

# EFBWW NEWSLETTER

This is a special edition of the EFBWW Newsletter.

Given the circumstances, a large part of this Newsletter is dedicated to COVID-19, with news about the EFBWW political positions and actions and updates from our affiliates.

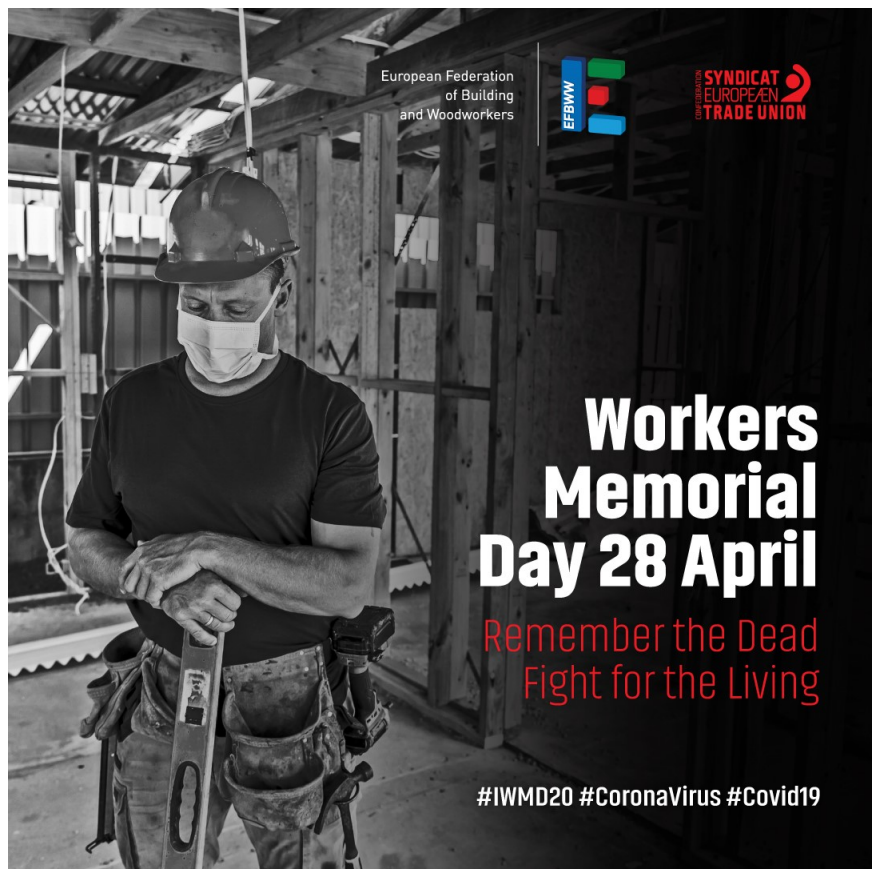
## EFBWW launches special webpage on COVID-19

Covid-19 has turned into a global health and economic crisis. To assist its affiliates, the EFBWW decided to launch a special webpage dedicated to COVID-19. The webpage went online on 26 March. On the COVID-19 webpage, affiliates can find an overview of agreements reached and responses implemented in different countries. The overview, made on the basis of information received by affiliates, is updated on a regular basis.

[More info](#)

## EFBWW marks the International Workers Memorial Day

In light of the International Workers Memorial Day (IWMD), ETUC and EFBWW made a [joint statement](#) on the impact of COVID-19 on workers and on society. It is essential to remember the dead and fight for the

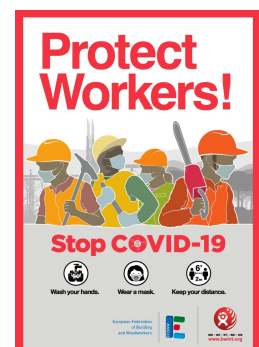


living and to assure health and safety laws and agreements for all workers. The EFBWW has also joined forces with BWI and launched a [joint call for action](#). This year the theme of the campaign "Protect Workers! Stop COVID-19". The message is urgent in a time when European institutions and many countries are preparing their exit strategies to resume economic activity in our industries. EFBWW and BWI insist that

after this crisis we cannot go back to business as usual and that health and safety should always be the first priority.

