



# EFBWW NEWSLETTER

In this Newsletter you find an overview of the different initiatives undertaken in the past two months regarding COVID-19 and the EU Recovery strategy, including EFBWW positions, reactions and demands. We also include reports from affiliates on the situation in their countries. Finally, we give an update on some of the running projects.

## From Corona to recovery: building our way out of the COVID-19 crisis

After a first phase, which was all about protecting the health and safety of workers, a new priority arises: economic recovery and the relaunch of our industries.

The EFBWW welcomed ([press release](#)) the [recovery strategy](#) proposed by the European Commission, especially the particular focus on the renovation of buildings. But the EU and European leaders need to be more ambitious. The EFBWW demands a European wide infrastructure program to upgrade cities to smart cities, to connect major cities in Europe and create sustainable transportation hubs. This means new infrastructure, but also maintaining and updating existing infrastructure.

EFBWW President, Johan Lindholm underlines that *“Large construction programs have always been part of successful strategies to get out of a recession. The construction industry is a labour intensive industry. And investments in construction have a multiplier effect because they create an extra demand for services and goods such as building materials”*.

The EFBWW supports a European Green Deal towards a just transition. Tom Deleu, EFBWW general secretary states: *“to realize a just transition it is crucial that trade unions will be actively involved and that sectoral social dialogue can play its role to guarantee that the transition will be social and sustainable”*.

The recovery strategy will demand large scale funding. That is why the EFBWW is urging the Commission to be more transparent on how the “Renovation wave” and the other infrastructure projects will be fi-

nanced. The EFBWW is also concerned about the announced

conditionalities in the different funding programs. For the EFBWW the main conditionality must be social progress: investments leading to good and stable jobs. We cannot afford to go back to austerity.

## EFBWW-FIEC joint appeal for a rapid and sustainable recovery

The proposals from the Commission need to be adopted by the Council. Ahead of the Council meeting that took place on 19 June the EU sectoral social partners of the construction industry, the EFBWW and FIEC (European Construction Industry Federation), together with EBC (European Builders Confederation), Construction Products Europe, Housing Europe, UIPI (International Union of Property Owners) and EuroACE (EU Alliance of companies for energy efficiency in Buildings) launched a [joint appeal](#) to the EU leaders.

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## Miscellaneous

### Belgium and Germany first European countries to recognize COVID-19 as an occupational disease

First Belgium, then Germany. These are the first European countries to recognize COVID-19 as an occupational disease for essential workers. Those who work in the healthcare sector and who have a significantly increased risk of being infected with the virus are eligible for recognition and compensation for occupational disease. As the obligations, provisions and regulations related to COVID-19 are changing on a daily basis, the EFBWW is interested to receive updates, also with regard to the possible recognition of COVID-19 as an occupational disease on other countries.



### ETUC warns that workplace safety is not a priority for the EC

The ETUC warns that the European Commission does not have official plans to make the workplace safer, despite the COVID-19 crisis. An updated work programme published by the Commission lists 43 new initiatives, including proposals ranging from airport charges to crypto assets and 'better regulation', but nothing to improve workplace health and safety.

[More info](#)

### EU Social Partners reach agreement on digitalisation

The European Social Partners - ETUC, BusinessEurope, CEEP and SMEUnited - reached an [agreement](#) on digitalisation. The Framework Agreement on Digitalisation was signed to support the successful digital transformation of Europe's economy and to manage its large implications for labour markets and society.



The transition brings challenges for workers and companies. The agreement enables employers and unions to introduce digital transformation strategies in partnership in a human oriented approach at national, sectoral, company and workplace levels. The agreement supports the successful integration of digital technologies at the workplace, investment in digital skills, skills updating and the continuous employability of the workforce.

This framework agreement now needs to be complemented and developed at a sectoral level in line with the specific sectoral needs.



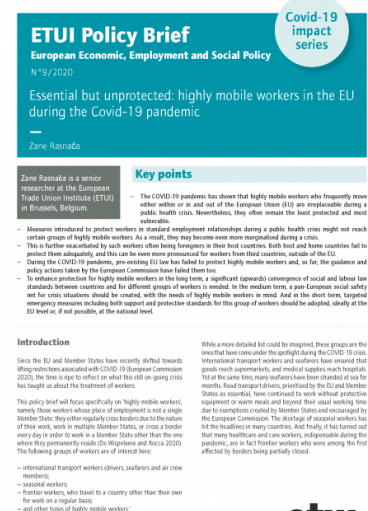
### Workers' Group concerned about levels of unemployment

The European Economic and Social Committee published its proposals for the reconstruction and recovery following the COVID-19 crisis. In this context, the Workers' Group welcomed the emphasis placed in the resolution on the need to stimulate employment and to put social recovery at the core of the recovery. Nevertheless, it also expressed its concerns about the levels of unemployment in all European countries and advocated the urgent need for social investments.

