy is also valid for other sectors, such as water where there cannot be “global players”. Vice President Liebing further insisted that it also impacts the issue of public procurement, which was not on the agenda when we discussed our Strategic Agenda and now is calling for us to deal with it. He expressed concerns about the fact that proposals will be brought forward that will lead to more micromanagement from the EU in order to achieve the Green Single Market, and that higher expectations are put on the public sector than on the private sector (for instance in the context of the SME Definition). He called for SGI Europe to take a clear stance and expressed concerns. Members who take part in various bodies of work of SGI Europe must be listened to, as he heard complaints that members are working hard but not taken seriously. SGI Europe is fragile enough: as we do not have too many members, we should be more grateful for those actively contributing. The draft Opinion was not yet seen, but Vice President Liebing warned that the inputs shared by members should be taken seriously.
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		The President thanked Vice President Liebing for putting this fundamental political debate which we must have amongst ourselves on the table. The President highlighted that it is a very old debate within SGI Europe/CEEP, between a very centralised organisation of their SGIs (such as France) and others very decentralised (such as Germany). He questioned the need to impose standards when, ultimately, we need to trust the Member States, regions and territories. We need to find compromises and boost our ability to reaffirm our unity: if we are too fragmented or “niche”, SGI Europe’s voice will not be heard at EU level. He highlighted that proposing monolithic structures is not always the most effective way, and the articulation between the different levels is crucial. The General Secretary responded that the main challenge is to find, as in all circumstances in SGI Europe seen our diverse membership, compromise and balanced positions. In the draft Opinion on competitivenessSGI Europe argues that the EU must rebuild its competitiveness from the bottom-up, with the local level at the core of its approach. However the local level is not the only one able to play a role.
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		For competitiveness, more than ever, we have around the table a broad range of different kinds of members, active at the local, regional national and even cross-national levels. Against that background, the members of the Internal Market Board need to consider if this text is a good enough compromise. Regarding the Letta report, despite all the inputs we have put forward, SGI Europe only had a direct say on the part on the importance of investing in SGIs. Sven-Joachim Otto highlighted that the Letta Report rightly put forward that “scale matters”. However, he emphasised that this does not really apply to SGIs, which are mostly active at the very local level. Mr Otto continued, listing the main European companies in the energy market (EDF, ENEL, E-on), which however are not competing on the global scale with other competitors, as the energy markets is very local. Similarly, we cannot organise water supply or waste management globally for example. Whilst acknowledging that the EU competitiveness must be strengthened, the red lines must be around the sectors that we represent: we need to make clear to EU leaders that we agree that size matters everywhere, except for SGIs.
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		The President explained that he had recently met the president of SMEUnited, and they both recognised the convergence between SMEs and SGIs. This echoes the expressed concerns. We must also allow local SGIs to work where they are and not focus only on the major companies and global competition. Alain Taccoen took the floor in his capacity as EDF representative in the French section. He said that he thought the main aim for the EU is to decarbonise its economy, and that a consensus emerged on the need to further in electrifying our energy systems (via green and decarbonised/low-carbon energy generation). He added that the discussion on “centralised vs decentralised” energy systems is unnecessary, as both will be needed in the future. He concluded by wondering the need to reignite this debate at this time, as the consensus on the need for both approaches is now established. The General Secretary responded very frankly that this dichotomy brings us two decades in the past, before the Lisbon treaty. She elaborated that there was at that time a permanent debate on the richness of organisation of SGIs. This richness is now recognised in the EU primary law (Article 14 TFEU and Protocol 26TEU),
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		giving each country the right to organise and finance their own SGIs as they see best, so it is important for us to continue to preserve this freedom of organisation and of financing. It is now important to find the right balance in our position, with the Treaties as our anchor. Vice President Liebing replied that he launched the debate because his aim is that both are accepted. However, the Letta report has a very clear objective to challenge that balance. Now that the issue has been put on the agenda, we must discuss it, and address political reasons at stake. He insisted that, in his views, the results of the EU elections may put in danger the principal of subsidiarity, including through for instance work on public procurement. He recalled the overarching goal of climate neutrality for the EU, and that many of proposals now on the agenda – which in theory should help to reach that goal - actually poses a risk. Last year, SGI Europe described our views very clearly with an Opinion on our Strategic Priorities for 2024-2029, but VP Liebing fears this was not taken into consideration sufficiently. He calls for SGI Europe to take up every opportunity to recall our positions. We should be bolder with our proposals and strike the right balance between centralised
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		and decentralised management of SGIs, while bearing in mind the need to reach our climate neutrality objective. We must speed things up and expect the EU to accelerate things and not slow them down. Vice President Angelova said that it is important that we are ambitious in this field and use every opportunity to improve the competitiveness of the EU and guaranteeing that SGIs are a part of the picture. To be loud and be heard, Vice President Angelova recommended to build alliances, as well as being agile and organised in order to be vocal on the preparation of the EU Competitiveness Deal. She also emphasised that having SGIs mentioned in the Letta report is an achievement, and we should aim at this also in the Draghi report. She finally recalled the diverse nature of SGI Europe membership, with Bulgarian, Greek, Polish and other similar sections wanting SGI Europe to be bolder in supporting a competitiveness and innovation agenda, including where scale matters. The minimum common denominator identified in all our recent discussions is surely the need to reduce administrative burden, but for the rest many differences arise, including on the place SGI Europe should play in the economy.
