

40th UNI Europa Management Committee Brussels, 18 October 2013

Item 2:

Hairdressing Social Partners' Agreement

Recommendation

The Management Committee is invited to:

- adopt the Statement on the Unprecedented Attack of the European Commission on Social Dialogue and Social Europe;
 - note the Annex (Circular 70, exchange of letters with the Commission on the hairdressing agreement)
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Statement

on

the Unprecedented Attack of the European Commission on Social Dialogue and Social Europe

In its “Refit – fit for growth” Communication published on 2 October 2013, the Commission blocks the request of the social partners in hairdressing to transform their agreement on occupational health and safety into law. It also identifies the entire area of EU law concerning occupational health and safety as potentially redundant. Further legislation is stopped and existing one is to be examined with a view to repeal it and transfer powers back to member states. On occupational health and safety, EU regulation has brought concrete progress for workers since the 1970s and provides a comprehensive framework for good working standards throughout the EU. This decision also needs to be seen in the context of the EU’s austerity policy and an increasingly negative approach to social dialogue.

UNI Europa

- views the decision by the Barroso Commission to roll-back occupational health and safety regulation and to stop the agreement of the hairdressing social partners as a clear attack to undermine social Europe, trade unions and the well-being of workers. It is unacceptable and must be reversed.
- reiterates that the legal implementation of the hairdressing agreement is a test case for the European Commission's commitment to social dialogue and Social Europe, one that the Commission has failed. The current approach of the Commission is anti-European, anti-social, and anti-democratic; it is anti-trade union and anti-workers.

- calls upon President Barroso to apologise for his disrespectful behaviour towards workers who suffer from occupational diseases, in particular female hairdressers and workers with back pain (as expressed in his interview with German Tagesschau on 2 October 2013).
- emphasises that musculoskeletal disorders, especially bad backs, cause the majority of all absences from work and thus are a major factor for a company's competitiveness and the sustainability of Europe's social security systems. Service workers are particularly often affected.
- condemns the Commission for announcing its decision on the hairdressing agreement without having yet informed the concerned social partners nor waiting for the results of its own on-going evaluation exercise. Despite assurances by Commissioner Andor and President Barroso, this decision has not been based on a comprehensive and impartial assessment nor on dialogue with the social partners. The Commission is in breach of its legal obligations.
- demands that the Commission reverses its decision and does the necessary to proceed with the requests of UNI Europa to give legal force to the hairdressing agreement by means of Council decisions.
- urges the Commission to give a strong and unequivocal endorsement of the right of social partners to conclude sectoral agreements that, as a matter of principle, are made legally binding by a Council decision as well as to facilitate a similar endorsement by the Council.
- calls upon UNI Europa affiliates, the ETUC and the entire trade union movement to prioritise campaigning and fighting for the reversal of the Commission's decisions on occupational health and safety as well as the agreement of the hairdressing social partners. Social Europe must be defended.
- regards this matter as the main priority for all parts of UNI Europa and instructs the Regional Secretary to take all action necessary.