[More info](#)

## etui. Paper on mobile workers

The European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) published a [Policy Brief](#) on highly mobile workers in the EU



during the Covid-19 pandemic. The brief explores the problems encountered by frontier, seasonal, posted, transport and other cross-border workers as a result of the crisis. The difficulties faced range from border closures, loss of job or job prospects, ineligibility for benefits, social assistance or support, to the situation at the workplace and living circumstances. The EU legal framework and policy responses are

examined, as well as future policy options for the shorter and longer term.

### Preparing European Works Councils for Brexit

Brexit will have a significant impact on the organisation and functioning of European Works Councils (EWCs). The European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) developed a [policy brief](#) to



understand if the EWCs are ready for Brexit.

The EFBWW

participated in a [webinar](#) organised by ETUI on the impact Brexit and COVID-19 are going to have on EWCs. The webinar gives some guidance, based on the common recommendations of the European Trade Union Federations (ETUFs).

## COVID-19 news from our affiliates

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

### SPAIN



#### Infrastructure, housing renovation and public housing

For the Spanish trade unions, there are several possible ways out of the COVID-19 crisis, but only one will lead to a successful conclusion: a commitment to ecological transition and a rethinking of the production model.

In Spain, economic stimulus initiatives must support the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals and the European Green Pact, starting to promote, among others, a housing rehabilitation program, prioritizing sustainable infrastructure and addressing imminent sustainable urban development.

The trade unions, together with the employers and the public administrations, are promoting that both the rehabilitation and adaptation of

housing, as well as the maintenance of infrastructures and initiatives to create new ones, are pillars that aim to recover the employment lost during this crisis, and the continuity and stability of our workers.

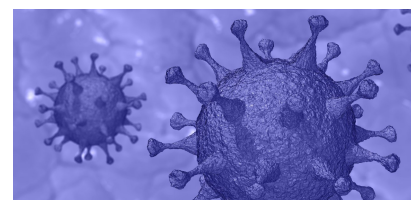
### POLAND



#### Employers abuse COVID-19 crisis to reduce wages and dismiss employees

The Polish government declared job protection as a priority, but the legal solutions introduced ("anti-crisis shields" 1-4) do not confirm this. The trade union Budowlani emphasizes that "shields" mainly serve to protect entrepreneurs and not employees. Budowlani accuses employers of using extraordinary solutions to reduce wages and to dismiss employees not related to the real dete-

rioration of the economic situation. Construction in Poland was not subject to lockdown, but the economic situation of small and medium-sized enterprises is getting worse. The level of construction investments is falling. For the trade union, the threat is local outbreaks of COVID-19 appearing in larger companies. According to ZZ Budowlani, the crisis related to the pandemic and political turmoil associated with the upcoming elections of the President of the Republic of Poland are already affecting the significant deterioration of working conditions and will have a very significant negative impact on the situation of employees and the functioning of trade unions.



## CROATIA



### Funds benefit employers not employees

In March and April 2020, the Croatian Government issued support measures to alleviate the economic and social consequences of COVID-19. Apart from the protection of workers' health the priorities focused on the preservation of jobs and workers' income. However, the Croatian trade union SGH argued that it was obvious that the funds were intended for employers. It was more about preserving their liquidity as the measures allowed for a partial dismissal of workers. SGH alleges that there were cases where employers paid wages that were lower than the amount of support received from the Government, keeping the difference to themselves.

SGH claims that one of the key regulations missing in Croatia is an act on the reduction of working hours, which is implemented through collective agreements. Trade union confederations are willing to work on this act.

## IRELAND



### Union officials with access to building sites

SIPTU along with sister unions in construction recently signed an agreement with the construction employers that gives union officials a right to access building sites to inspect compliance with COVID-19 rules across all construction sites. The agreement also supports a Lead Worker Representative being elected on work sites to ensure COVID-19 safety protocols are implemented and adhered to. Another key redline issue is the Construction Worker Pension Scheme (CWPS), which refers to Legal Entitlement. If the employer has not signed up to this, they have broken the law and can be held accountable for all contributions to the Pension Scheme.

## NORWAY



### Fellesforbundet fears a decline in construction activity

Fellesforbundet says that activity in the construction sector is almost normal, despite the COVID-19 crisis. Nevertheless, the trade union fears a decline in construction activity in the next two years, if the crisis continues. Unemployment has not yet increased, and prevention rules are

being respected on construction sites. Some foreign workers returned home when Covid19 began. When coming back to Norway, those who were in their home country had to complete two weeks of quarantine. Fellesforbundet and the employers proposed measures to increase investment in renovation and energy efficiency of buildings and affordable housing. Despite support from the Labour Party, the conservative government did not back the proposed measures.

