

**Our Europe:
fair,
sustainable,
solidly united**



European Federation
of Building
and Woodworkers



13th EFBWW GENERAL ASSEMBLY- Vienna (AT), 7-8 November 2019

DOCUMENT H

EFBWW Strategic Plan: Main Priorities 2020-2023



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The EFBWW favours European integration in the interest of Europe's workers and citizens. We see European integration as a way of upholding fundamental rights for all workers and citizens and as a bulwark for protecting mainstays of European democracy, such as the rule of law and freedom of speech. Consequently, the EFBWW does not intend to work together with – or seek support from – right-wing populist parties.

The EFBWW demands the inclusion of a Social Progress Protocol in the EU Treaty the next time that treaty is amended. It also proposes that the EU should accede to the Council of Europe's European Social Charter, an international charter of fundamental rights firmly setting out strike and collective bargaining rights.

AREAS OF INFLUENCE

Equal treatment – fair mobility for all workers

Our main aim is to combat all kinds of precarious work (temporary work, undeclared work, atypical forms of employment and bogus self-employment) and arduous work, and to promote equal treatment between all workers in the same situation, i.e. equal treatment re wages and working conditions (equal pay for equal work done in the same place), social security and social protection, occupational health and safety and access to vocational and professional training. These efforts also entail guaranteeing fundamental rights – to join a union, negotiate freely and take industrial action – for all workers.

All workers must be guaranteed equal treatment in the workplace and fair migration. To this end, the EFBWW will be highly attentive to the effective and efficient enforcement of fundamental rights. We will work towards an ambitious revision of the EU Regulations governing social security coordination and strive to ensure that everyone enjoys equal rights. We will work alongside the new European Labour Authority to successfully secure equal rights.

We will address the challenges associated with cross-border work, such as postings, fake postings, cross-border social fraud and the posting of bogus self-employed workers, as well as social abuses such as the use of letterbox companies. The instruments we will use to do this include building cross-border trade union networks and cooperation, facilitating bilateral cooperation between trade unions in posting and host countries, and creating information tools for cross-border work.



All workers in our sectors, regardless of their gender, must be guaranteed equal treatment and non-discrimination. This should be accomplished by taking account of all gender specifics, health and safety standards, ensuring that vocational training courses are compatible with modern working conditions and lifestyles, guaranteeing equal professional standing and wages, including systems for calculating and measuring the gender pay gap in companies, applying all maternity and/or paternity measures provided for in EU and national legislation, and striving to ensure a good work-life balance for all workers.

Combating climate change – ensuring a just transition

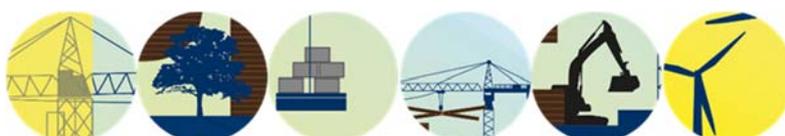
The EFBWW fully supports the goals laid down in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving the energy transition open up many job- and activity-related opportunities in the building, forestry, wood and building material sectors. The EFBWW sectors can all play a key role in implementing climate change policies and be part of the solutions to existing challenges.

Our main focus is to participate in – and thereby influence – European initiatives on new production innovations and processes and work organisation related to climate change goals and the circular economy.

Designing and anticipating change means making cities more resilient and resistant to evolving environmental conditions and defining best practices and strategic actions for achieving this.

In particular, we will address the needs for sustainable construction, energy renovation of buildings, energy efficiency and affordable housing, and their potential effect on workforce and skills requirements.

But there are not just opportunities: energy-reduction and climate policies will seriously impact energy-intensive industries like cement production. Together with other ETUFs, the EFBWW will continue to champion a sustainable, ambitious EU industrial policy agenda. The EFBWW believes there is still a future for energy-intensive industries in Europe, but these industries need more effective measures to better comply with international carbon emission and energy efficiency requirements. These measures need to be accompanied by policies and investment that will help bring about a just transition for workers, including the right to retraining and/or mediation towards other jobs or industries, if necessary. Sufficient EU and other funding must be earmarked to make this happen. We are also calling on the EU to tackle the phenomenon of carbon leakage, i.e. industrial activity and jobs being transferred beyond EU borders to countries with laxer emission constraints.



