

EWC guide on demographic change

How to improve
INFORMATION and
CONSULTATION in EWCs in the
building, building materials,
cement and woodworking
industry.



European Federation
of Building
and Woodworkers



Brussels, 2020

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XXX

PHOTOS: goodluz – stock.adobe.com (cover), iStock.com/m-gucci [p. 8], iStock.com/lovro77 [p. 10]



Project carried out with the financial support of the European Commission.

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Know the issues at stake

THE AGEING OF THE WORKFORCE concerns both the construction and woodworking industry. In the construction and building materials sectors in the EU, the share of adults aged 25 to 49 declined from 65.3% in 2008 to 61.8% in 2015. In the same period, the proportion of workers aged 50 to 64 increased from 22.2% to 28%. Moreover, while young workers aged 15 to 24 decreased from 11% in 2008 to 7.8% in 2015, workers aged 65 or over grew by 0.9 percentage points¹.

In the woodworking and furniture sectors, the proportion of employees between 25 and 39 years old fell from 45% in 2005 to 38% in 2014. The share of the workforce older than 55 increased from 9% in 2005 to 15% in 2014².

Reasons behind these trends include a reconfiguration of the age structure following the economic downturn, generational effects, and the lack of attractiveness of the sectors for young workers.

THE SHARE OF WOMEN EMPLOYED IN THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR slightly increased from 15.1% to 16.5% between 2008 and 2015. Overall, the sectors are male dominated (83.5% in 2015). Countries with the highest share of women in their construction workforce in 2018 include Luxembourg (16.4%), Germany (13.8%),

Austria (13.2%) and the UK (12.4%), while the lowest proportions are found in Greece (6%), Ireland (5.5%) and Romania (6.4%).³ Women are largely concentrated in administrative, technical and secretarial functions⁴.

The share of women in the European wood industries decreased from 20.5% to 19.8% between 2009 and 2018, reinforcing a male prevalence in the sector⁵.

Obstacles to gender inclusiveness have been mainly attributed to recruitment practices and working and employment conditions.

The main challenges for social partners in the concerned sectors are:

- **HEALTHY AND ACTIVE AGEING**, from the adaptation of work organisation and practices to dealing with chronic diseases (i.e. cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes)⁶ and subsequent re-integration after longer absence;
- **RECRUITMENT OF WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**, which is still negatively impacted by the bad reputation of the sectors, often linked to their old-fashioned representation. Work in construction is often described as “dirty, difficult and dangerous”⁷.

¹ European Construction Sector Observatory of the European Commission (April 2017), *Improving the human capital basis*.

² CEI-bois, European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (2014), *Demographic changes in the woodworking industry*.

³ European Construction Sector Observatory of the European Commission (April 2017), *Improving the human capital basis*.

⁴ European Federation of Building and Woodworkers, European Construction Industry Federation (February 2019), *Inclusive vocational education and training for low energy constructions*, VET4LEC Final report.

⁵ Eurostat (for_emp_lfs).

⁶ World Health Organisation (2018), *Noncommunicable diseases*.

⁷ ILO (2001), *The construction industry in the twenty-first century: Its image, employment prospects and skill requirements*.



Perform targeted practices

Ageing and its effects in multinational companies are still scantily discussed within European Works Councils (EWCs). The employment situation and prospects are topics of information and consultation in 67% of the EWC agreements⁸, but the demographic composition of the workforce is often neglected. Non-discrimination and equal opportunities for workers, regardless of their sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, are mentioned in only 12% of the EWC agreements⁹. The impact of demographic change across European countries is quite homogeneous. Thus, the inclusion of young people and women in the concerned sectors and the designing and implementation of active ageing policies in workplaces should become thematic competences of EWCs.

For European Works Councils that want to initiate a dialogue with management in this field it may be useful to:

- ▶ include in the EWC agreements clauses that make demographic change-related aspects permanent issues on the agenda of EWC meetings.

▶ Information and consultation on demographic issues in EWC agreements

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES are subject to both information and consultation procedures.

The 2008 Peab EWC agreement includes equal opportunities and personnel policies as topics for information and consultation.

