



Documentation of the European trade union workshop “Cocoanet.EU”

28th February – 1st March 2011, Vienna



(From the left, 2. row: M. Bergstreser, K. Maack, J. Hendriks, D. de Graaf, F. J. Pasalodos Gil, G. Riess, M. Amadis; first row: S. Longeley, J. Schouten, G. Gruzdiene, B. Roberts, J. Blondeel, H. Verhelst, K. Schuetze)

The second workshop of the trade union and employee representatives network Cocoanet.EU took place on February 28th and March 1st 2011 in Vienna, Austria and was hosted by the Austrian trade union Pro-Ge.

This network is co-funded by the European Commission and has officially been launched with an international trade union conference assembling almost 100 participants in last year’s September in the BZO in Oberjosbach, Germany. The second workshop was attended by members of the project’s steering group and additional representatives from Spain, Lithuania and France. 15 participants representing FNV (Netherlands), ACV (Belgium), ABVV (Belgium), Pro-Ge (Austria), Unite (UK), Cfdt (France), NGG (Germany), UGT (Spain), the Lithuanian Food Trade union, EFFAT and the IUF met for the 2-days workshop.





Monday, 28th February 2011

The workshop began with a visit to the Austrian chocolate factory Manner, located in Vienna, where the participants were welcomed and guided by two shop stewards of the company. Manner (Josef Manner & Comp AG) is a well-known traditional brand for a wide range of products (about 1.100 different products) and looks back on a history of more than 120 years. The company is still largely owned by the Manner family and has a total workforce of 750 in its three locations. The factory and company headquarters in Vienna has 430 employees and processes cocoa beans and produces different chocolates and wafers. The workshop participants used the meeting with the two shop stewards of Manner to actively discuss decent working conditions and precarious work in the company and the entire chocolate and cocoa sector of Austria.

The workshop was officially opened by host **Gerhard Riess**, trade union secretary of Pro-Ge in the Austrian Trade union house Catamaran along the banks of the Danube and chaired by **Michael Bergtreser** of the NGG in Germany. First point on the workshop's agenda was the presentation and intensive discussion on "toolkits" developed to inform and sensitize cocoa and chocolate workers to chocolate-related sustainability issues. This toolkit includes various approaches, information kits, manuals and guidelines offering shop stewards and trade union secretaries important and innovative methods to address sustainability issues.

One innovative idea was presented by **Dick de Graaf** from FNV in the Netherlands who spoke about a possible sustainability fund. **Dick de Graaf** has already for many years been active in awareness rising on the social and working conditions of workers and child labor in the cocoa producing countries. His concept of a sustainability fund suggests imposing a levy on the leading multinational chocolate and cocoa producing companies (either a certain percentage of each company's marketing budget or a certain levy depending on the amount of produced cocoa) which should then be used to contribute to a decent living in a sustainable environment for all people working in the cocoa chain, and in particular workers in the south. The discussion on the sustainability fund was fruitful but did not lead to precise conclusions. It was agreed that **Dick de Graaf** will seek further brainstorming, exchange of information and discussions with colleagues of **Sue Longley** (IUF) and her contacts in Vienna. He will then present the first results or a draft concept to the steering group of the cocoanet.EU in Mechelen. Another important part of the toolbox was a "user-friendly guideline" on the core ILO conventions on labor rights and OECD Guidelines for multinational enterprises, designed for interested stakeholders to better understand their meaning and impact.

Sue Longley of the IUF spoke about the work of her organization on human & labor rights in the entire cocoa value chain, their contacts to trade unions in cocoa producing countries and the important aspect of trade union capacity building. The IUF (International union of food, agriculture, hotel, restaurant, catering, tobacco and allied workers) is based in Geneva and covers 389 affiliated unions in 124 countries including the unions represented in the cocoanet.EU. She emphasized the precarious conditions of people working in agriculture and outlined that plantations have been ranked by the ILO as one of the three most dangerous industries with a high fatal accidents rate. She further mentioned that 60 % of all child labor takes place in agriculture, that another serious problem is the high number of migrant and seasonal workers and unpaid family labor. Sue Longley explained that children often go along with their parents as seasonal workers, while the father is the only person officially appearing in the employer's records on the plantation. But in reality the entire family works on the plantation. Among other initiatives, the IUF is involved in an International Partnership on Child Labor in Agriculture and has set a priority on trade union capacity building. In this context it has been





controversially discussed whether unions should represent self-employed farmers. **Sue Longley** referred to unions in Brazil and in Ghana who have taken political decisions to include self-employed farmers in their organizations. However she mentions that small farmers tend to be very bad employers.

As a good practice example **Gerhard Riess** presented the international project “Matra”, which was coordinated by FNV in the Netherlands and supported by Pro-Ge and the NGG in 2003 to exchange information and experiences between trade unions and shop stewards from middle- and eastern European countries in the chocolate industry. More information on Matra and the project’s archive can be found on the Pro-ge website www.proge.at.

