



# Social Dialogue in the EU Sugar Industry

Online 9<sup>th</sup> October 2020

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## Minutes of the working group meeting

The meeting was chaired by Justine Richelle (CEFS) and Wiebke Warneck (EFFAT).

### 1. Approval of the 07 February 2020 report and of the [agenda](#)

The minutes of 7 February 2020 and the agenda were adopted.

### 2. Sugar Industry and Covid19 – tour de table of all participants

Members of both sides of the industry took the floor in order to share their experience and practices at the workplace during the Covid19 pandemic.

EFFAT recalled the joint statements/guidelines negotiated between social partners on EU level.

### 3. A transforming European sugar industry: new and better jobs in a competitive, innovative and sustainable industry – update on the joint project.

Presentation by Alberico Loi – Areté (reference; [PowerPoint presentation](#))

Alberico Loi gave an update on the ongoing project.

#### Discussions:

Participants highlighted the need of practical outcomes: guidelines and action plans that companies can really use. Outcomes that are useful across the value chain and for all stakeholders.

The global context, the complex situation on trade and the problem on intra EU mobility should be taken into account. The current crisis is also important. The project should cover the reality of the sector, make the link to the CAP, the Green Deal, and take up the sustainability angle. The final deliverable needs to cover the daily and practical needs of the sector (from Southern to Northern Europe), keeping in mind that the Sugar Industry is a seasonal business.

In conclusion: Participants rely on concrete outcomes in this report and concrete measures and recommendations that can be distributed as a toolkit, giving advice for the future.



#### 4. Policy updates from European Commission, DG EMPLOYMENT - Joé Rieff

- The Social Partners have been very active during this period of crisis. No less than 35 concrete joint statements have been released including very concrete proposals and frameworks to ensure healthy and safe working conditions.
- Since the previous Sugar Social Dialogue in February, the European Commission adopted its first communication regarding the European Green Deal (released in December 2019). This is the Commission's long-term strategy to achieve climate neutrality. This was known as the main objective from the current President of the European Commission Von der Leyen. It is clear that environmental and social sustainability need to go hand in hand. Von Der Leyen has pointed out that this transition needs to be socially fair and just.
- Several social initiatives have been planned for 2020-2021, focusing, among others, on: fair working conditions, social protection and inclusion and equal opportunities and jobs for all. An action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights will be proposed by the end of 2021 Social Dialogue is without any doubt key to successfully manage the changes to come.
- The Commission has reacted to the current COVID19 crisis by several initiatives. The Commission has launched the 'Reopen EU" webpage where all restrictions in different Member States can be found.

More information can be found here: <https://reopen.europa.eu/en>.

Additionally, EU Member States adopted a Recommendation on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes a classification of regions (green, orange, red and grey) based on the local epidemiological situation. The Recommendation invites Member States to provide timely information to travelers. The new colored map will be available soon on the same website.

- The European Stability mechanism (ESM) supports the Member States during this current crisis with the amount of 240 billion euros. This credit line is tailored to the corona crisis and will be activated upon request, under standardized terms defined in advance.
- The Commission adopted a second mechanism as an immediate response: The temporary **S**upport to mitigate **U**nemployment **R**isks in an **E**mergency (SURE). It is available for Member States that need to mobilise significant financial means to fight the negative economic and social consequences of the coronavirus outbreak on their territory. Soon already 19 countries will receive up to 90 billion euros (together) to support workers and companies.



- Lastly the initiative on minimum wages is still ongoing. The Commission launched in the beginning of June the Second Stage Consultation on how to ensure fair minimum wages for all workers in the European Union. The goal is not to harmonize minimum wage setting systems but more to ensure that decent minimum wages are reached across Europe. Any possible measure would be applied differently depending on the minimum wage setting systems and traditions of the Member State, in full respect of national competencies and social partners' contractual freedom. At the moment the Commission is analyzing the different responses of the Social Partners and will propose an instrument at the end of this year.

The Commission is currently looking for possible new dates for the Social Dialogue meetings next year. This will be communicated as soon as possible to the secretariats.

### **5. Brexit and ongoing negotiations between the EU and the UK-impact on the sugar industry.**

Florian Dalstein (CEFS) made a presentation on the impact of Brexit on the sugar industry (see powerpoint [here](#)) discussing the shared history of the EU's and UK's sugar markets and reflecting on the key elements of the bilateral sugar trade today.

Wiebke Warneck (EFFAT) gave the viewpoint of the trade union side. She insisted that in a “no deal” scenario the food and beverage sector would be disproportionately affected. It would lead to major job losses in the UK but also in the EU Member States. A plea is sent to the negotiators for a good trade deal that save jobs and delivers for working people. The withdrawal agreement must be fully respected and a hard border with Ireland must absolutely be avoided.

Isabel Vasserot reminded everyone that the future of this sector is highly dependent on the EU policy. There are many issues at stake. We are 25.000 workers providing to others 360.000 jobs. The future of this sector is a common future.

EFFAT and CEFS ask EU negotiators to do all possible to come to a free trade agreement and ensure a level playing field for European producers and workers.

### **6. AOB and Conclusions**

CEFS and EFFAT published joint news for their different websites. No dates available yet for the 2021 meetings but will be communicated by the Commission soon.

Wiebke Warneck and Justine Richelle thanked all the participants and the interpreters and closed the meeting.