The 2017 Bonduelle (food sector) EWC agreement lists personnel and corporate social responsibility policies as topics for information

and consultation. This includes the ageing of the workforce, the inclusion of new talents, the integration of people with disabilities, diversity and equal opportunities. Moreover, the agreement establishes that a specific topic, within the broader themes of demography and non-discrimination, will be discussed during the plenary meeting in order to exchange best practices between employees from different countries.

▶ Questions to ask central management on demographic issues

A LIST OF ESSENTIAL INFORMATION that EWC members should receive concerning the employment situation and policies is provided by EFFAT¹⁰:

- Employment figures and comparison with past years (total, per country, per gender group, per age);
- Youth employment: What is the company ready to do to improve the involvement of young people? Are any policies in place?

- Gender equality: What are the company's policies in this respect?
- Chronic diseases: Is the company sensitive to the issue? Have there been cases of workers affected by chronic diseases? How have they been handled? Are any policies in place?

WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT:

- Number or percentage of young workers (below 29 years) employed in the company or group;
- Type of contract of young workers and type of occupation;
- Career opportunities for young workers in the company: annual number or percentage of young workers who experience a transition from a precarious position to a permanent one;
- How long are the internship programmes? Are they paid or not?
- Has the company or group adopted any youth employment initiative to create opportunities for young entrants and to boost the attractiveness of jobs? If not, why?
- Does any tutoring or mentoring procedure through intergenerational cooperation apply to young workers in their first job?
- During the last 12 months, how many young workers attended VET offered by the company or group? What was it about? How long?

AS REGARDS GENDER EQUALITY:

- What is the percentage of female employees in the company? What fluctuations has this percentage shown over the past two years?
- What is the percentage of female employees in managerial positions? What fluctuations has this percentage shown over the past two years?
- What is the percentage of female employees in top management positions (from GM upwards)? What fluctuations has this percentage shown over the past two years?
- At what age did women achieve managerial positions in the past two years, compared to men?
- What are the percentages of female trainees and female management trainees? What fluctuations has this percentage shown over the past two years?
- Does the company or group offer part-time jobs in Europe? If so, what percentage of women and men take up these offers?
- What are the percentages of women and men in managerial positions in HR?
- What is the company's policy on equal opportunities in Europe?

- Are there written rules or clearly defined action plans?
- Who is responsible for equal opportunities for women and men in Europe? What decision-making responsibilities does this person have?
- At which company/subsidiaries is there an equal opportunities officer?
- Does central management deal with items concerning equal opportunities of women and men on a regular basis?
- What in-house provisions are there in Europe to safeguard an optimal work-life balance? (Reference is made here to flexible working hours, company nurseries/kindergartens, discussions with mothers- and fathers-to-be, continuous training following maternity/paternity leave, as well as provisions that go beyond legal maternity arrangements, etc.);
- How much did the company invest in the ongoing employee training in Europe in the last two years? How many women and men participated in ongoing training programmes?
- What were the average annual earnings of female employees in Europe in the current and previous years? How did these earnings develop over the past two years?
- What mechanisms does the company use to secure equal pay for women and men performing comparable tasks? Are there clearly defined rules and regulations? If so, what are they?
- Does the company compile regular reports on these topics? If so, where and how often do they publish the reports?

⁸ European Trade Union Institute (2015), *European Works Councils and SE Works Councils in 2015*.

⁹ European Trade Union Institute (2015), *European Works Councils and SE Works Councils in 2015*.

¹⁰ European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (2016), *Enhancing EFFAT's role in European Works Councils and transnational companies*.



How to obtain an optimal work-life balance in the whole company? A case for the EWC?

ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT, EWC members can propose the development of a transnational campaign for sharing best practices between different local sites and alternance training for young people.

The British Woodworking Federation launched the “Wow I made that” campaign intended to provide information, advice and guidance to young people interested in a woodworking career.

The TinoSana Group (Italy) set up a didactic woodworking laboratory located inside the main plant to support vocational education and training students in their learning activities before starting the job.