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## EFBWW COVID-19 statement

The debate on the (post) COVID-19 crisis measures and post-Corona society has started. The ETUC has requested input from the ETUFs for the political discussion. Measures from short-term work schemes to new health and safety rules to investment decisions as a part of the economic recovery plans, deeply affect the EFBWW sectors. We need to make sure that the voices of our members are heard in the European debate. It is time for a shift towards a more social internal market. It is time for a just transition towards a worker and climate friendly EU. The EFBWW Executive Committee will discuss and amend the draft statement on COVID-19 at its online meeting on 26th May.

## EFBWW issues joint statements with employer federations in its industries on COVID-19

The EFBWW agreed on joint statements with the sectoral employers' federations in the [construction](#) (FIEC) and in the [woodworking and furniture industries](#) (CEI-Bois, UEA, Efic, EPF and EOS) on the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its sanitary, social and economic consequences. We consider that these important documents can contribute to the current and future discussions, stressing the importance of social dialogue at European and national level.

### Construction industry



The joint recommendations with FIEC prioritize the health, safety and hygienic conditions of the construction workers, while taking in account workers' health and safety, proposals to absorb the negative social and economic consequences of this COVID-19 crisis and its possibly longer-term impact, the necessity to negotiate arrangements between workers' representatives and employers' representatives at national and company level and exit measures that respect the highest standards of occupational safety and health. The document also contains some policy recommendations.

### Woodworking and Furniture Industries



The recognized European Social Partner organisations for the woodworking and for the furniture sectors, together with the employer organisations from the panel and

the sawmill sector jointly agreed on proposals on how to protect workers at work and how to support our sectors during the crisis and how to support their recovery.

The joint statement is directed to both policy makers and social partners at national and company level.



## ETUC launches COVID-19 Watch

The ETUC launched a series of COVID-19 Watch briefing notes. They focus on developments providing information on the impacts of COVID-19 on labour markets, workers and citizens across Europe. These Briefing Notes are produced by the ETUC with the support of the ETUI and ETUC affiliated organisations. The briefings will be updated periodically as new measures are being announced and implemented. In these briefings, workers and citizens can find the measures implemented by the Governments in several EU countries on many topics, such as tax reliefs, national measures to avoid lay-offs and to support businesses, frontier workers, among other subjects.

[More info](#)



## ETUC warns about undemocratic legislation in Hungary

ETUC expressed its concerns about the measures adopted in Hungary to mitigate the economic consequences from the spread of COVID-19. The law adopted on 30 of March gives the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán the opportunity to extend the state of emergency for an indefinite period of time, without requiring the consent of Parliament, and suspended certain laws to guarantee "public health, the safety of citizens and the economy". ETUC sent two letters: one to the Hungarian Prime Minister and another one to European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, about the consequences of this legislation. ETUC warned Ursula von der Leyen that this legislation creates the first non-democratic country in the EU. Asked for a reaction from our Hungarian affiliate EFEDOSZSZ, Gyula Pallagi stated that "for trade unions the biggest problem is the absolute neglect of social dialogue by the government. Referring to the emergency the government has changed the labour law, undermining existing collective agreements while even the employers deny the necessities of such actions".

[More info](#)

## ETUF recommendations for EWCs during the COVID-19 crisis

The sectoral European Trade Union Federations (ETUFs) have jointly drafted practical recommendations on "COVID-19 - Anticipating and managing the impact in multinational companies". They address coordinators and worker representatives in SNBs, EWCs and SEs. Worker involvement through information, consultation and participation in company decision-making is more important than ever to deal with the health and safety and the social and economic consequences of the crisis. A second recommendation for worker representatives gives advice on how to deal with negotiations to set up (or to renew) an EWC agreement during the COVID-19 crisis. You can download them from the [EFBWW website](#).

## COVID-19 and its gender effects

Many workers on the frontline against COVID-19 are female. 70% of health workers and social workers are women. In addition, workers of the supermarkets, elderly care, cleaning, etc. are mainly women. The schools are closed and our children are at home. In many cases, women have to take

care of them. At the same time, reports show that the situation of confinement leads to a dramatic increase of domestic violence in many countries. For many women and children, the home is not a safe place. The ETUC asks that European institutions and national governments recognize the gender impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore the ETUC and EFBWW are extremely worried that the proposed European initiative to close