## AUSTRIA



### Drawing right conclusions

The Austrian trade union GBH says that the right conclusions must be drawn from the Corona crisis. The number of unemployed was 571,000 in April 2020, 210,000 more than in April 2019. In total, 91,000 applications for short-time work have been approved, which affects 1.25 million jobs. GBH expects total construction industry sales to decline by 10 to 20%. The trade union defends that much must change in terms of working conditions, of the distribution of work and health protection. New framework conditions must be created in the interests of workers.

**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 Executive Committee meets online



On 26th May, the EFBWW organised its Executive Committee meeting.

This was the first Executive Committee meeting after the General Assembly that took place in November last year in Vienna. Traditionally this means a full agenda. Given the circumstances this was an online meeting. More than 50 participants logged in.

The EFBWW [governance structure](#) and the [strategy](#) to implement the main priorities were presented. Discussion points on the agenda were the impact of Covid-19 on the construction and wood sectors and the importance of linking up the economic recovery to the European Green Deal.

The [EFBWW position](#) on the European Green Deal and the [motion](#) on COVID-19 were approved.

The Secretariat also presented a document with [26 concrete demands](#) for the coming 12 months. Given the impact of COVID-19 we need to redirect our focus. Not new

priorities, but more focus. To support the main messages the EFBWW developed 3 leaflets on: occupational health and safety, the European Green Deal and better protection for posted workers. You can download them [here](#).

The EFBWW Executive Committee welcomed back the Bulgarian trade union CITUB. The election of the vice chairs for the standing committees was postponed to the autumn meeting.

### EFBWW urges European Commission to improve Posted Workers Directive

In a [letter](#) to European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit, the EFBWW asked the European Commission (EC) to postpone the publication of the interpretation of the posted workers directive as several important points must be amended first. The interpretation document was prepared before the Corona crisis. Meanwhile, the crisis proved that the current system of temporary posting needs to be re-

considered or at least requires significant improvements, especially regarding the housing and transport arrangements of the posted workers and the rules on dismissals.

### EFBWW and EFIC sign joint declaration on digitalisation in furniture

The European Furniture Industries Confederation and the EFBWW signed a [joint recommendation](#) on how to anticipate, design, implement and manage industrial change driven by the increasing use of digital tools, materials, processes, the digitisation of analogue data and digitally based communication at all levels. The agreement underlines the need to shape work organisation and training. Coming from a strong basis in process and product innovation, the sector can manage the transition based on a qualified workforce. Coherent EU legislation is needed to support this process.

## No more business as usual

# BETTER PROTECTION FOR POSTED WORKERS!

To know more about the 26 EFBWW demands, check [www.efbww.eu](http://www.efbww.eu)

### EFBWW condemns Commission's classification of COVID-19 as risk group 3 "only"

Members of the EMPL Committee and the European Commission agreed to classify the COVID-19 virus as a risk group 3 biological agent. For the EFBWW the virus clearly belongs in risk group 4. The EFBWW calls upon its affiliates to lobby at national level to ask legislators to deal with the COVID-19 virus as a risk group 4 biological agent.

### European Green Deal: Brochure and leaflet on their way!

The Executive Committee adopted the position paper on the European Green Deal. Since then, the EFBWW Secretariat is fine-tuning a brochure and leaflet on the issue. The brochure and leaflet should be ready for distribution in September and will be available in print and digital form.

### Consultation Renovation wave

The EFBWW participated in the Energy efficiency in buildings – road map consultation on the 'renovation wave' initiative. A second consultation is ongoing. By the end of June a reply to the EC questionnaire on the 'renovation wave' initiative will be prepared. The EFBWW will coordinate the reply with its affiliates. [Hyperlink to the Consultation](#)



### EFBWW sets up Communication network

The Executive Committee has agreed to set up an EFBWW Communication Network. The Communication Network will aim to establish a strong two-way communication network with its affiliates. Being aware of each other's projects, concerns, demands will strengthen our positions. To launch the activities of the network, the EFBWW will organise an online meeting with the communication officers of its affiliates on 29 June.

### Second round of social partner consultations on an EU action regarding minimum wages

On 3rd June, the European Commission started the second round of [social partner consultations](#) on an EU action regarding minimum wages. The ETUC will formulate a common reply on behalf of its affiliates. The consultation phase ends on 28th August. As a sectoral European trade union federation, the EFBWW submitted some amendments on

the content of the ETUC draft reply. The EFBWW takes a strictly sectoral point of view and bases its contribution on the EFBWW position paper. The EFBWW does not express itself on the precise choice of which legislative instrument would best suit the expected outcomes, as that debate needs to take place at ETUC level. At the same time, the EFBWW will strive to find a compromise position of the European trade union movement on this very important matter.