FOR ELDERLY WORKERS, EWC members can propose the introduction via collective bargaining of special arrangements, such as more paid holidays, no compulsory overtime, no obligation to work in shifts, possibilities of reducing their working time until the retirement,

training courses and mentoring opportunities, as it has been agreed by Dutch and Belgian social partners¹¹.

FOR WOMEN RETURNING TO WORK AFTER MATERNITY LEAVE, EWC members can advance the idea to provide training both with a view to upgrade their skills and to take advantage of maternity-related competences for the development of the organisation.

Training opportunities, task adjustments and work-life balance arrangements (e.g. remote working, reduction of the working time, more paid leaves, etc.) should also be offered to workers affected by chronic diseases, who may need periodic treatments and specific care. Colleagues and line managers should be trained so that they can be open to the specific needs of employees and provide a suitable and inclusive environment for all.

► **include in the EWC agreements clauses on financial, technical and material resources for EWC members to deal with ageing and the inclusion of women and young people.**

FOR EFFECTIVE INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION, many EWC agreements include technical, material and financial resources available to the EWC.

EWC members should be notified of the agenda of ordinary meetings at least 30 days in advance, so that they can request for the inclusion of demography-related issues on the agenda.

WORKING GROUPS within the EWC can support the work of the plenary meetings regarding demographic change:

The Engie EWC agreement provides for temporary and four permanent working groups. They deal with strategy-related issues, thematic studies, labour relations (employment, training, mobility, equality, diversity and social reporting) and health and safety. They meet twice a year for two days, plus additional meetings. External stakeholders may be invited (e.g. employee representatives, competent professionals, representatives of ETUFs). Based on working group reports, the EWC decides on specific issues to be included in the agenda.

► **Proposals from EWC members on demographic issues**

► **How to get ready for EWC meetings**

¹¹ CEI-bois, European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (2014), *Demographic changes in the woodworking industry*.



EWCs can address active ageing or attracting more young people and women to the company in issue-specific joint declarations.

For European Works Councils that want to take the dialogue with management to the next level it may be useful to

- **extend the competences of European Works Council members to the signature of specific agreements and the launch of transnational projects.**

4% of the EWCs have the authority to activate projects and 3% have bargaining competences on transnational issues¹².

EWCs can address active ageing and the inclusion of young people and women in issue-specific joint declarations, rather than in the EWC founding agreements themselves.

WITH THE SIGNATURE OF A SPECIFIC AGREEMENT, EWCs can contribute to the launch and monitoring of transnational projects, encompassing targeted information and training activities as well as equal opportunities and work-life balance initiatives. These policies can be extended also to local companies' suppliers and subcontractors.

THE 2015 SODEXO EWC AGREEMENT ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OF OLDER WORKERS lists measures which Sodexo implemented in the meantime:

- A communication campaign;
- the collection of best practices;
- the implementation of the so-called "I-Gen" training;
- the definition of the "Inclusive Manager" role;
- the promotion of reciprocal mentoring;
- the development of intergenerational networks in different countries.

Every group company with more than 300 employees must draw up an action plan within 12 months, following a discussion with workers' representatives. The action plan must include interviews with the employees concerned, focusing on the tasks they perform, the level of satisfaction in the completion of their tasks, their skills and strengths and their career prospects. The EWC monitors the implementation of the agreement. A report is presented during the annual plenary meeting.

THE 2015 SUEZ ENVIRONNEMENT EWC AGREEMENT ON GENDER EQUALITY in the workplace foresees that all group companies

with over 150 employees must define an action plan for equal opportunities (in recruitment, career progression and training) and equal pay for women and men, better work-life balance and the prevention of sexual harassment. EWC training seminars held every four years discuss gender equality, diversity and the increased representation of women, including in trade union delegations. An Employment and Training Working Group within the EWC has the competence to:

- monitor the implementation of the agreement on the basis of a set of indicators listed in the Appendix of the agreement;
- convene at least one follow-up meeting per year (two meetings in the first year);
- and propose actions for improvement.