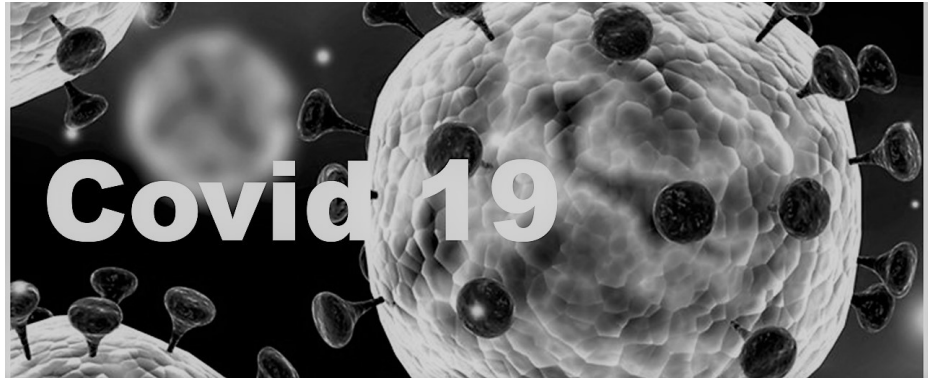
the gender pay gap would be put on hold. This would be a wrong signal. In a reaction to the European Commission, Esther Lynch (ETUC) made it clear that *"equal pay is a requirement of the EU Treaty; it is not a fair weather option. There is a strong interconnection between a need to create a new normal after Covid-19 and guaranteeing equal and fair pay. Throughout the EU, key workers, in sectors where women predominantly work, are unfairly underpaid and undervalued."*



## COVID-19 news from our affiliates

(You can find a selection in this Newsletter. For a more complete overview see [Corona-webpage](#))

*The work of trade unions is vital in this crisis. The EFBWW contacted several affiliates about the state of play in their countries, about the main difficulties the workers and business are facing, the measures implemented in each Member State and the central claims and concerns of the trade unions.*



### BELGIUM



#### Social partners reach an agreement on construction in Belgium

On 16th of April, after long and hard negotiations, the social partners in the construction industry reached an agreement on safe working conditions in the construction industry. It provides that the rules on social distancing are and remain a priority. In addition, the workers will have the possibility of refusing the employer's request when work is to be carried out in a building in which one or more cases of coronavirus have been detected or if the worker can demonstrate by medical certificate that he belongs to one of the risk groups. Non-urgent interventions and activities must still be allowed to be carried out, provided that the rules of social distancing are respected. If this is not the case, the work may be suspended. Employers and workers will be able to

report problem situations to a point of contact at Constructiv, the paritarian organisation of the social partners in the construction industry. Negotiations about a sectoral agreement, that would allow a collective restart of the construction industry on 4 May, are still ongoing (situation as at 28 April). Some of the remaining issues are the organization of safe transport of workers to sites, the responsibility of employers (or his representative) on site and how to protect the health and safety of posted workers.

### FINLAND



#### There will be delays in projects warns Rakennusliitto

In Finland, and according to the Finnish trade union Rakennusliitto, work continues normally despite the restrictions and at this moment the effects of the crisis are still not significant. Most companies are not lacking materials nor workforce.

Nevertheless, the trade union warns that there will be delays of planned projects, production will slow down, and work capital and funding will decrease. In spite the fact that temporary changes in Finnish law have been made concerning layoff procedures and unemployment, there is an understanding about avoiding temporary lay-offs and the employers see the importance of holding on to professional workforce.

### NETHERLANDS



#### Trade unions put Helpdesk into action

In the Netherlands, a protocol has been in force since March, which was updated in April. Part of this protocol is a Corona Helpdesk to which employers and employees can call and mail. A website was created where an extensive list of Q&A can be found, but also, for example, the protocol explained to the daily schedule of professionals. The infor-

mation is available in multiple languages. The trade unions also inform people through their websites, especially with regard to questions of a legal nature: about childcare, leave and salary. As in other countries, the collective bargaining negotiations were suspended. There are many schemes for companies from the government, the most important of which is the Noodmaatregeling voor overbrugging voor behoud van werkgelegenheid (NOW). This ensures that employers with a substantial loss of turnover can be reimbursed 90% of their wages for a period of three months. In addition, there is an additional 30% compensation for employers' costs.

## GERMANY



### IG BAU pressures employer organisations for safety measures

In Germany, due to the Corona-crisis the ongoing collective bargaining rounds have been interrupted. IG BAU is focusing on ensuring that members can work safely without risk and that those who face reduction of working time or job losses are protected.

