

**EFFAT Women's Conference**  
**Maritim prorate Hotel Berlin, Friedrichstrasse 151, Berlin**  
**19 Oct. 2009 – between 12:30 and 14:00h**

**Note for side event:**  
**Domestic Workers on the international agenda – and in Europe?**

Organised by International Domestic Workers' Network (IDWN),  
Sponsored by German Commission for Justice and Peace

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***Domestic workers on the agenda of the ILO***

Domestic Workers are on the international agenda: the International Labour Organization will negotiate an international standard for domestic workers on its Conferences in 2010 and 2011. We hope that the result will be a strong Convention, which will guarantee minimum international standards for domestic workers.

The ILO report: "Decent work for domestic workers" states that there are over 100 million domestic workers worldwide. In developing countries, between 4 and 10% of the total workforce are domestic workers; in developed countries, 1 to 1.25%. For all countries an increasing demand for domestic workers is reported.

Domestic work is undervalued and poorly regulated, and many domestic workers remain overworked, underpaid and unprotected. Accounts of maltreatment and abuse, especially of live-in and migrant domestic workers, are regularly exposed in the media. In many countries, domestic work is often performed by children.

***Domestic workers in Europe***

In Europe, most of the domestic workers have several employers and do not live in the home of an employer. Very often they work informally and are therefore neither covered by labour laws nor by social protection schemes. Many of them are migrant women, also undocumented, who are especially vulnerable. Many women from Eastern European countries migrate to Western European countries to work in households and support their families in their home countries by sending home money.

But even where labour laws protect domestic workers, they are rarely enforced. Domestic workers are isolated and therefore find it difficult to organize.

***Domestic workers organize internationally....***

Nevertheless, domestic workers do organize. Under the auspices of the IUF and in partnership with WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing; [www.wiego.org](http://www.wiego.org)), an International Domestic Workers' Network (IDWN) is developing. A steering committee was set up in October 2008, which further organized its work this year in

June 2009. IDWN is a platform for organized domestic workers to put their demands on the agenda at all levels. The SC decided that only trade unions and other membership-based organizations have the right of decision-making in IDWN. Others, like NGOs and individuals, are invited to join and to support the process, but without voting power.

### *...and in Europe*

At the moment all regions – with the exception of Europe – are represented in IDWN. There is a whole range of organizations dealing with the issue of domestic workers in Europe. There are trade unions, for example FILMCAMS (Italy) and ACV-CSC (Belgium), who actively organize domestic workers among other categories of workers. Some of them, like UNITE in the UK and Bondgenoten in the Netherlands, have partnerships with self help organizations: Kalayaan (UK) and Trusted Migrants (NL). There are a lot of NGOs supporting especially migrant domestic workers, among them a lot of church organizations. Some of them have built the RESPECT network, which is based in Amsterdam. A European network of domestic workers' organizations, including all these different organizations, could mean a lot of difference for domestic workers with regard to improvements of their working and living conditions.

### *European Conference on domestic work?*

As indicated above, the situation of domestic workers in Europe differs from other parts of the world. In April 2006, the ETUC organized a European conference on domestic work: **“Out of the Shadows”**. In the course of the international developments, it seems to make sense to discuss a follow-up meeting at the European level.

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