Suppliers and subcontractors must comply with the principles of gender equality. This provision is an effort for horizontal coordination along the whole value chain.

THE 2015 GROUPAMA DECLARATION ON QUALITY OF LIFE AT WORK signed by the EWC and management is structured along three axes:

- The prevention of discrimination;
- the promotion of diversity (including the integration of people with disabilities at work);
- and well-being at work.

The joint declaration is implemented by:

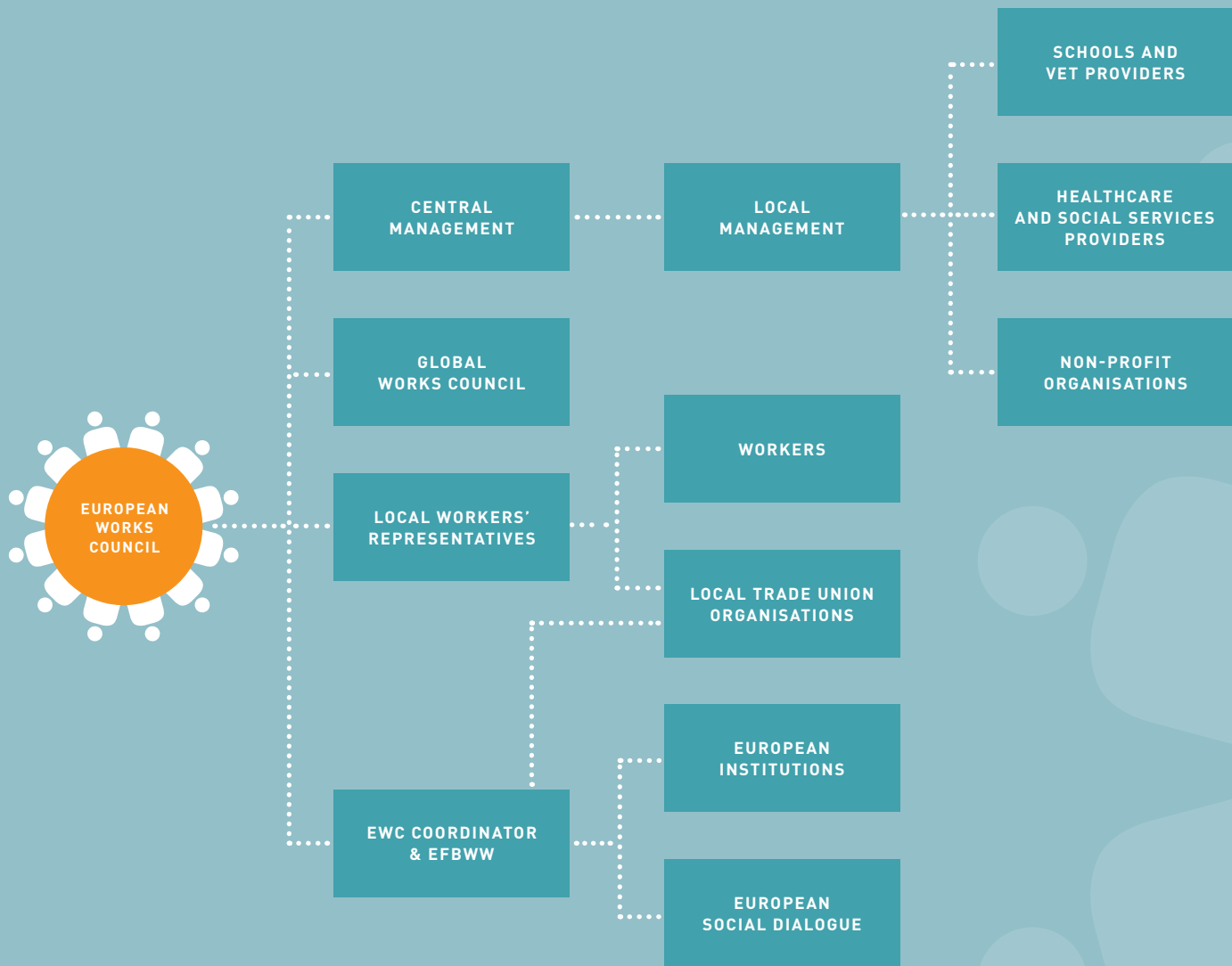
- Information and communication activities targeted to managers, workers' representatives and employees, awareness and training initiatives (including brochures, events and seminars, exchange of best practices, training modules, and crisis management following an accident or trauma);
- the introduction of work-life balance practices.