Kim Schütze from Wilke, Maack and Partner in Germany gave a short insight in the-state-of-the art of the cocoanet.eu website. The website shall serve as an important platform of the network to exchange information on activities of each participating unions in their national sector and to easily access contact details of European works councils (EWC) of leading cocoa and chocolate companies and trade union secretaries in the EU. It contains a good overview on the project’s work, first conference in September 2010, contact details of participating union and different information on current collective bargaining negotiations in Austria and Germany.

Tuesday, 1st March 2011

Michael Bergstreser welcomed the **Food, Drink and Tobacco Sector Secretary of EFFAT** and opened the second workshop day. The morning of the second day was used to further discuss the “toolkits” which shall offer shop stewards and trade union secretaries various tools to sensitize co-workers on cocoa-related sustainability issues. Another instrument was a set of five flyers which shall be distributed in various companies all over Europe to strengthen the awareness on sustainability in the entire cocoa chain. **Dick de Graaf** presented a draft on topics which will be addressed in each of the flyers. The basic idea is to distribute one flyer after another in a specific timeframe to all employees in one company. The workshop participants agreed to stick to such a timeframe for the flyer campaign, that the campaign should be completed in 2011, but stated that every company and country naturally had its own rhythm. It was further agreed that the Netherlands will set a benchmarking so that positive experiences and first results could be shared among the people in the cocoanet.EU in Mechelen. **Julie Schouten** of FNV promised to start the flyer campaign together with her shop stewards in the Netherlands and to report about their experiences in May.

Hilde Verhelst of ACV presented a manual for shop stewards and trade union secretaries which should assist them to enter communication on sustainability issues and the adherence to the core ILO conventions with their employers. She further explained that this manual shall offer a questionnaire for European works councils on a sustainable production of chocolate and another questionnaire for suppliers. Also this manual shall give guidance in critically reviewing a company’s code of conduct and a checklist for cooperation with sub-contractors. Together with the Trade Union’s Principles on Sustainability, the Declaration of Frankfurt and the “user-friendly” guideline on the ILO conventions and the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises, this manual shall be a part of the “toolkit”.





On the question of critical monitoring of company's CRS activities, **Barrie Roberts** from Unite referred to a UK based private company which critically checks on companies and their suppliers for a responsible cooperation (sedex.org.uk). **Gerhard Riess** added that Pro-Ge was a member of the "[Netzwerk Soziale Verantwortung](#)" monitoring which companies were evidently involved in CRS. **Julie Blondeel** praised the toolkit as an important and interesting instrument for shop stewards and added that it would meet the great expectations of the participants in Mechelen.

Another task of the workshop was to prepare further activities of the project and in particular the upcoming conference in Mechelen. The group developed an agenda for the 24th of May 2011 which will be the core conference day of the three-day event. About 80 participants from more than 12 European countries are expected to participate. It was agreed to open the event with a welcome dinner on the evening of the 23th of May.

Julie Schouten shared FNV's experiences on a trade union and NGO cooperation called "Voice" and invited the other trade unions in the cocoane.EU to participate. She referred to a cooperation statement of the coalition of European NGOs and FNV in the Netherlands "Voice of Organizations in Cocoa in Europe". EFFAT welcomes initiatives of national unions to seek cooperation with other stakeholders according to trade union cultures and practices. The EFFAT representative explained that the draft "EFFAT memorandum of understanding for EFFAT Trade Union / NGO Cooperation" was needed to guarantee fair cooperation for all the trade unions with membership in the chocolate industry, also of those who cannot actively take part in the steering group. The memorandum is also about making sure that no conflict of interests arise among unions in such cooperation, it also sets guidelines on the nature of partnership, mutual recognition and communication in order to enable a successful cooperation. The "Memorandum of understanding" was discussed and approved in the EFFAT Management Committee in February 2011 and its draft was shared for comments with the Cocoanet.eu Steering Group on 12 January 2011.

The EFFAT representative gave a brief overview on the very first results of the questionnaires sent out by EFFAT as part of the cocoanet.eu project on the social conditions of the cocoa and chocolate industry in Europe. The questionnaire complies to EFFAT's general focus on combating precarious employment in the EU. She welcomed the immediate reply by trade unions in Switzerland, Denmark and Finland, which until now have not been actively participating in the cocoanet.EU project and then summarized data from Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Lithuania, Finland, Denmark and Austria. The EFFAT representative concluded that the chocolate and cocoa industry in these seven countries showed a comparably high rate of fixed employment reaching averagely 80 %. More detailed results of this survey will be presented at the conference in Mechelen.

Kim Schütze, 04.03.2011
Wilke, Maack and Partner, Hamburg

