

Joint Press release of
EFFAT, ETUF-TCL, UNI-Europa and COESS, EFCI, EURATEX and FERCO

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"TOWARDS RESPONSIBLE AWARDING OF CONTRACTS"

"The awarding of public and private contracts for services in the catering, cleaning, private security and for the textile sectors should be carried out in a socially responsible way" was the message of a conference organised on 18 April 2008, in Brussels, by the European Commission and the social partners of the 4 sectors, representing 7.3 million workers and generating a turn-over of 300 billion euros.

Around 200 participants representing public authorities, companies, employers' associations and trade unions from all levels (European, national, regional) listened to and discussed the presentations of the above-mentioned actors which underlined that competition in the procurement processes should be accomplished by taking fully into account quality, sustainability and innovation offered by the providers as well as correct working conditions and wages. Procurement processes based solely upon price lead to unprofessional or even illegal practices, which are strongly condemned by the social partners of all 4 sectors.

The revised EU Directives from 2004 explicitly allow the inclusion of social and environmental criteria. Various concrete "good practices" at national or local level were presented as examples of such criteria.

At the closure of the conference, the European social partners of the private security sector (CoESS/UNI-Europa), the contract catering sector (FERCO/EFFAT), the cleaning industry sector (EFCI/UNI-Europa) and the clothing and textiles sector (EURATEX/ETUF-TCL) signed the joint declaration "Towards Responsible Awarding of Contracts" calling upon public and private contractors to select the economically and socially most advantageous offer rather than the lowest bid, taking into consideration quality criteria such as competencies of the service provider, environmental and sustainable aspects, working conditions, respect of labour standards, trade union rights, social legislation and collective agreements of workers along the supply chain.

The social partners of the 4 sectors will continue their joint efforts to evaluate, promote and update their guides and, on a more general level, implement the principle of the "economically most advantageous offer" in their sectors, in order to give it a more prominent role in public procurement legislation.

COESS, EFFAT, EFCI, ETUF-TCL, EURATEX, FERCO and UNI-Europa ask the European Commission to speed-up the publication of the "social procurement handbook" and to be involved in its elaboration. They encourage the social partners of other sectors to take up the initiative in the fields where their goods or services are subject to the awarding of contracts through procurement procedures.

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