IG BAU has negotiated with the employers' organizations hygienic standards to ensure a high protective level at work and asks the public entities to continue with the procurement of construction services. (<https://igbau.de/Die-Gesundheit-steht-an-oberster-Stelle.html>).

IG BAU provides information to its members – also in different foreign languages – about the consequences of the Corona-crisis at the work-



place and their rights. IG BAU is advocating for an increase of the short time work compensation so that not only companies, but also workers benefit from the governmental programs in place.

### IG Metall: The burden of the crisis will be borne by workers

The effects of COVID-19 in the wood and furniture industry in Germany are very different in the sub-sectors. Temporary production shutdowns have been limited. In March and April, in a lot of companies, the working time accounts have been reduced and almost the full monthly income was paid. However, with the short-time work and the government-funded short-time allowance, dismissals could be avoided until now. How high the financial losses for the employees are going to be, will depend on the length of this crisis. Since Monday 20th April

2020, smaller shops and furniture stores in parts of Germany are allowed to reopen, which gives hope for the future. Nevertheless, IG

Metall is concerned about the future and cautions that the burden of the crisis will ultimately be borne by our colleagues: not only with loss of income, but

also with more difficult conditions - at work or privately.

## DENMARK



### Migrant workers coming to Denmark without quarantine

Bat Kartellet alerts that there are many new unemployed, and many apprentices are losing their "practice" in the dual vocational training system. The Danish trade union signals that this will be a huge problem for the amount of future skilled labour, which the country will be needing. The trade union is making efforts to keep apprentices in work.

Bat Kartellet warns that there have been incidents where members have been afraid of being exposed to the virus. Especially with migrant workers who are coming to Denmark and start working from day 1, whereas a Danish worker, who

comes home from abroad/holiday must be in quarantine for two weeks. The problem is not solved and Bat Kartellet assures that it is working politically to keep this fear away from all members. The Danish trade union states that much of their lobbying is concentrated on how to keep the economy going and how to secure the future.

## HUNGARY



### ÉFÉDOSZSZ worried about economic slowdown

In Hungary the construction sector has not stopped because of the Corona virus. Working sites are still open, cement plants and brick factories kept on producing and measures have been taken to mitigate the danger of contamination. Éfédoszsz says that, even though the number of infected and deceased people in Hungary is not as dramatic as in other countries, the economic effects are palpable. The trade union states that the intensity of the preparation of new projects is reducing and more and more projects are stopping. Logistics are becoming a problem, procurement of raw materials is slowing down and becoming more expensive. More and more subcontractors are suspending their work, especially in Budapest, as fewer people are traveling from the countryside due to the spread of the epidemic. The migrant workers

left immediately when the border closure was announced, which deepens the problems caused by the lack of qualified workers. There is also a fear that the number of state and municipal contracts will decline dramatically. Éfédoszsz stresses that economic recovery measures are needed and that the negotiations with the Government have begun.

## FRANCE



### French trade unions concerned about return-to-work measures

Since 17 March, companies in the construction sector have ceased their activities. Only urgent and essential repair work was still allowed. Many workers have been put on temporary partial unemployment. Recently, companies have been slowly but gradually resuming their activities. This has to be done within a strict regulatory framework negotiated by trade unions, employers' federations and the Government. The rules are written in a guide. The measures to be followed have been collected in guides, negotiated at the level of each branch. CFDT Construction took part in the negotiations for the various health and safety recommendation guides for the continuity of construction activity and insists that the rules are very clear and very strict. The COVID-19 pandemic has, according to

CFDT Construction, also had another effect. The CFDT notes that social dialogue has again been brought to the forefront in many companies. This is a very interesting development according to the CFDT. Trade union representatives play an active role in finding solutions at company level to ensure income protection for workers in temporary partial unemployment and to guarantee safe and healthy working conditions.

For FNSCBA CGT, the French government is making every effort to speed up the return to work. The FNSCBA CGT therefore refused to accept the guide and believes that only vital professions should be allowed to work for the time being. And the only vital professions are those that make it possible to fight the pandemic and ensure the essential and urgent needs of the population and the nation. For FNSCBA CGT, it is clear that all other activities cannot be considered essential. The construction trades are already affected by 1 death per working day and one serious accident every 5 minutes. For FNSCBA CGT, it would be irresponsible to overload hospitals or to remove protective equipment from care personnel and patients.

