



EFBWW NEWSLETTER

News from the EFBWW

Only one month and a half before our 14th General Assembly

We are almost there! One month and a half to go! Destination: Helsinki, Finland. Dates: 12, 13, 14 December. We are building our way up to the most important event for our federation: the General Assembly. The General Assembly takes place every four years and is the highest decision making body. The General Assembly will evaluate the past congress period and decide on the main priorities for the next congress period. We are now finalising all the documents, the side-events and the different panel discussions and the communication part of the event. Looking forward to seeing you there!



Contents:

News from the EFBWW	1-3
Projects	3
News from the affiliates	4-5
Miscellaneous	6
Calendar	6

EFBWW stands by Sweden after terrorist attack

The EFBWW expresses its condolences to the families of the victims of the terrible attack in Brussels, Belgium on 17 October. Hate and violence will never be the way forward and we will always condemn them. We stand by and support Sweden and our Swedish affiliates.

New colleague at the EFBWW secretariat

EFBWW is happy to announce that since 2 October, a new colleague has joined its Brussels-based team. Teodora Ilieva is the newest Policy officer, and she will be overseeing the European Works Council dossiers, the ongoing efforts on organizing, as well as other political dossiers related to labor and company law.



Adoption of new Asbestos directive

On 3 October, the European Parliament adopted the new directive on Asbestos with an overwhelming ma-

majority. Later in October, the Council followed suit and formally adopted the compromise. EFBWW and its OSH network will now focus on the implementation of the new rules into national law. We need to keep in mind that the new requirements are minimum requirements and that the transition period is a maximum period. Member states need to be stimulated to perform better and quicker, especially in connection with the transition period. The EFBWW secretariat will also continue its engagement regarding asbestos-related aspects not directly covered by the Workers Protection Directive, namely the expected proposal for a Directive on screening and registration of asbestos in buildings, the enlargement of the European List of Occupational Diseases and the guidance for the state of the art prevention in terms of technical and organisational measures.

ETUC demonstration in Paris against EU austerity plans

On 13 October, tens of thousands gathered in Paris for the ETUC demonstration "On the road for a Fair Deal for workers" and to protest the EU's proposed austerity plan, which may necessitate €45 billion in budget cuts next year. Trade unions from across Europe supported the day of action demanding pay raises, decent pension schemes and gender equality. The ETUC is now campaigning against

"austerity 2.0", advocating for fair worker treatment. The EFBWW fully supports the ETUC campaign and was present and visible at the demo highlighting its campaign to [limit subcontracting](#).

EFBWW seminar on "Green transition in wood and forestry"

On 17 and 18 October, colleagues from 7 different countries representing the woodworking and forestry sectors met to exchange visions on the green transition. The topic was introduced by two quite different stakeholders: Fern, an environmental NGO, and the European State Forest Association. Participants were given two different views on the EU Green Deal and its potential impact. The analysis of the management on the current and future outlook of the woodworking sectors was shared by many of the participants: a scarcity of wood as raw material for the EU market, lack of workforce, and the unclear impact of the Green Deal on the sector paired with the feeling of not being heard by national and European policymakers. Participants expressed concern about not knowing and understanding the impact of the green transition on their sectors and their jobs. More information, training, and exchange for EFBWW affiliates is needed.

Heidelberg Materials Global Union Network Meeting

On 12 and 13 October, the Heidelberg Materials Global Union Network met in the IG BAU training centre close to Frankfurt. Around 20 participants from 9 different countries exchanged views on developments in their home countries. Slavica Uzelac, EFBWW Policy Officer, provided input on the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and the EU Emission Trading System (ETS). The transition of the industry towards carbon neutrality remains a challenge and time is pressing to speed up developments. The meeting was overshadowed by the long-lasting strike actions in France. Colleagues from the Calcia plant in Couvrot were present at the meeting and reported about their situation. Management has been ignoring requests to take up a social dialogue with workers' representatives for over a month now. So it is not surprising that central HR management declined participation in this meeting, which they normally join. Norbert Steinert, EWC chair of Heidelberg Materials, was worried by the French reports and announced to visit the sites in France immediately.

