



## TOOLBOX: GOOD PRACTICES AND TOOLS FROM THE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY IN EUROPE

*Bringing in new talents and managing an ageing workforce:  
two sides of the same coin – implementing good practices for  
a more attractive food and drink industry in Europe*

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## FOODDRINKEUROPE

*is the representative body for Europe's food and drink industry – the largest manufacturing sector in the EU in terms of turnover, employment and value added. It brings together 25 national food and drink federations, including 2 observers, 26 European sector associations and 19 major food and drink companies*

## EFFAT

*is the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions. As a European Trade Union Federation representing 120 national trade unions from 35 European countries, EFFAT defends the interests of more than 22 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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# FOREWORD

This report builds on the findings of a previous joint study<sup>1</sup> on ensuring sustainable employment and competitiveness in the EU food and drink sector, which was funded by the EU Commission. This joint study showed that, although the food and drink manufacturing and processing sector had shown considerable resilience during the recent economic and financial crisis, it was unfortunately not seen as an attractive choice by many potential employees and therefore had difficulty recruiting some of the skills needed to improve the sector's productivity and international competitiveness.

With further financial support from the EU Commission, the sector's social partners, FoodDrinkEurope and EFFAT, have worked with consultants, Syndex and wmp consult, to examine how different parts of the sector in a number of Member States are trying to tackle this problem by bringing in new talents and managing an ageing workforce.

The result of this exercise has been the development of a "toolbox" of different measures, which we believe, will be of assistance to members of both FoodDrinkEurope and EFFAT when they are looking for ways to tackle these issues. We are confident that im-

plementing these measures will also help to improve the image of the EU food and drink sector and make it an employer of choice for potential employees.

This report's "toolbox" is a valuable resource that contains a number of examples of good practices and case studies from employers, large and small, in different Member States. We believe it will provide the members of both FoodDrinkEurope and EFFAT with the opportunity to share, develop and consolidate sustainable employment practices across the EU food and drink sector.

## *Acknowledgements*

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1. "Ensuring Sustainable Employment and Competitiveness in the EU Food and Drink Industry: Meeting the Challenges of the Labour Market", <http://www.fooddrinkeurope.eu/S=o/publication/food-and-drink-social-partners-highlight-need-for-targeted-action-to-ensure/>.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The European social partners, FoodDrinkEurope and EFFAT, have joined forces to identify bottlenecks in recruiting new and skilled employees and to tackle challenges arising when companies have an ageing workforce. In doing so, they have been supported by two consulting agencies, wmp consult and Syndex. Always bearing in mind that local stakeholders operate in a specific environment as regards industrial relations systems, labour law, educational systems and unemployment characteristics, the European social partners have identified a set of tools comprising transferable good practices, possible scenarios and guidelines for the benefit of employers, workers and trade unions in the sector. The use of these tools can also help to improve the sector's image as a potential employer.

The following general recommendations are based on the experience gained from 28 good practice examples submitted by FoodDrinkEurope and EFFAT members in different Member States

## **ATTRACTING NEW TALENT TO THE EUROPEAN FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY**

Finding and recruiting new employees can be difficult, especially in remote areas. In other cases, there might be numerous candidates but their educational background and skills might not fit the industry's needs. How can companies go about tackling these situations?

### **INNOVATIVE RECRUITMENT INITIATIVES**

The first step consists of mapping required company or sector skills and recruitment needs and the local workforce that is avail-

able. This also involves anticipating future industry developments including customer demands and changing production methods. Long-term partnerships between companies and local employment and education bodies, including schools and universities, can also be very beneficial.


Second, it can be helpful for young people to have discussion with their peers – who, at the same time, are working as company “ambassadors” – about career opportunities and through social media. Trade unions also have a positive role to play as they can help to tackle prejudices against working in the sector during recruitment campaigns and school visits.

A good recruitment campaign should also promote workforce diversity by specifically focusing on certain groups of potential employees. For example, women are underrepresented in the majority of companies in the food and drink industry and migrant workers often have the necessary skills for jobs in the sector.

Finally, multinational companies can adopt a European recruitment strategy by setting targets for their country managers. Local managers know best the specific constraints and opportunities in their labour market, allowing them to set and achieve recruitment targets in the most relevant manner.