## UK



### Unite criticizes the British government for weak guidance on safety conditions

Unite has been working to ensure that workers have been fully protected both financially and physically during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unite was a key player in convincing the government to develop the Job Retention Scheme (JRS) that funds companies to 'furlough' workers at 80% of their pay to save jobs. Yet as over half of construction

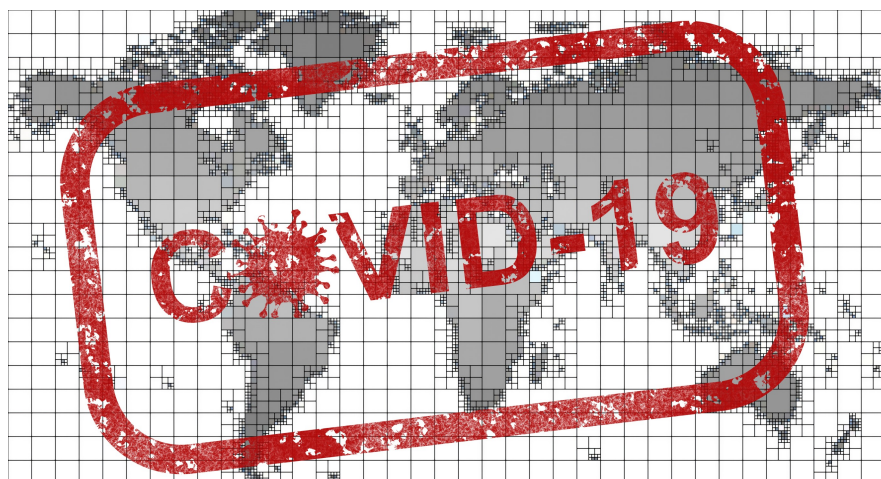
The union considers that its task has been made harder by defective and weak guidance circulated on behalf of government which allows construction workers to "work for up to 15 minutes less than two meters apart". Unite has written to the government calling for this guidance to be withdrawn and has also launched a hotline and an extensive social media campaign to ensure that workers worried about their health and safety can inform Unite with a promise that it will then act on their concerns.

situation changed a few days after: further restrictions were announced on 28th March which saw all sites closed apart from those deemed essential in the struggle to curtail the virus.

Workers laid off were either provided with a COVID-19 payment given to all workers in this situation or a Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme applied for by the Company - which could be supplemented by companies.

Negotiations between SIPTU and major companies resulted in several agreeing to pay a top up payment to members.

These included Kilsaran International, Roadstone, O'Neill & Brennan, and Wall's. Changes have been made with regard to the Safe Pass, an obligatory license required to work on sites, which means the pass will not expire throughout the COVID-19 emergency period. This will ensure that workers will not be prevented from conducting an orderly return to work for builders once a protocol has been established.



workers are officially self-employed the JRS did not cover them so Unite also successfully lobbied the government to introduce a scheme for the self-employed which will see them paid a grant of up to £2,500 a month during the furlough period, now extended to the end of June. With regards to site safety, Unite has argued that if sites cannot operate social distancing for all workers, the authorities should ensure sites close.

## IRELAND



### SIPTU negotiated payments with employers

In Ireland, while all non-essential services were closed from the 22nd March when the Government announced new restrictions to halt the spread of the coronavirus, the operation of most construction sites continued as the industry was deemed an essential sector. However, the

## LUXEMBOURG



### OGBL Bâtiment monitors compliance with safety rules on construction sites

After the Government decided to suspend all building activities in Luxembourg on 20th March, almost all



companies stopped working. Around 35,000 workers in these sectors benefited from short-time working, which guarantees them 80% of their normal salary. This amount is paid by the State. In the meantime, the construction sites have reopened as from 20 April 2020. The social partners discussed the health and safety standards with the Minister of Labour, which were then incorporated into a government regulation. The trade unions and employers have also signed an agreement on the rules for the transport of personnel, in order to limit the number of passengers in company vehicles. There have been no derogations from collective agreements due to covid-19. OGBL is currently carrying out surveillance work on the building sites with staff delegates in order to remind workers on the importance of strictly respecting all health rules.