EFBWW expresses solidarity with strikers at Calcia Cement in France

EFBWW joined the social media campaign together with BWI and IndustriAll Global Union in support of striking colleagues of the Calcia cement plant (Heidelberg Materials). Since 6th September 2023, 110 employees at this plant have been on strike to demand better working conditions, a better social climate and social dialogue, more staff to cope with the work overload, and recognition of workers' efforts. For over a month, local management has refused to engage in a meaningful and constructive dialogue. Management decided to let the strike continue by importing clinker from France, Germany, Belgium and Norway. You can follow the colleagues on their social media accounts on [Facebook](#) and [X](#).

CRH EWC agreement review started

Recently, the CRH management has agreed to enter negotiations for a review of the current CRH European Works Council agreement. CRH is a provider of building materials solutions, employing around 75,800 people at more or less 3,160 operating locations in 29 countries. CRH has market leadership positions in both North America and Europe. Its current HQ is in Dublin, Ireland. EFBWW will be involved in the negotiation process, by means of its nominated Belgian and Irish coordinators, by assisting and supporting them during the review.

EFBWW at ELA Posting 360 Forum in Bratislava

On 23rd October, the EFBWW attended the ELA Posting 360 Forum in Bratislava. This forum served as a platform for discussing the issue of temporary agency workers in the context of posting in Europe.



EFBWW sees this as a pressing concern, as it reflects a growing exploitative business model in Europe's construction sector, pushing these workers into precarious conditions and dependent on the employer. Jonathan Cornah, policy officer EFBWW, highlighted the challenges faced by these workers, noting the vulnerability of third-country nationals in particular, as raised by EFBWW affiliates. As also highlighted and confirmed by the ETUC it's clear

that the use of temporary agency workers needs urgent attention across Europe.

ELA Stakeholder Group

On 18 October, the ELA Stakeholder Group - composed of representatives of the EU Member States and the social partners - met in Brussels to discuss ongoing matters and activities in the remit of ELA. The main items on the agenda were the ELA campaign on construction, the preliminary outcome of the concerted and joint

inspections (CJI) that were carried out, the campaign to promote EURES in view of its 30 years' existence and the upcoming review of the ELA mandate. Tom Deleu, EFBWW's General Secretary, requested that the EURES campaign should have a clear sectoral dimension. Today EURES is very much underused in the construction sector, but it could play a key role in securing better and direct jobs in times of labour shortages.

Projects

Kick-off of the Cement Skills 2030 project



On 6 October, the steering committee of the project met for the first time. In the next two years, the steering committee will exchange regularly on the project's progress and will actively support the project activities. The core of the project is a research study to develop different scenarios for skills and employment that will be needed for the industrial change of the cement sector, followed by policy recommendations jointly adopted and agreed between EFBWW and CEMBUREAU. EFBWW will commission the study to an external research institute in November. The participants gave input for the first focus group workshop, which is planned for March 2023. This workshop will feed into the study and will provide expert input

from the sector to the research team. In a second and more profound stage, in-depth interviews will be carried out until the end of 2023. The project will end with a final conference in spring 2024.

Scaffolding work in Europe

The EFBWW project on scaffolding work is now halfway. Six country reports have been finalized, covering differing traditions of scaffolding work and various conditions in terms of training labour market conditions and social dialogue. The reports cover Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Poland. Based on the acquired knowledge and description of problems in terms of working conditions, training, work organisation and social dialogue, policy recommendations will be drafted and discussed in four consecutive workshops. The first workshop will deal with OSH. The event is scheduled for 22 November. The three further workshops will take place in 2024.

SIDE-CIC Project's First Steering Group

The EFBWW and FIEC have jointly started a project on social ID cards in the construction sector. Named SIDE-CIC, the project's steering group met for the first time this October in Brussels. This meeting saw discussions on the project which aims to develop the interconnectivity of social ID cards in the construction sector. Affiliates from EFBWW and FIEC shared insights and mapped out future actions. AEIP will assist in coordinating the project and carry out the initial mapping of the current landscape of social ID cards in the EU construction sector. The next meeting will happen in Rome in February 2024, where the steering group will hear from experts and practitioners in the field and have the opportunity to learn about the development of the scheme in Italy and the development of the Commission's ESS-PASS project, which complements the SIDE-CIC project.

News from our affiliates

Belgium

Unions mobilised against the attempt to restrict the right to protest in Belgian criminal law.