Digitalisation for workers – the fair transformation of our sectors

Digitalisation is already changing production processes in our sectors and could fundamentally transform working conditions and labour relations. Together with BWI, the EFBWW will seek to influence such transformations to serve workers' interests. No workers may find themselves left behind, and any who lose their jobs must be fairly compensated and requalified for new professional activities. Moreover, productivity gains arising through digitalisation must be fairly distributed by increasing wages.

For the EFBWW, a fair transformation entails limiting working time so that workers are also protected in the digital age. The EFBWW will oppose any attempt to introduce new flexibility into the European Working Time Directive. EFBWW affiliates have already shown that through collective bargaining agreements they can arrive at working time arrangements that are tailored to workers' personal needs and provide a better work-life balance.

Using digital tools will give companies new ways of collecting data on workers, commercialising them or using them to control workers. The EFBWW demands the high-level protection of personal data on workers, while allowing data to be used to combat any circumvention of social and labour laws and standards. Digital tools need to be introduced to improve measurements of working time – including for mobile workers on changing construction sites – to ensure that any overtime is always duly compensated. Any such tools need to be developed and deployed in cooperation with workers and their representatives.

Requalification of the workforce is essential for ensuring that workers find decent jobs and that their jobs are not downgraded in a transformed digital economy. The EFBWW will back European initiatives for the (re)qualification of workers, including use of EU funding to support them.

New technologies have the potential to make workplaces safer and healthier. And rather than being deployed to increase workload and stress, they should serve to improve working conditions and make our sectors more attractive for young and female workers. The EFBWW will perform a thorough risk assessment of new technologies and strive to ensure high standards for occupational health – including mental health – and safety in a digitalised economy.

More investment – high-quality jobs and better vocational training

Extensive public and private investment is needed in Europe to upgrade infrastructure and prepare the economy and society to meet stated climate ambitions. The EFBWW will work on drawing up a European investment plan, a 'Green New Deal', in which the building, forestry, wood and construction material sectors can play key roles.

Current EU budget rules hinder large public investment programmes at both the national and EU levels. The EFBWW will lobby for a change in these rules, to enable an ambitious investment programme to be set up at EU level.

The EFBWW will also set out specific demands in a programme for improving the functioning and fairness of the internal market. These demands will focus on strengthening the market role played by the building and woodworking sectors. The EFBWW's proposals will cover areas including the conditions for investment, fair public procurement and cross-border exchanges of data.



The EFBWW will also strive to influence education and vocational training policies for our sectors in a bid to strengthen workers' role, pave the way for higher-level qualifications and skills, secure lifelong learning and identify new vocational training requirements that will help create new jobs. Another aim will be to make the EFBWW sectors more attractive to young people and women workers.

A better work environment for a healthier workforce

All too often, working in EFBWW sectors is still hazardous and arduous, with workers exposed to dangerous substances and strenuous situations. Materials and equipment are often not ergonomic and too heavy, working conditions are frequently physically onerous and psychosocial risks are a growing concern. All this results in a comparably high incidence of occupational diseases and accidents and means many workers are unable to work up to the normal retirement age. The EFBWW is intent on continuously improving working conditions and defends existing early retirement schemes for those unable to work until the statutory retirement age.

Our main priorities involve tackling hazardous substances and improving workplace ergonomics (including equipment). We endeavour to champion advanced work organisation and combat psychosocial risks at work. We are also continuing to lobby for an improved European legal framework on occupational health and safety (OHS) and cooperate with European social partners on OHS-related issues. One way we do this is by reaching agreement on joint statements, supporting the proper implementation of the EU legislative framework and drawing up European agreements wherever possible.

Special attention needs to be paid to the risk-assessment and documentation in the use of hazardous substances and dangerous working methods. Female workers need special protection as well as a form of work organisation whose time, place and manner takes account of gender-specific health and safety requirements.

The introduction of new technologies and novel production methods must go hand in hand with an impact assessment on working conditions right from the introduction of any innovative processes or restructuring. To this end, we will take OHS issues on board in EFBWW structures, step up our cooperation with other trade union federations at European and international level and also with other EU and national institutions dealing with working conditions.

Stronger trade unions – organising and improving industrial relations

The EFBWW's main focus is on facilitating the creation of networks to help share best practices on capacity building and organisation. We will look at existing European programmes and alliances for capacity building and share their best practices and conclusions.

