



EFFAT

EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM TRADE UNIONS

Brussels, 5 December 2011

- **To all EFFAT member organisations**

Dear Friends,

Both Harald Wiedenhofer and I felt that it would be a good idea for me to write to you at this time. The present situation and the issues we are currently dealing with require that I do so. We need to strengthen our ties, and I wish to share a few thoughts with you within our democratic federation.

Without going into too much detail, it is time to take stock of all EFFAT's past, present and future activities. When we refer to EFFAT, we are of course talking about the Secretariat and the affiliated trade unions. Together we form a group which defends and promotes social and societal values within our three sectors.

The two recent crises have brought about new challenges for Europe. Whether economic, political or trade union-related, we must confront these challenges because they concern the future of social democracy. Successive attacks against individual countries and the Euro are exacerbating the situation and creating a tension which is spreading everywhere, fuelling scepticism among Europe's citizens about their future and that of Europe.

We do not need to go over the causes of these crises – we all know how they started. We also know how they affect us, since we are being subjected to or are beginning to be subjected to austerity measures, the only emergency responses introduced by our politicians who lack both ambition and the foresight to develop genuine policies for economic and social growth. As a result, they let the market act in their place, thereby increasing social inequalities. Moreover, trade union organisations are generally not being consulted. This is a deliberate political choice made by our leaders.

They leave us with only two options: either keep quiet and allow austerity policies to develop or accept the break-up of Europe – a break-up which some claim is inevitable, as frequent media reports attest.

These two theories are inconceivable for us trade unionists because there is a third solution. That of strengthening Europe, of building a real European political project for social cohesion, a solution which will do justice to the European plans of tomorrow for the future of all Europe's citizens. Today more than ever before, we are the true guardians of solidarity between peoples and countries, because together we bear the weight of history and the pact for peace in Europe.

Dear friends and colleagues, EFFAT has chosen this option since the day it was founded, as did the two federations which preceded it. It has done so even more resolutely since the Berlin Congress, thanks to its policy of acting on all fronts where we can promote social development in Europe. Whether in the tourism, food or agriculture sector, whether on professional equality or European works council policy, we have tackled all issues in a very hands-on way, we have looked for solutions which take into account the diversity of national situations and above all we have succeeded in reaching agreement on these solutions and in supporting them together, at all times and in all places. For there must be no weaknesses or flaws in our joint actions for the common interests of the European workers we are defending.



EFFAT

EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM TRADE UNIONS

This is where our trade union strength lies. There cannot be an all-or-nothing policy; rather, our policy is one of mutual dialogue in which we must engage with our social partners and politicians to make tangible progress towards viable solutions.

Yes, it is a daily fight! Yes, it is a fight in which we will not get everything all at once, as we would like, but it is a necessary process. Rome was not built in a day. It is not enough for us alone to believe in our cause. These solutions must be adopted in partnership so that they are applied, monitored and controlled, thereby eliminating uncertainties and inequalities.

Let us look now at some of tomorrow's challenges. For the time being there is no point examining our decisions on precarious work. We are continuing our discussions and work and we need to let the consultation process take its course. However, a number of other European trade union federations, the European Trade Union Confederation and some politicians are keeping a close eye on the outcome of our work because they know that this is a major issue for Europe and that EFFAT has made the most progress on this topic.

Conversely, in the tourism sector, how can we continue our work on creating a qualification and skills passport, as agreed with employers in 2006, when DG Enterprise and Industry now want to shift the focus and incorporate it into EURES? How can we continue at national level with the food hygiene e-learning tool for the contract catering sector? The answers to these questions are not a matter for the Secretariat alone. They concern and involve us all because we adopted them in the sector meetings and the Executive Committee and it is our responsibility to keep them going.

It is vital that the recent decisions of the Executive Committee on professional equality are enforced. Vital not only for the women who make up for more than 40% of EFFAT's membership (through affiliated national trade union organisations), but also vital for social equality, to ensure that women are recognised on equal terms with men for the same jobs they do and for their involvement in society.

As for the food sector, it is essential that we continue our joint actions against social dumping in the meat industry and thus clearly move from the roadmap (also adopted by the General Assembly and the Executive Committee) to joint concerted projects to force employers to develop real social dialogue within the sector. Some are currently opposed to this (including some French employers' federations). However, the meeting of the EFFAT delegation with Commissioner Andor resulted in the latter taking proper account of the situation in this sector, so let us build on this! In the same way, discussions with Food Drink Europe on establishing a European social dialogue definitely represent a step forward for the inclusion of social issues in all food sectors. After many years of waiting, this is a real opportunity for us and we must grab it with both hands. Of course, we must be careful, as there is no such thing as a philanthropic employer and employers have their own interests on this issue, but let us exploit this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for discussion!

Admittedly, not all of EFFAT's actions against liberal directives and draft directives which introduce even more dumping and social inequality have been successful (primarily due to the political environment in EU countries). However, thanks to EFFAT's initiatives, we are no longer alone – other European federations have joined us in this campaign and we will continue these actions at both European and national level.

Finally, regarding the CAP, the Secretariat has just sent out a circular aimed at gathering your thoughts and comments on EFFAT's position (we felt it would be useful to reiterate a number of points). It will then be up to you to assess and decide what will be best for us.



EFFAT

EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM TRADE UNIONS

In 2009, we were harangued by leaders of all political persuasions on one simple question: should we continue with the common agricultural policy or open agriculture up to the liberal market? Some of us spent time lobbying to keep the CAP, albeit not in its current form. Then there was the major public debate organised by the new commissioner, where EFFAT used pressure and persuasion to successfully obtain permission for 10 of us to take part in the meeting in July 2010 in Brussels and to defend the interests of workers together. We know full well that some of the other 490 participants (farmers, consumer organisations, and so on) completely ignored us and only thought to defend their individual interests against collective interests and that of workers in particular.

Confronted with this situation, we had already organised ourselves at Almeria, then Dubrovnik, and our positions and demands are (and remain) clear and uniform. They are clear because they have been developed and defended together.

So yes, the Commission's proposals do not meet all our expectations, because national situations vary so much from country to country. However, they do meet one key expectation: they take into account employment and a number of other aspects of importance to the future of agriculture in Europe, regardless of the country concerned. This affects all of us. Since it was first implemented in 1962 and in its successive revisions, we have never succeeded in having a reference to employment and all that is linked to it included in the CAP. However, until 2013 nothing can be taken for granted on this issue of employment because a number of governments, MPs and employers (cf. GEOPA-COPA's declaration on the CAP) want this reference removed from the Commission's text. And yes, we must continue our work so that training, social protection, working conditions and occupational health and safety for all workers are included in this reform and any future reforms of the CAP.

So, for all these reasons we must continue our dialogue and our joint action, at both European and national level – for we are currently the only ones defending social cohesion in all our sectors and actions.

The sole purpose of this long letter is to encourage us to stay the course we have plotted together. That is what makes us strong.

If anyone has cause to be proud, it is me. I am proud to be your President. I am proud to be part of a European federation which understands the challenges that face us, knows how to respond to them and stands up for social cohesion and equality between the peoples and countries of the European Union. Thanks to you and the Secretariat, we are moving forward and we will continue to move forward.

I wish you all, especially those I will not have a chance to see before the end of the year, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and I look forward to seeing you all again in 2012.

Yours,

Bruno Vannoni
EFFAT President