### **ATTRACTIVE WORKING CONDITIONS**

It is important to try to position your company as a “great place to work”. A company's working environment and image is often closely related to the attention given by it to its employees' views. Surveys, meetin-



gs, works councils and trade union or workers' representatives can also help to ensure that communication and job satisfaction remains at a high level. Within social dialogue bodies, priority should also be given to health and safety policies.

Investing in work-life-balance programmes and, at the same time, promoting female leadership initiatives are policies that can enhance a company's image as an "employer of choice". Potential employees are attracted to companies offering good working conditions with, alongside pay, innovative forms of work organisation, training opportunities, giving workers better control over their working time and providing career development opportunities being seen to be important.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**

Sometimes, a jobseeker's profile does not fit a company's needs. At company or sector level, employers and workers' representatives can work together to examine job profiles, promote different types of qualifications and encourage better initial training and education. This can result in the creation of new qualifications which better reflect the current and future needs of the industry and improve the workforce's employability throughout the sector. Employees can have an important role to play in the innovation process, as they often have valuable practical experiences to share with their managers. Finally, unskilled workers' employability can be improved through dedicated training courses.

### **MANAGING AN AGEING WORKFORCE**

In the vast majority of European countries, the retirement age is going up. At the same

time, some older workers do not have the physical capacity or skills to adapt to the constantly changing requirements of the food and drink industry. However, a number of companies and the social partners have come up with effective age management policies to try to retain and manage an ageing workforce.

### **AGE-FRIENDLY WORKING CONDITIONS**

Some companies have adapted their working conditions so that they better suit older employees. Here again, social dialogue can often be a valuable driver for finding solutions and adapting workplace requirements. Using an age structure analysis, there are examples where the social partners have worked together to introduce health promotion policies and reorganise work, focusing on risk prevention, stress reduction, new shift patterns, better ergonomic workplaces etc. Further initiatives have involved the introduction of multitasking, creating greater autonomy at work and appointing older employees as mentors for younger workers or providing benefits such as additional days of paid leave as employees approach retirement and pre-retirement schemes. The objective of introducing a managing an ageing workforce policy is to trigger a mind-set change within a company's workforce and management, resulting in a company culture that is adapted to healthy ageing. Several of these initiatives involve a financial investment by the company, but it also benefits from the increased productivity and lower absenteeism rate of older workers.

### **LIFELONG LEARNING**

To prevent older workers losing touch with modern technologies, they need to be re-



gularly upskilled. However, in some cases, a company may have to “start from scratch” when basic skills such as literacy and numeracy – two prerequisites for accessing further and more specific training – are lacking. In some cases, companies may need the support of external experts or sectoral bodies to amend their HR policies. There are several examples showing that it is possible to design tailor-made solutions that match a company’s workforce characteristics.

### **RAISING AGE AWARENESS AT COMPANY LEVEL**

In some cases, older employees may find it difficult to adapt to new ways of working and associated training requirements. Addressing this may require some employee involvement in helping to design age management policies. This will help to ensure wider acceptance of these changes and workers’ representatives can play a key role in this process. At the same time, the success of any dedicated age management policy depends on the positive support of supervisors and managers. There needs to be an understanding that this policy is not just an additional obligation but is an important part of the way the company is managed.

The retirement of key employees should be anticipated well in advance to ensure that the company does not lose knowledge and know-how. Mentorship is one of the most frequently used methods for ensuring this transfer of knowledge between different generations of employees.

### **IMPROVING THE SECTOR’S IMAGE**

All of the 28 good practice examples in the

Report can also be beneficial in improving the sector’s image for potential employees. But doing good is not enough. Communicating success stories is also of major importance and is therefore a key task for the sector.

Bottom up examples of individual company initiatives can benefit the entire sector, especially if companies or the social partners have a system for exchanging good practices through, for example, a web platform or communication campaign with advisory bodies promoting these. Top-down sector led approaches may be more effective in terms of their coverage but should always be based on tangible facts to be credible. The best solution is to have these image campaigns involving social partners in the initial and dissemination phases.

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