The application of the declaration is debated during the plenary meetings of the EWC.

► **EWC bargaining competences on demographic issues**

12 European Trade Union Institute (2015), *European Works Councils and SE Works Councils in 2015*.

The players



THE EUROPEAN WORKS COUNCIL (EWC) is a body bringing together employee representatives from the different European countries in which a multinational company or group of companies operates. Its aim is to ensure information and consultation for employees on the progress of the business and any significant decision at European level that could affect employment levels or working conditions. The right to establish an EWC applies to companies or groups of companies with at least 1000 employees in the EU and the other countries

of the European Economic Area (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein), and at the same time employing at least 150 workers in each of at least two Member States. A request by 100 employees from two countries or an initiative by the employer triggers the process of creating a new EWC, whose composition and functioning is adapted to the company's specific situation by an agreement signed by the management and workers' representatives of the different countries involved.

Within the EWC, an important role is attributed to the **EWC COORDINATOR**. In the building, building materials, cement and woodworking sector, the EWC coordinator is selected by the **EFBWW** Secretariat in consultation with the EFBWW affiliated organisations with members in the transnational company concerned; the EWC coordinator is usually an officer from an EFBWW trade union based in the country where central management operates. The EWC coordinator acts as a trade union expert for EWC representatives, by encouraging teamwork and positive internal communication, monitoring central management's actions in compliance with the EWC agreement and the law, providing consultancy to EWC representatives and participating in all EWC and Select Committee meetings. The EWC coordinator liaises between the EWC and the EFBWW Secretariat and affiliated organisations involved in the transnational company.

THE EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF BUILDING AND WOODWORKERS (EFBWW) is the European Workers' Industry Federation covering building, woodworking, forestry and allied industries and trades. It is a member of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). European trade union organisations represent workers at the European level. There are both cross-industry and sectoral European trade union organisations. The ETUC is the major trade union organisation at the European level, representing workers from different sectors.

EUROPEAN SOCIAL DIALOGUE is a forum for discussions, consultations, negotiations and joint actions involving organisations representing the two sides of industry (employers and workers) at EU level. It is either a tripartite dialogue involving the public authorities, or a bipartite dialogue between the European employers and trade union organisations. It takes place at cross-industry level and within sectoral social dialogue committees. For the construction sector, the organisations involved in European social dialogue are the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW), the European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC) and the European Builders Confederation (EBC). For the woodworking sector, the EFBWW's counterpart

is the European Confederation of woodworking industries (CEI-bois), the European Furniture Industries Federation (EFIC) and the European Panel Federation (EPF).

At the cross-industry level, the organisations involved in European social dialogue are the ETUC, the Confederation of European Business (BusinessEurope), the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public services (CEEP), the SMEunited, the Council of European Professional and Managerial Staff (Eurocadres) and the European Confederation of Executives and Managerial Staff (CEC).

CENTRAL MANAGEMENT is the management of the Community-scale undertaking or, in the case of a Community-scale group of undertakings, of the controlling undertaking. Its location can be either inside or outside the European Union.

THE GLOBAL WORKS COUNCIL is a group of employee representatives established in a transnational company on a voluntary basis, either through a transnational agreement or as a result of a decision by the employer. It may be created either as a separate body from the EWC, or as an enlargement of an existing supranational body, such as the EWC. There are no (international or European) legal standards governing the creation of Global Works Councils.

LOCAL WORKERS' REPRESENTATIVES encompass workers' representatives, works councils or union delegates from the different European establishments and/or undertakings of a multinational company or group of companies.

LOCAL MANAGEMENT is the management of the different European establishments and/or undertakings of a multinational company or group of companies.

