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A Call for a Just Transition
that Delivers for working people



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EFFAT

EU Elections 2024

**EFFAT calls for a Fairer
Europe for Workers #CallingEU**

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EFFAT Calls for a Just Transition that Delivers for Working People



What are we talking about?

The agriculture, food processing, and hospitality sectors significantly contribute to climate change while also being highly impacted by its effects.

The effects of climate change are becoming more catastrophic by the year. Reverting this trend is vital to save our planet and protecting our jobs and workers' rights.

The agriculture, food processing, and hospitality sectors significantly contribute to climate change while also being highly impacted by its effects. Addressing sustainability in both our food chain and hospitality industry is essential as a part of the solution to the climate crisis. Extreme weather events are having major effects on the health and safety of the workers EFFAT represents and are already a threat to job security.

However, while the pursuit of a Green Transition is essential for environmental sustainability, it may lead to disruptions within EFFAT sectors, potentially resulting in job losses, the emergence of new business models, and the need for additional skills.

Addressing these risks requires strengthening collective bargaining and ensuring that all environmental policies have a robust social dimension to anticipate change and promote quality job creation.

We need, in a nutshell, a **Just Transition!** A transition turned into an opportunity to tackle precarious work and create more and better jobs with stable employment, fair pay, and advanced working conditions.

We need a Just Transition that tackles the climate crisis while representing an opportunity to promote quality jobs.

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Why is EU action needed?

The EU needs a change of approach and bears the responsibility to draw a coherent strategy against climate change that looks in the direction of citizens and workers.

The EU Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy set the EU vision towards climate neutrality. While they're crucial for the future of our continent, these policies are currently under attack, lacking social acceptance. The reasons are multiple.

The prevailing perception is that the Green Transition in Europe has been imposed, placing the burden on the most vulnerable ones, who are left to bear the costs of its implementation. Alongside, the lack of tangible assessments on the positive effects of these policies on employment jeopardises their evaluation.

These shortcomings are becoming the building blocks of the far right's populist narrative against science, against workers and the future of younger generations.

Without a change of approach, the whole EU climate ambition embedded in the Green Deal runs the risk of being marginalised, leaving a gloomy prospect of having to deal with the climate crisis without a robust policy to tackle it.

The EU bears the responsibility to act with a coherent strategy against climate change, one that gains acceptance by placing citizens and workers at its core.

In the previous mandate, the EU veered away from its ambitious commitments outlined in the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy, which now lack social acceptance.

How can the EU act?

Just transition is about making our sectors greener while strengthening collective bargaining, promoting gender equality and workplace democracy. It is also about ensuring that the Green Transition is accessible to all without exacerbating inequalities.

To achieve a true Just Transition in our sectors, the next EU term should be focused on the following priorities:

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1. Addressing sector-specific issues detrimental for workers and the environment:

There are many issues affecting working people while contributing to environmental degradation.

For the agro-food sector these issues include:

- **The concentration of power across the food chain:** Big players (food retailers, supermarkets chains, food giants, agrochemical companies) use their bargaining power against small ones (e.g small farmers, agro-food workers) pushing them into poverty or into unsustainable practices to earn a living. This process of concentration is also a threat to food security and food affordability.
- **Short-termism and shareholder value maximization:** It is about private equity funds, speculators and financial investors increasingly attracted by the agro-food sector. The EU should tackle short-termism which is against nature and society. This is especially true in a sector whose main goal should be feeding with nutritious and healthy food a growing population in a world with limited resources.
- **An unsustainable approach to Trade Agreements:** International trade should never lead to unfair competition and a global race to the bottom in terms of rights and working conditions. On the contrary, trade agreements should be a tool to tackle inequalities and defend food sovereignty.

For the **hospitality sector** these issues include:

- **Mass tourism:** Mass tourism thrives on a model based on low wages and precarious work with negative impacts on land use, increased waste, pollution, natural habitat loss, and physical damage to natural and marine areas
- **Uncontrolled platform economy:** The largely unregulated state of the platform economy across Europe exposes the darker side of digitalization. This trend comes at the expense of employment stability and compromises the quality of services provided.

2. Including social considerations in environmental policies:

All environmental policies whether adopted at institutional level or pursued by a specific company must have a robust social dimension to ensure it is implemented fairly. This should include:

- **Rigorous socio-economic impact assessments:** A major shortcoming of EU environmental policies and files (e.g. Green Deal, Farm to Fork, Fit for 55) is the lack of a comprehensive assessment of their impact on jobs and working conditions.

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A clear governance of the transition with the involvement of trade unions: Anticipation and monitoring of change will be key to achieving a fair transition. Social partners involvement will be a decisive step, as the feedback from European, national, and local trade unions and employer organizations is key to developing precise forecasts and minimising potential negative impacts.

3. Linking financial support for companies to social conditionalities:

Resources needed for the transition must come with social strings attached. EFFAT doesn't oppose the provision of economic support to employers to make companies' operations and supply chains greener. On the contrary, the Green Transition requires important resources, and the EU and Member States should invest greatly in it. At the same time, EFFAT encourages careful scrutiny of expenditure and insists that the EU and national funds associated with the Green Transition should not be allocated to employers who disregard workers' rights or neglect investments in quality jobs.

4. Introducing an EU law on maximum working temperatures and a right to job-to-job transition:

Climate change is already impacting workers' health, safety, and job security. Mitigation strategies to decarbonise and enhance the sustainability of our sectors must be complemented by adaptation strategies.

Adapting to climate change involves preparing for and adjusting to both current and predicted impacts. These strategies should also address climate change's effects on jobs and working conditions, incorporating key safeguards such as:

A EU binding legislative tool on maximum working temperatures: Exposure to extreme heat can result in occupational illnesses and injuries. Heat stress can result in heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, or heat rashes. All workers have the right to work in safe temperatures. As weather conditions transcend national borders, European action is imperative. EFFAT urges the implementation of an EU legislation establishing maximum working temperatures. This legislation should include provisions for reducing working hours and extending breaks during elevated temperatures. Employers must be obligated to install effective ventilation systems for indoor workers, and compensation for hours/days lost due to extreme weather events should be covered by the welfare system and publicly financed.

A right to training and job-to-job transition: Workers in agriculture, food processing and hospitality will need education, training, upskilling and reskilling programmes to acquire different qualifications and strengthen their employability as their job might disappear or change due to climate change.

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EFFAT Calls for a Just Transition that Delivers for Working People



A JUST Transition that delivers for working people

- Addresses the sector-specific issues detrimental for workers and the environment
- Embeds a social dimension into all environmental policies
- Regulates working in maximum working temperatures through an EU binding initiative

EFFAT is the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions, also representing domestic workers.

As a European Trade Union Federation representing 116 national trade unions from 37 European countries, EFFAT defends the interests of more than 25 million workers towards the European Institutions, European employers' associations, and transnational companies.

EFFAT is a member of the ETUC and the European regional organisation of the IUF.



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