



Another case of severe exploitation of migrant construction workers: is the EU becoming the new Qatar?

On 26 July, Belgian press reported about a new and striking case of exploitation of migrant workers in the port of Antwerp.

Belgian inspection services found 55 workers from the Philippines and Bangladesh on a construction site worth several billions euros. The workers were housed in terrible conditions and paid very low wages. Some of them only receiving 2 euro/hour.

They were working for a French-Italian consortium IREM-Ponticelli in a long chain of subcontracting with expired Hungarian work permits. The inspection services are treating the case as a case of human trafficking.

This story sadly sounds all too familiar. Posting and migration have long since become a lucrative business model to provide cheap workers. Only the nationality of the exploited workers changes.

EFBWW affiliates report regularly about rapidly increasing numbers of third country national workers in the construction industry. First workers came from Moldova, Ukraine and the Balkans, but now more and more workers come from Vietnam, Nepal, India and Bangladesh.

On 2 June 2021, the EFBWW and BWI organised a joint webinar warning about "the EU becoming the new Qatar".

Workers enter the EU with (or without) a valid work permit, to be posted in a fake way to other EU member states. In many cases, these workers are contracted by illegal intermediaries. Not only are they receiving very low wages, but they are also mostly not covered by any social protection.

Before the Summer break, the EFBWW launched its subcontracting campaign calling for:

- direct jobs
- limited subcontracting in construction
- full joint and several liability
- ban intermediaries in the context of posting
- full equal treatment of all workers

In the next months, the EFBWW and its affiliates will develop several activities to highlight the concerns and to propose remedies.

Click [HERE](#) for more information about the subcontracting campaign.