## Projects

### CEI-Bois and EFBWW apply PCWIE II project for the wood industry

PCWIE I was dealing with OSH and the overall challenges of the sector. Results: an agreement between EPF and EFBWW on Formaldehyde and European Wood dust conference on 16 May 2019. Previous project ended with a conference in Portugal and focused on the attractiveness and image of the industry. Participants also underlined the importance of sound social dialogue to overcome difficulties. The new project shall continue discussions, research and action related to the attractiveness of the sector.



### Construction Blueprint Strategic Skills Alliance launched on LinkedIn

The EFBWW is in a partnership, formed by 24 partners from 12 countries and led by Fundación Laboral de la Construcción (Spain), for the Construction Blueprint project (Erasmus+ Programme). This four year project (2019-2022) aims at implementing a new strategic approach to sectoral cooperation on skills. The EFBWW, together with other European partners (FIEC and

EBC) is responsible for the dissemination package, more specifically for the Construction Blueprint Strategic Skills Alliance, the National Advisory Groups (NAGs) and the endorsement events. On 11th June, the Construction Blueprint Strategic Skills Alliance on LinkedIn officially started operating. The SSA is a group for practicing professionals in the construction sector or related to the construction sector to discuss the Blueprint project findings and construction-related topics in the fields of training and skills, with a particular focus on energy efficiency, circular economy and digitalisation. You are warmly welcome to join the group.

### Share, like and retweet

[www.constructionworkers.eu](http://www.constructionworkers.eu)

As a part of the ECMIN project (European Construction Mobility Information Net), the website [www.constructionworkers.eu](http://www.constructionworkers.eu) was developed to provide accessible and reliable information on the working conditions in the construction industry in all European countries. On the website, workers can find information on salary, working time,



European Federation  
of Building  
and Woodworkers



## SALARY?



CHECK WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS  
[www.constructionworkers.eu](http://www.constructionworkers.eu)

Co-financed by the European Union

holidays, travel abroad, lodging conditions, etc. The information is available in all European languages. Workers can also find contacts of trade union representatives ready to help and support them in case of need.

This website aims to combat the exploitation of posted workers.



European Platform  
tackling undeclared work

**FAIR WORK,  
FAIR PLAY**

**SAY NO**

TO UNDECLARED WORK  
IN CONSTRUCTION

**SAVE THE DATE !!**

**Videoconference**

**Tackling Undeclared Work**

**24 September, 10 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.**

## EFBWW Meeting schedule

7 July	Presidium	Videoconference
27 August	Joint EFBWW-BWI presidium	Videoconference
10 September	EWC Steering group	Videoconference (Hybrid)
10 September	Formaldehyde SG	Videoconference (Hybrid)
15 September	Auditing Committee	Brussels
<del>16-17 September</del>	<del>STIC Seminar: Building</del>	<del>Postponed</del>
24 September	European Conference on Undeclared Work in Construction	Videoconference
22 September	Standing Committee Wood/Furniture/Forestry	Brussels (Hybrid)
<del>22-23 September</del>	<del>Decentralized SD meeting construction – VET and Youth</del>	<del>Postponed</del>
<del>23-24 September</del>	<del>STIC Seminar: Wood</del>	<del>Postponed</del>
29 September	Final Conference Bolster Up 2 project	Webinar/Videoconference
5 October	S&H Coordination Group	Brussels (tbc)
16 October	Social dialogue Wood and Furniture: WP VET & S&H	Brussels (tbc)
19-20 October	Standing Committee Building	Brussels (tbc)
20-21 October	STIC Seminar: Building Materials	Berlin (tbc)
27 October	Social dialogue Construction – WP Safety and Health	Brussels (tbc)
27-28 October	EWC coordinators meeting	Napoli (tbc)
28 October	Project RCS – Train the trainer seminar	(tbc)
18-19 November	Supply chain project: Conference	Prague (tbc)
23-24 November	Executive Committee	Brussels (tbc)
2-3 December	STIC Seminar: Cement	Madrid (tbc)
4 December	Open expert meeting Asbestos and skin diseases	Brussels (tbc)
10 December	STIC project steering group	Brussels (tbc)
13-14 January 2021	Due diligence project seminar	Paris

### Time to take a break

Time to take a well-deserved break.  
The EFBWW Secretariat wishes you all excellent, restful, energizing, reinvigorating holidays together with your loved ones.  
See you soon!