The Belgian trade unions and several NGOs have been on the barricades to fight against the proposed legal restrictions to the right to protest as presented in the draft legislation by the Belgian Minister of Justice in spring 2023t.

According to the government this legislation is needed to ban violent protestors. However the proposed scope of this law is so broad that the articles concerned would make it possible to also crack down on trade union demonstrations.

CG-FGTB, CSC BIE and CGSLB are taking the lead in this fight to protect the fundamental freedom to take collective action. and will not stand down until the withdrawal of this bill which aims at curbing collective demands, and those of workers in particular.

Ireland

SIPTU condemns “poverty pensions” in Budget 2024

On different occasions, the Irish Government has committed to raising the contributory pension to 34 percent of average earnings (and to do so, pensions would have to increase by approximately €50 per week). However, budget 2024 made no progress in implementing the Government’s promise. Sadly, one in eight older people in Ireland suffer multiple deprivation experiences while a third are at risk of poverty. SIPTU, with other civil society groups, established a Pension Promise campaign to put pressure on the Government to keep its promise to link pensions with wages. This is part of SIPTU’s continuing

involvement in issues that impact older people, including our participation in the successful campaign to prevent a rise in the pension age (Stop67); and to end mandatory retirements by allowing employees to work until the pension age which was adopted by the Commission on Pensions and which is the subject of discussion in the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF) process.

Netherlands

Dutch CBA negotiations for construction and infrastructure started

The Dutch CBA for the construction sector will expire on 31 December this year. FNV Bouw and CNV Vakmensen prepared an exhaustive list of demands: a wage increase of 10 – 14 %, an automatic price compensation mechanism to be put in place on 1 January 2025; solid arrangements for administrative workers and other white-collar workers in the sector; safe workplaces for all (research has shown that also in construction discrimination, bullying, (sexual) harassment and (verbal) aggressiveness occurs); the obligation of the main contractor to inform all (migrant) workers in their own language of their rights and sectoral arrangements at the start of their work at a Dutch construction site. CNV Vakmensen and FNV Bouw declared that employers were not very keen on collaborating, and that they expect difficult negotiations ahead.

First strike ever in Dutch lumber yards

400 workers participated Tuesday 24 October in the first ever strike organised in the Dutch lumber yards sector. EFBWW stands in full solidarity with the workers in this sector.

Sweden

Unionen’s Congress 9-13 October 2023

During the congress Peter Hellberg, the former Unionen’s 1st vice-chairman, was elected as the new president. Victoria Kirchhoff was elected First Vice-President and Martin Johansson Second Vice-President. The Congress manifested its solidarity with the free trade unions in Belarus and their fight for democracy and fundamental trade union rights. The Congress condemned the criminalization of free and independent unions in Belarus, the imprisonment of trade union leaders and the confiscation of union assets. Finally, the Congress also approved a wage policy platform, a work environment policy platform and a new action program for the next four year congress period.

In a panel discussion Tom Deleu (EFBWW GS) invited Unionen to become more active within the EFBWW. Unionen, as one of the biggest white collar trade unions in Europe, has a lot of experience in organizing white collar workers. Experience that we would like to integrate in our organizing policies. White collar workers are a fast growing category of workers in our industry and traditionally they are less organised. Together with Unionen, we want to develop a targeted approach. To be continued.

Norway

News from Fellesforbundet Congress

Good news from the 9th national [Fellesforbundet](#) congress. Despite Covid, wars, energy crisis, staggering inflation and interest rates, the union could celebrate many victories in the last congress period. The

News from our affiliates

union is growing. It is clear, the way forward is through unity, organising and collective bargaining. Focus on the new legislation that bans agencies in construction. Only recently in place, the positive results of the new legislation are already visible. EFBWW congratulates Fellesforbundet with this important victory. For EFBWW and its affiliates, it is clear: to better protect workers and to fight labour crime, we must ban agencies in construction, all over Europe!

Germany



IG Metall elects a woman as its leader for the first time

In the week of 23 October, the 25th congress of IG Metall took place in Frankfurt, and with it, the election of the new board. The congress elected Christiane Benner with 96,4% as the first female president in its history. Christiane Benner insisted on the need for a strong and progressive industrial policy as the basis for a just transition towards an industrial future with quality jobs. And trade unions must be fully involved to shape these policies. The congress also took a very clear stand against the far right (AfD) and for democracy. Reminding that the far right goes against all of the trade union values. IG Metall is affiliated to the EFBWW for the furniture and wood processing industries. EFBWW congratulates the newly elected President and wishes her all the best in this new role!