## ITALY

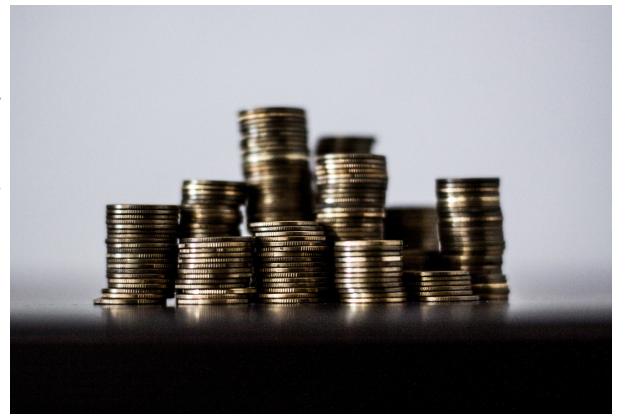


### Italian unions sign protocol to resume building activities in a safe way

Building sites in the Lombardy Region in the north of Italy, have been suspended since 7 March, except for urgent and necessary activities such

as building new structures for Covid-19 needs. In all the other Italian regions they continued to operate, as the building sector, according to the Ateco Code, is considered among the essential activities not to be suspended. Nevertheless, it was very difficult to comply on construction sites with some provisions issued by the government such as the social distancing measures. At the strong request of the Italian trade unions and after many tripartite discussions, the Italian government decided that building sites in Italy had to be temporarily suspended from 25 March up to 13 April. Only construction activities related to COVID-19 needs and those building sites that could prove that all the provisions for workers' health and safety could be respected, were allowed to continue. The suspension was afterwards prolonged up to 3 May. With the last Decree of April, public building sites e.g. for the construction of schools, hospitals, and prisons- could resume their activities from April 27, while private building sites will re-start only from 4 May. Also in the wood, forestry, furniture and in the cement and

construction material industries activities were reduced considerably or temporarily suspended. These industries will also resume activities on 4 May. The Italian trade unions signed a protocol last week with all the counterparts for a safe resumption of work. All the health and safety provisions need to be respected, i.e. social distancing measures, respiratory masks need to be available, etc...



Special measures have been taken to support income and salary of workers. These measures also apply for temporary and atypical workers. The prohibition to fire workers for 60 days from the entry into force of the Decree and suspension of the procedures for collective redundancies started already before the Covid-19 crisis. There is also a possibility to have extraordinary parental leave for a total of 15 days, available alternatively between the two parents with children up to 12 years old or a voucher of € 600,00 for babysitting.

**This is only a limited overview of contributions from affiliates. In a next edition of the Newsletter, we will give the possibility to other affiliates to share their stories. If you have news or contributions, do not hesitate to contact [pcravina@efbww.eu](mailto:pcravina@efbww.eu).**



## News from the EFBWW

### EFBWW now in a social platform near you

The General Assembly in Vienna decided that the EFBWW should adopt a more proactive communication strategy. This is even more vital in the COVID-19 crisis and in the era of “fake news”. The EFBWW wants to reach out and be closer to its affiliates. Paula Cravina de Sousa has started her function as EFBWW Communication Officer on 1st of April. Communicating successfully also means being in all major social platforms, so now you can find EFBWW via: [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). Our social media platforms will be gradually developed and regularly updated from now on. Be sure to have a look and like our pages. The goal is to make our voice sound louder, its importance more visible and its influence more powerful.

### Minimum wages: EU Commission's 2nd phase consultation of the social partners

On 10th June (tbc), the European Commission will present its proposal for a possible initiative on minimum wages in the EU. This will start the 2nd phase of the European social partner consultation. In order for the EFBWW to make our sectoral voice heard in the ETUC reply towards the Commission, we will have

to adhere to a very strict timeline. The EFBWW Executive Committee will discuss our amendments to the ETUC draft reply and, in a second step, the vote on the final ETUC reply. The basis for our internal EFBWW discussion on this matter is the [resolution](#) on “Equal pay for equal work in EU countries” that was adopted at the General Assembly in Vienna and our [position paper](#) on collective bargaining and minimum wages. As during the 1st phase consultation, the EFBWW will strive for a common European trade union position based on consensus.

### EFBWW is preparing the European Green Deal position

The EFBWW Secretariat is preparing a common European Green Deal position paper including all our industries: building, wood, furniture, forestry and building materials. The European Green Deal position paper will be published in a form of a brochure. Additionally, a 2-3 pages leaflet will be prepared. The leaflet will summarise the EGD brochure and will include our main points of action. Apart from the main European Green Deal brochure and leaflet,

we plan also to develop specific position papers concerning selected topics of importance, like EU Industrial Strategy, Circular Economy Action Plan, Renovation Wave, Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism etc.



