



EFFAT

EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM TRADE UNIONS

## Summary of the outcome of the EFFAT Meat Conference Berlin, 20 and 21 June 2012

1. The consultancy firm, **GIRA**, provided a summary of the situation in the European meat industry. Only very limited official data and statistics on forms of employment in this industry are available. One significant gap is on wage data and we conducted a **rough analysis of industry wages** by country by surveying participants. However, we are continuing to press the **EU to regularly collect employment data on the sector**. A written report from GIRA is expected after the summer break. We are also engaged in a project to **survey of the trade union representation** in major meat companies with IUF. We are drawing up a questionnaire with a view to collecting relevant data. For this, we will rely on information and support from our member organisations.
2. Working conditions and conditions of employment have further deteriorated, partly as a result of the **EU's neoliberal Euro Plus Pact, which** reduces national minimum wages, deregulates labour laws and limits pay rises. The European labour movement is calling on the EU to **respect the complete autonomy of national collective bargaining**.
3. Despite all the criticism levelled at the EU, European trade unions have also made **headway** politically: there are European statutory minimum standards for part-time workers, fixed-term workers and posted workers, as well as putting **temporary workers** on an equal footing with permanent staff. Companies now need to urgently implement this directive in particular. To this end, EFFAT has drawn up a **leaflet in 13 languages** detailing how companies are to handle temporary work. In addition, the extent to which **registering migrant workers** could prevent abuse needs to be investigated.
4. The strong purchasing power exhibited by **food retail corporations** is intensifying the cost pressure on the food industry, which in turn often passes this on to workers. As a result, EFFAT has long been dedicated to establishing a European regulation that guarantees a fair balance between commerce and industry. We expect the commercial, industrial and agricultural sectors to draw up a draft code of conduct in July. However, we suspect that this code will be insufficient and will barely require more than compliance with applicable statutory regulations, so we believe that a voluntary solution from the industrial sector will not generate progress. We continue to look at how we can pressure retailers into taking up their **responsibility for supply chains** and call on European legislators to take action in this regard.
5. EFFAT will invest in resources to support **workers' representatives in meat companies** (especially transnational companies such as Danish Crown and Vion) setting up a **network with a dedicated website** to help them offering each other mutual support on organising, disputes and negotiations. We will also use this to disseminate information on linguistic resources and longer term will look at the possibilities to use online campaigning tools.
6. EFFAT member organisation Gewerkschaft Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten (**NGG**), the German Food and Restaurant Workers Union, has been fighting hard against social dumping in the German meat sector (the largest and fastest growing in Europe). While it is agreed that minimum wages can never replace collective bargaining, the introduction of a minimum wage applying to all meat workers in Germany will be a vital strategic step in this work. NGG have made



significant headway in the fight to establish a minimum wage in Germany. NGG and ver.di, the German trade union for the services sector, have successfully encouraged the entire Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB) to back the call for a universal, **mandatory minimum wage in Germany**. Moreover, thanks to the campaign for a minimum wage initiated by German trade unions, over 85% of Germans now support the introduction of a minimum wage, and a number of sectors have now adopted one. NGG has also made considerable progress in the unionisation of workers in the German meat industry and has started a unionisation project targeting workers from outside Germany.

7. Trade unions face a significant challenge in organising the large number of **migrant workers** in the industry. Language and cultural barriers extenuate difficulties often caused by different contract status. Many EFFAT affiliates, including SIPTU, UNITE, and NNF made significant headway in organising migrant workers by employing organisers from the migrant communities themselves. EFFAT will continue to gather and distribute such 'best practice' examples in order to assist affiliates to increase membership and bargaining coverage in the meat sector.
8. Fighting precarious work is the most important task in combatting social dumping. The conference agreed that exploitation of contracted labour and the use of fake self-employed status is a serious problem. EFFAT has adopted a **European Charter against precarious work** and a roadmap for its implementation. An evaluation of precarious work in EFFAT sectors was carried out as part of an EU project. One of the key conclusions was that all workers doing the same job in the same place must have the same rights and the same pay.
9. **EFFAT** has drawn up a **leaflet entitled 10 Key Points to Fight Precarious Work** in 13 languages and distributed it to member organisations. This leaflet and the **Guidelines on the use of Temporary Agency Workers** (see item 3) can be used in collective bargaining and in European Works Councils (EWCs) to uphold the principle of equal pay for equal work in the same workplace.
10. A new **website on precarious work** has have been set up to improve cooperation between member organisations. The Secretariat asked member organisations to send relevant contributions such as stories, successes, and so on.
11. An **EFFAT trade-union coordinating committee** for the meat industry will be established to plan and coordinate further activities at European level.
12. The measures to establish an **EWC at Vion** will be stepped up a gear. Dutch trade union FNV Bondgenoten will discuss the next steps to be taken with the management and will inform the network of the outcome of these talks.
13. NGG, Danish Food and Allied Workers' Union (NNF) and EFFAT will hold **talks with German Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Ursula von der Leyen** about social dumping and unfair competition in the German meat industry and will inform the network of the outcome of these talks. A **resolution and press release** were agreed and issued in support of the NGG.