We will initiate actions and launch projects to strengthen industrial relations at various levels in Europe, at European level between the European social partners, at national level between the national social partners, at regional level, and also at company level, between union representatives and their counterparts. Under the terms of our existing cooperation agreement with BWI, we will work together on capacity-building issues in CEE countries.



Since in most EU Member States, the proportion of women and young people employed in EFBWW sectors is low, we will try to pinpoint the factors that determine how attractive these sectors are to women and young people, improve job opportunities for women and young people and make these sectors more attractive to them.

One key factor that determines how attractive our sectors are is trade unions' ability to influence income distribution and better working conditions. The wage gap between Western, Northern, Southern and Eastern Europe persists. The EFBWW will continue to support upward social convergence and social cohesion in the EU. Collective bargaining is the key to achieving this.

The EFBWW will support future campaigns for decent wages and pay rises throughout the EU and provide fora for our affiliates to exchange information on national collective bargaining strategies and outcomes. The EFBWW will actively defend national sectoral social partners' autonomy and different existing social models in the collective bargaining domain against any interference by EU institutions (e.g. via the European Semester).

TOOLS OF INFLUENCE

Lobbying and European Social Dialogue to influence EU institutions

The EFBWW's main task has always been lobbying, i.e. influencing EU legislation to more closely align it with our goals and objectives. A precondition for successful lobbying at European level is the formation of broad alliances wherever possible, i.e. with the ETUC and other ETUFs; with NGOs and organisations sharing similar goals; with political groups or parties within the European Parliament, provided they uphold democratic values; with individual MEPs; with officials at the European Commission; and sometimes also with authorities and/or governments or groups of governments in EU Member States. Successful lobbying hinges on the EFBWW's solid expertise on the subject matter in question, on developing good personal relationships with the individuals we seek to influence and on adopting a 'solution-oriented' approach to legislative issues.

European Social Dialogue with employers is also an important tool for influencing the EU legislative process. The EFBWW has traditionally maintained a very good, constructive European Social Dialogue in all three sectors where we are active: construction, woodworking and furniture. Through European Social Dialogue we have positively influenced EU legislation. And by reaching agreement with employers at European level, we have also successfully stopped many legislative proposals that would have been damaging to our sectors and their workers.

EWCs to influence multinational companies

European Works Councils (EWCs) not only support international solidarity among workers and thereby promote the EFBWW's political goals, they also provide an environment in which their members can exercise capacity building. At the same time, the EFBWW needs to learn from the experience gained through EWC work, include it in its political activities and strive to develop a coherent approach on how to incorporate EWCs into EFBWW campaigns.



In particular, we will address the conduct of multinationals operating outside the country where they are based and – working together with the BWI on global issues, where necessary – will assess whether their behaviour is in line with their social commitments and with the social requirements laid down in international charters, instruments and framework agreements. In this context, we will also arrange learning sessions for EWC coordinators and members.

In this entire process, EWC coordinators mandated by the EFBWW continue to play a crucial role, requiring the support of unions in their home country, both to ensure that existing EWCs function properly and to establish new ones. Especially for trade unions in CEE countries, new EWCs provide opportunities for unionisation and for securing more rights for workers, including with regard to information and consultation.

It is important that the EWC trade union network is fully supported by EWC coordinators and their respective trade unions, as exchanges of experiences and ideas will improve European Works Councils' work.

Plans to include more female delegates and coordinators in existing EWCs should be drawn up, so that gender issues can be organised, represented and resolved at both the European and multinational levels.

Communication and campaigns to influence public opinion

The EFBWW will adopt a more proactive communication strategy. To this end, it will develop a coherent internal and external communication strategy, using traditional and social media platforms. The EFBWW website will be updated and transformed to turn it into a user-friendly, interactive communication tool. The EFBWW will also further invest in inclusive solutions for online meetings and will further develop newsletters and other information tools serving to actively inform and involve EFBWW affiliates.

One important dimension in lobbying and attempts to influence EU legislation and multinational companies is influencing public opinion, EU officials and politicians. To this end, the EFBWW will further develop its campaigning strategies and capacities in a targeted way, linked to specific legislative dossiers or political actions.

To succeed in European lobbying and European campaigns, the EFBWW will continue to count on the support and active engagement of its member organisations to influence their respective national governments.