Last month the European Commission issued communications on the EU Industrial Strategy and Circular Economy Action Plan. As part of our internal strategy in the coming months, we are planning to launch consultation processes and discussions with our members on the above-mentioned topics.

## End of the EFBWW-FIEC-AEIP project “Towards A New start of Industrial relations in Construction in Central and Eastern European Countries” (TANSIRC)

In 2019, the European social partners of the construction industry and the European Association for Paritarian Institution launched a two year project, aimed to build and strengthen the national systems of industrial relations in the construction industry in the Central and East European Countries. The project was managed by the EFBWW. Now, we should assess what has been achieved and how to proceed.

For the first time, we have a clear picture of the Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the national models of industrial relations in the construction industry in Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Although each country is rather unique and have a specific political, legal and administrative framework, there are several common challenges. Primarily all organisations, whether employers or trade union organisations, have difficulties in attracting and retaining active members. Attracting young members remains difficult. In several Central and East-European countries, the existing legal framework provides a

limited autonomy for the social partners to regulate their own labour market. In particular, a proper enforcement of the existing legal and conventional rules, remains difficult. Overall, we also see that many social partners of the construction industry share common political challenges. In a nutshell we can list: ensuring safe and healthy working conditions, properly regulating the access to the construction labour market (public procurement), upgrading social standards, tackling unlawful forms of work and building a sustainable framework for the system of industrial relations based on paritarianism.

As the partners of this project have committed themselves to a long-term engagement, a commitment was made to ensure a continuation of the project for the period 2021-2022. This time the European Employers Federation of the construction industry (FIEC) will take the lead.

## OSE and ETUI publish anniversary edition - Social policy in the European Union 1999-2019

In 1999 the European Social Observatory (OSE) and the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) started publishing the study - Social policy in the EU: state of play. The goal was to contribute to the debate on important developments in EU social

policymaking. This year, OSE and ETUI published an anniversary edition – Social policy in the European Union 1999-2019: the long and winding road. The book looks back at the main developments in EU social policymaking over the past two decades.



This edition analyses the twists and turns of a social policy paradigm permanently overshadowed by financial considerations. Some of the key questions addressed include: what was the place of the social dimension during the financial and economic crisis? Who has driven, and who has braked, EU social policymaking? What are the next steps in the further implementation of the EU's social dimension, especially in the context of the European Pillar of Social Rights? Despite many

optimistic statements by the EU leaders, social policy remains a 'nice to have' - if and when the economic and political context allows for it – not a 'must have'.

[More info](#)

### European Vocational Skills Week

The European Vocational Skills Week is an annual event during which local, regional or national organisations showcase the best of Vocational Education and Training.

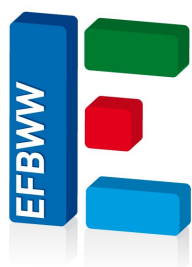
This initiative was created in 2016 by the European Commission to present the visible achievements of European cooperation in VET. The European Parliament has also asked the European Commission to strengthen its work on raising awareness of the benefits of quality VET. Now, the event has become an exchange platform for VET stakeholders all around Europe and beyond. Its next edition will take place in Berlin from 09-13 November

2020. As soon as you know your plans for this year VET activities, register them under the European Vocational Skills Week 2020. [Registrations](#) are now open.

Additionally, the European Commission asks for contribution to complete a [short survey](#) to share views on the past European Vocational Skills Weeks (2016-2019).

### EFBWW Meeting schedule until 30 June – Corona update

Date	Meeting	Status
27 April	Auditing Committee	Postponed
27-28 April	Social dialogue seminar on OH&S	Postponed
4 May	Standing Committee Building	Videoconference
5 May	EFBWW Women's network	Videoconference
12 May	Cross-sectoral Strategic Group on MW	Postponed
13 May	EFBWW EWC Coordinators Group	Videoconference
18 May	Social dialogue Wood - plenary meeting	Videoconference
19 May	Social dialogue Furniture - plenary meeting	Videoconference
26 May	Executive Committee	Videoconference
28 May	Social dialogue FIEC -WP Employment	Videoconference
June	Safety and Health Open expert meeting	Postponed
12 June	BWI European Regional Women's Committee and EFBWW Women's Network	Postponed
25 June	Supply chain project steering group	Videoconference



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