WORKERS are the whole European workforce employed by a multinational company or group of companies.

LOCAL TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS

represent workers in the different European countries and territories where a multinational company or group of companies operates.

EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS set the legal and policy framework on various social areas also concerned by demographic change. Importantly, social partners are involved in a consultation procedure with the European Commission, prior to the submission of policy proposals on social topics. Social partners may limit themselves to providing the Commission with an opinion or recommendation on the subject in question or, per Article 155 TFEU, they can start negotiations on the matter themselves, thus undertaking the so-called “autonomous route” in an effort to reach agreements. Agreements concluded at the EU level shall be implemented either in accordance with the procedures and practices specific to management and labour and the Member States (i.e. via national affiliates of the EU-level social partners) or, in matters covered by Article 153 (i.e. social matters for which the EU has regulatory competence), at the joint request of the signatory parties, by a Council decision on a proposal from the Commission. Examples of the former approach are the Autonomous framework agreement on harassment and violence at work (2007) and the Autonomous framework agreement on active ageing and an inter-generational approach (2017). Examples of the latter way are the Framework agreement on parental leave (1995) and the Framework agreement on part-time work (1997).

SCHOOLS, UNIVERSITIES AND VET

(vocational education and training) providers organise education and training programmes for young people, sometimes in partnership with business. Importantly, VET is a key element of lifelong learning systems, which equip citizens with knowledge, skills and competences required in particular occupations and on the labour market. In relation to the topic of this guide, attention should be paid to initial VET systems that are usually carried out at upper secondary level before students begin their working life.

HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

PROVIDERS are devoted to the promotion of people’s health and social wellbeing, thanks to numerous publicly or privately provided services intended to aid particularly disadvantaged, distressed, or vulnerable persons or groups.

NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

are dedicated to a number of social causes, including non-discrimination and equal treatment between men and women, protection for elderly people and those affected by disability or chronic illness, and the empowerment of youngsters.

The rules of the game

A wide range of EU social policy affects demographic change, including non-discrimination and equal treatment, disability and chronic health problems, active ageing, youth employment, gender equality and work-life balance.

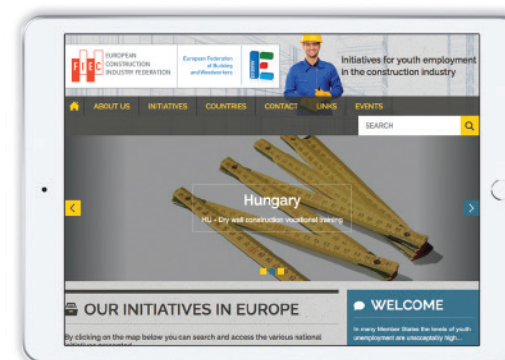
SOCIAL DIALOGUE

The EFBWW and FIEC published a [brochure of tutorship](#) in favour of the employment of young people and elderly workers in 2003.

In 2005 they made the [Joint statement of the European Construction Industry’s Social Partners on Young People](#).

In 2014, FIEC and EFBWW launched a [website](#) gathering national initiatives for youth employment in the construction industry.

At the cross-industry level, the European social partners reached a joint declaration in 2013 on a [Framework of actions on youth employment](#) (plus the [Annex](#) with national initiatives). Follow-up reports were published in [2014](#), [2015](#) and [2016](#).



An EFBWW and FIEC joint social partner project on youth employment in the European construction sector: www.construction-for-youth.eu/EN/

NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL TREATMENT

The [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) (TFEU) prohibits discrimination on grounds of nationality as well as other forms of discrimination, such as those based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

A number of EU directives on non-discrimination and equal treatment in matters of employment and occupation have been adopted:

- Directive [2000/78/EC](#) – the Equality Framework Directive – provides for a general framework for equal treatment of individuals in the EU, regardless of their religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. It applies to access to employment or occupation, access to all types and levels of vocational guidance and training, employment and working conditions (including pay and dismissals) and membership of organisations of employers or workers or any other organisation whose members carry out a particular profession.
- Directive [2006/54/EC](#) on equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation.
- Directive [2010/41/EU](#) on equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity.