IG BAU and IG Metall leave FSC Germany

FSC-Germany is a non-profit association for responsible forestry that, as a national organization, represents the interests of FSC-International. FSC stands for Forest Stewardship Council. Founded in 1997, FSC Germany is supported by environmental associations such as WWF and NABU, but also by representatives from business and unions such as IG Metall or IG BAU.

On 25 October, IG BAU and IG Metall sent out a press release announcing they are leaving FSC Germany. The FSC board has a total of seven members, two from each chamber and the chairman. In order to reach a solution, the three chambers (i.e. social chamber, the environmental and economic chamber) must vote by consensus. For two times now, the nomination of the previous long-standing board members who represented the Social Chamber has been blocked without any clarification.

Harald Schaum, IG BAU Vice Federal Chairman and responsible for forestry, cannot imagine that FSC-Germany will want to forego its second pillar in the future, which, in addition to ecological forest management, is socially just action. But *"One thing is clear: as long as IG BAU is no longer represented on the board, we are no longer a member of the FSC,"* says Schaum unequivocally. IG BAU was once even a founding member.

Brigitte Döth, industry coordinator at IG Metall, says: *"Sustainability also requires social standards for employees along the supply and production chains. A trustworthy label*

must be more than a superficial marketing label."

More info [here](#)

Italy



CGIL and FILLEA CGIL on the street against austerity policies

On 7 October, CGIL and Fillea CGIL demonstrated in Rome with over 15,000 people to demand better work and wages, to fight against precariousness, cascade subcontracting, the increase in fatal accidents at work, and to be able to retire more fairly. The demo was organised as a parallel event to the ETUC's mobilisation path "On the road for a fair deal for workers". More info [here](#).

Switzerland



Swiss Contractors' Wage Dispute Sparks Concern

In an alarming move, the Swiss Association of Contractors (SSE) has called for a wage freeze for construction workers despite rising living costs, housing expenses, and a shortage of skilled labor. With the construction industry booming and full order books, this stance is deemed "incomprehensible and dangerous." The absence of compensation for inflation could harm the industry and economy. The Swiss Association of Entrepreneurs' delegates must now step in to rectify this issue and bring the parties back to the negotiation table. The shortage of skilled workers is a growing concern, making wage adjustments vital for the industry's sustainability. [Learn more here](#).

In this section the EFBWW gives the possibility to its affiliates to share their stories.

If you have news or contributions, do not hesitate to contact ibuttu@efbww.eu.

Miscellaneous

Opportunity: ETUI training courses

The European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) is the independent research and training centre of the ETUC. The ETUI places its expertise – acquired in particular in the context of its links with universities, academic and expert networks – in the service of workers’ interests at European level and of the strengthening of the social dimension of the European Union. We would like to flag [ETUI’s trainings](#) covering a wide range of topics (green transition, health and safety, youth, etc.) related to the trade union movements.

Social economy: Council recommendations

On 9 October, EU ministers reached a political agreement on a first-ever recommendation on developing framework conditions for the social economy, with a view to promoting social inclusion and access to the labor market. In the Council, member states are recommended to take measures in order to acknowledge and support the role of the social economy in:

- easing access to the labour market, especially for vulnerable or underrepresented groups
- fostering social inclusion, by

providing accessible and high-quality social and care services

- stimulating skills development, including skills needed for the digital and green transitions
- promoting social innovation and sustainable economic development

According to the recommendation, improved access to markets and public procurement, efficient use of state aid rules and an enabling taxation framework are equally crucial for the development of the social economy.

EFBWW Meeting schedule 2023

9 November 2023 (full day)	Executive Committee	Brussels, Belgium (EESC)
14-15 November 2023	DESOCO II Thematic meeting and Sectoral Social Dialogue Construction	Warsaw, Poland
7 December 2023	RESILIENTWOOD project: Workshop 1 - "Gender balance: analysis of the status quo and possible actions"	Brussels, Belgium
12-14 December 2023	EFBWW General Assembly	Helsinki, Finland