



EFFAT

EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM TRADE UNIONS

NEWS FROM EFFAT

For immediate release

Brussels, 1st April 2009

Use the crisis as an opportunity: what are the chances of the industries' workers?

31st March afternoon European leaders and trade unions met for a high-level panel discussion on economic crisis at the Friederich-Ebert-Stiftung office in Brussels. Commission Vice-President Gunter Verheugen and European Socialist leader Poul Nyrup Rasmussen were participating in the debate. EFFAT Secretary-General, Harald Wiedenhofer and Peter Scherer, the EMF General-Secretary, were there to give the message of the unions to the European leaders.

Peter Scherer began the panel debate introducing the background of the discussions: economic crisis, job losses and the danger of a social recession.

From the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Union, Harald Wiedenhofer brought in the social dimension of the situation: "We have to stabilize the market, but we can't do it without supporting the jobs and the workers. This crisis is different because it is not only economic and financial but already a social one. We are witnessing more and more social conflicts: Lindsey strike in UK, demonstrations in France and other countries, the contradictory ECJ judgements (e.g. Ruffert) and we are afraid that the EU is in danger to lose the support and trust of its citizens and workers. The European Commission and Council must act now and reconsider the priorities by establishing the two indispensable pillars of a successfully internal market: job mainstreaming and equal treatment of workers, including the right to strike. "

Poul N. Rasmussen agreed that "Europe can't have an effective industrial policy if the workers are not supported. We need to focus on more, good and decent jobs and also to safeguard the ones we have. It is necessary to reformulate the recovery package and establish a list of priorities."

The discussions taped in the need for appropriate working skills in the industry. It has been agreed that a better match between skills demand and offer on the market is strategic and this needs to be coordinated at the European level.

Commissioner Verheugen underlined three top pillars he envisages for the future of the industry: top quality, technological leadership and a knowledge-based, low carbon reality. Though difficult to admit, we have to see that we can't find the right solutions for all jobs, it will be impossible to save all of them. New jobs will come and we need to push for this to happen as soon as possible."

ENDS

Note to Editors:

EFFAT represents the interests of more than 2.6 million members, affiliated to 118 national trade unions in 38 European countries in agriculture, food production and tourism.

Contact: Codruta-Liliana Filip, EFFAT Press Officer, Tel: +32 (0)2 209 62 60, Email: c-l.filip@effat.org

EFFAT REGIONAL ORGANISATION WITHIN THE IUF - MEMBER OF THE ETUC

RUE FOSSÉ-AUX-LOUPS 38 BTE 3 ■ B-1000 BRUSSELS ■ T + 32 (0) 2 218 77 30 ■ F + 32 (0) 2 218 30 18 ■ E-MAIL effat@effat.org ■ WEB www.effat.org