Chapter 3 of the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#) (2012/C 326/02) is dedicated to equality and contains the following rights: equality before the law; non-discrimination; cultural, religious and linguistic diversity; equality between women and men; the rights of the child; the rights of the elderly; and integration of persons with disabilities.

DISABILITY AND CHRONIC HEALTH PROBLEMS

By 2020, one-fifth of the EU population is expected to have some form of disability¹³. According to the United Nations, the global trends in ageing population and the higher risk of disability in older people are likely to lead to further increases in the population affected by disability¹⁴. A quarter of the EU working population reports having a chronic disease and this share increased by 8% between 2010 and 2017. The upward trend is expected to continue with the ageing of the population, since workers over 50 are more than twice as likely to have a chronic illness as workers under 35¹⁵.

At the cross-industry level, the ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation) on the one hand and UNICE (now BusinessEurope) and CEEP (European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public services) on the other hand, signed the 1999 [Declaration of the social partners on the employment of people with disabilities](#).

Several EU laws and policies matter in this context:

- [Directive 89/391/EEC](#) – the OSH “Framework Directive” – requires employers not only to carry out risk assessments and to implement suitable prevention measures in order to eliminate risks and adapt work to workers, but also to protect sensitive groups against the dangers that specifically affect them and to organise workplaces by taking account of the needs of disabled workers.
- [Directive 2000/78/EC](#) – the Equality Framework Directive – provides for “reasonable accommodation” in employment for people with disabilities. Article 5 states: “employers shall take appropriate measures where needed in a particular case, to enable a person with a disability to have access to, participate in, or advance in employment, or to undergo training, unless such measures would impose a disproportionate burden

on the employer. This burden shall not be disproportionate when it is sufficiently remedied by measures existing within the framework of the disability policy of the Member State concerned”.

- The EU and all its Member States are party to the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UNCRPD\)](#), setting minimum standards for rights of people with disabilities.
- [The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020](#) was designed to implement the UN convention in the EU and to promote active inclusion and the full participation of people with disabilities, including in employment. Regarding employment, the objective is to significantly raise the share of persons with disabilities working in the open labour market.
- [The EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety 2014-2020](#) highlights the impact of demographic challenges faced by the EU and emphasises the role played by the adaptation of workplaces and work organisation (including working time, workplace accessibility and interventions targeted to older workers).
- [The European Pillar of Social Rights](#) stresses the right of persons with disabilities to have income support that ensures living in dignity, services that enable them to participate in the labour market and in society, and a work environment adapted to their needs (Principle 17).

ACTIVE AGEING

The European cross-sectoral social partners – BusinessEurope, CEEP, UEAPME (now SMEUnited) and ETUC – have concluded the [Autonomous framework agreement on active ageing and an inter-generational approach](#) in 2017. The Agreement is based on the

principle that ensuring active ageing and the inter-generational approach requires a shared commitment on the part of employers, workers and their representatives. It outlines tools and measures to be taken by social partners and/or HR managers in the context of national demographic and labour market realities, and in accordance with national practices and procedures specific to management and labour. Actions outlined: strategic assessments of workforce demography; health and safety measures at the workplace; skills and competence management; adaptable work organisation over the life course; and cooperation and inter-generational solidarity.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

The youth unemployment rate (referred to people aged 15-25) is still very high in the EU, with peaks of more than 30% in several countries (such as Greece, Spain and Italy). In 2018, more than 5.5 million young people (aged 15 to 34) were neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs). Levels of youth unemployment are partly influenced by economic conditions, but they may be also affected by structural challenges, such as unsatisfactory outcomes in education and training, segmentation of labour markets, and sometimes the low capacity of employment services to provide tailored services to young people, particularly to the most vulnerable¹⁶.

The EU has put in place several policy measures:

- The youth Guarantee (YG), based on the [Council Recommendation](#) of 2013, is a commitment by all Member States to ensure that all young people under 25 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship and traineeship, within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. YG is financed by the [Youth Employment Initiative \(YEI\)](#) and the European Social Fund.

