



Sustainable canteens?

A delegation from the CPRE – Joint Committee on Restaurants and Staff Shop at the Commission in Brussels – composed of representatives of staff, the administration and the OIB, visited the canteen of the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee, which has been awarded the "sustainable" label by Brussels Environment. Sustainable canteens share the goal of combating waste and have an environmentally friendly procurement policy.

When will we get a sustainable label for the Commission's canteens?

Since 2012, U4U has supported the idea of sustainable canteens for the Commission in Brussels. We have written [several papers](#) during this time asking the Commission to include waste control requirements in its calls for tender, and the need to have an environmentally friendly procurement policy. If only to bring its practices in line with its recommendations to Member States through its different policies – environment, climate, agriculture, health, consumers, etc.

An initial effort was made in the 2012 specifications with the introduction of an obligation to buy a small percentage of organic products, for example, or to provide a balanced diet (smaller portions, withdrawal of some fats, less salt, etc.). However, these efforts were not enough in light of the issues raised by food today.

It is therefore with optimism and enthusiasm that we support the work of the CPRE (Joint Committee on Restaurants and Staff Shop at the Commission in Brussels) whose delegation visited the canteen of the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee at the end of January. These two committees came together to start a canteen with a "sustainable" label. This label was developed by Brussels Environment, the body that for some years has promoted the increase in the Brussels Capital of canteens meeting [sustainability criteria](#). The CdR canteen has been labelled a "sustainable canteen" and part of its menu has also been certified as organic. Independently of the changes made, which are genuine advances in terms of respect for the environment, and of consideration for the land in which we live and work and which gives

us our home, the quality is high. Vegetarians and those with allergies are also taken into account in the catering provision.

Of course, such quality comes at a price. Contrary to popular thinking, this canteen, which serves some 800 meals per day as opposed to almost 8,000 at the Commission, is no more subsidised than ours are. It is therefore the staff who pay the price for this quality (€5.35 for the dish of the day versus €4.70 at the Commission). At the Commission, however, we know that this price is not sustainable for the concessionaires and that it would affect the quality of what is on offer. So it is up to us to consider what we want and how much we are prepared to pay for our food, perhaps agreeing that at €5.35, a dish of the day (of high quality of course) remains extremely competitive compared to the prices charged in other European quarters.