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		Luigi Del Giacco added that the issue of this dichotomy between centralised and decentralised management of SGIs is pluriform in Italy, with for instance the energy and water being organised differently (energy = national; water = local). The work we are doing on competitiveness in the Internal Market Board must focus on how our members can support the competitiveness of the EU as a whole. The General Secretary took note of the very rich debate, proving that the draft Opinion on competitiveness can only be a first step of a longer work on the matter. For this first step to be effective and timely, the draft Opinion will be sent out directly after the meeting for parallel approval by written procedure by the Internal Market Board and the General Assembly. The General Secretary also recalled that the Letta Report is not a proposal for future legislation, but rather a high-level reflection on how to reinforce the Single Market (without any direct impact on future legislation). The Draghi Report will have a similar approach regarding the EU competitiveness. What is important at this stage is our contribution to the EU strategic agenda. It was approved to send out that same day the paper and
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		give time for written comments by 24 June midday. The President concluded the discussion. Alain Taccoen reported on the Sustainability Board activities, insisting notably on the importance of taxonomy, and gave the floor to Bernardo Piccioli, chair of ENVI Task Force, and Henriette Gleau who covered the other task forces briefly in the absence of the respective chairs
5. ITEMS FOR ADOPTION/INFORMATION		
5.1 Documents for adoption	<u>Sustainability Board:</u> Opinion Paper- Green Reindustrialisation	Henriette Gleau briefly presented the paper, which was unanimously approved The President thanked the members for their work
5.2 Documents published since the last meeting on 6 December 2023	<u>Sustainability Board:</u> • Joint Call by FEAD, CEWEP and SGI Europe to remain Waste to Energy criteria in guidelines list in the Renewable Energy Directive • Joint paper with Eureau, APE, Water Europe, COPA COGECA and more signed petition to call for a EU Water Resilience framework • Water TF: Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive- Trilogue paper	The President said that these are the expression of the good work produced.

	<u>Internal Market Board:</u> • <u>SGIs and the Future of the Single Market: SGI Europe contribution to the Letta report on the Future of the Single Market</u> <u>Social Affairs Board:</u> • SGIEU- response to the public consultation to evaluate European Labour Authority's performance • <u>Val Duchesse Social Partner Summit Tripartite Declaration for a Thriving European Social Dialogue</u> • <u>La Hulpe Declaration on the Future of the European Pillar of Social Rights</u> <u>Transversal:</u> • <u>SGIs Network Joint Declaration for the Tripartite Social Summit</u> <u>Others:</u> • <u>Statement of the EU Social Partners - Voting for Europe: Securing a bright future, together</u> • <u>SGI Europe Manifesto for the EU elections 2024: SGIs for a Competitive,</u>	
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	Sustainable and Just Europe • Pulse of SGIs - March 2024 • Policy Kit - Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU	
6. OTHER BUSINESS AND DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS		
6.1 Miscellaneous		
6.2 Dates of future meetings		9 December 2024, Brussels, from 14:00