- The Quality Framework for Traineeships, based on a [Council Recommendation](#) of 2014 recommends 22 quality elements for traineeships outside formal education which can be incorporated in national legislation or social partner agreements. They include: conclusion of a written traineeship agreement; learning and training objectives; working conditions applicable to trainees; rights and obligations; reasonable duration; proper recognition of traineeships; transparency requirements; cross-border traineeships; use of European Structural and Investment Funds; applying the Quality Framework for Traineeships.
- The [EC Communication “Investing in Europe’s Youth”](#) of 2016 is composed of three strands of action: better opportunities to access employment (via a strengthened support to YG); better opportunities through education and training (by supporting Member States in modernising apprenticeship systems); better opportunities for solidarity, learning mobility and participation (by increasing the budget allocated to the [Erasmus+](#) programme).
- The European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, based on a [Council Recommendation](#) of 2018, aims at increasing the employability and personal development of apprentices and a highly skilled and qualified workforce responsive to labour market needs. The Framework outlines 14 criteria in relation to working and learning conditions (i.e. written agreement, learning outcomes, pedagogical support, workplace component, social protection, work, health and safety conditions) as well as to framework conditions (i.e. regulatory framework, involvement of social partners, support for companies, career guidance and awareness raising, transparency).

¹³ See European Commission, www.ec.europa.eu [consulted on December 11, 2019].

¹⁴ See United Nations, www.un.org [consulted on December 11, 2019].

¹⁵ Vargas Llave, O. et al. (2019), *How to respond to chronic health problems in the workplace?*, Eurofound.

¹⁶ See European Commission, www.ec.europa.eu [consulted on December 13, 2019].

GENDER EQUALITY AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

With reference to gender equality and work-life balance, cross-industry European social partners concluded the following agreements and adopted the following actions:

- [Framework agreement on parental leave](#), on December 14, 1995 and [Framework agreement on parental leave \(revised\)](#), on June 18, 2009, which were implemented through respectively Directive 96/34/EC and Directive 2010/18/EU. The latter has been recently repealed by the Work-life Balance Directive.
- Framework agreement on part-time work, in 1997
- [Framework of actions on gender equality](#), on March 1, 2005
- [Autonomous framework agreement on harassment and violence at work](#), on April 26, 2007

Gender equality is enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, in the Treaties of the European Union and in several directives setting out minimum requirements to ensure equal opportunities between women and men. In addition, the European Commission issued the [Recommendation 2014/124/EU](#) on strengthening the principle of equal pay between men and women through transparency.

Principle 2 of the European Pillar of Social Rights (2017) states: "Equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men must be ensured and fostered in all areas, including regarding participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment and career progression. Women and men have the right to equal pay for work of equal value". With specific reference to work-life balance, Principle 9 states that parents and people with caring responsibilities have the right to suitable leave, flexible working arrangements and access to care services. Women and men shall have equal access to special leave, in order to fulfil their caring responsibilities and be encouraged to use them in a balanced way.

Legally binding EU Directives:

- [Directive 92/85/EEC](#) on safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding.
- [Directive 97/81/EC](#) implements the Framework agreement on part-time work concluded by BusinessEurope, CEEP and the ETUC. The Directive aims against the discrimination of part-time workers and to improve the quality of part-time work.
- [Directive 2003/88/EC](#) – the Working Time Directive – lays down minimum safety and health requirements for the organisation of working time and sets minimum periods of daily rest (11 consecutive hours), weekly rest (24 hours plus the 11 hours' daily rest if possible) and annual leave (at least four weeks), breaks and maximum weekly working time (that shall not exceed 48 hours). The Directive also aims to protect workers from negative health effects due to shift and night work as well as certain patterns of work.
- [Directive 2010/41/EU](#) grants maternity leave of at least 14 weeks to self-employed women or assisting spouses.
- [Directive 2019/1158/EU](#) – the Work-life Balance Directive – aims at supporting a work-life balance for parents and carers, encouraging a more equal sharing of parental leave between men and women, and addressing women's underrepresentation in the labour market.



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