



EFBWW and BWI call for urgent EU action on Vietnamese workers' case in Serbia

The EFBWW and BWI condemn the cruel and shocking way in which more than 500 Vietnamese workers are being treated in Serbia by the China Energy Engineering Group Tianjin Electric Power Construction Co. LTD, a contractor of the Chinese company Linglong International Europe Ltd.

The European authorities need to take urgent action.

EFBWW general secretary, Tom Deleu: "We are witnessing severe human and labour rights violations in a candidate country to the EU. These issues cannot remain unanswered by the EU institutions. The EU cannot look the other way. The case shows that the protection of workers' and trade union rights must become a fundamental pillar of the EU's accession and neighbourhood policies. Violations must be sanctioned with all instruments available."

The Vietnamese workers:

- Are lodged in unacceptable accommodations without proper sanitation.
- Are exposed to dangerous health and safety conditions.
- Have beds without mattresses, but planks covered with thin quilts.
- Work 9 hours a day, 26 days a month.
- Do not get paid their monthly wage if, for any reason, they work a day less.
- Do not receive salary slips.
- Can be fired if they engage in trade union activities.
- Had to hand over their passports to the employer.
- Do not have proper heating, electricity and drinking water.
- Do not have hot water for showering. Clothes are washed by hand with cold water and dried on ropes where they store other things, because they do not have closets.
- Were told that it would not be possible to be vaccinated against Covid-19. When someone falls ill, he is isolated in an improvised hospital room where he stays until he recovers - without paid compensation.

The inventory of abuse is extensive. The EU cannot look the other way.

BWI general secretary, Ambet Yuson: "Impunity in these and similar cases may create a common practice where workers are exposed to inhumane conditions."

We call on the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Serbian Government and local authorities to take action and end these serious violations of international labour standards and national law. BWI and EFBWW will ask the ILO to assess if Serbia's labour legislation is in full compliance with the international standards on trafficking and labour exploitation, ILO standard C29, the Protocol

of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention and Forced Labour (Supplementary Measures) Recommendation (No. 203) that aim to advance prevention, protection and compensation measures and to eliminate all forms of forced labour, including trafficking in persons.

The China Energy Engineering Group Tianjin Electric Power Construction Co. LTD, branch, Belgrade should conduct proper due diligence, and behave itself responsibly, including by engaging into a dialogue with local trade unions.

Contact:

Paula Cravina de Sousa, EFBWW Press and Communication officer, +32 (0) 473 13 43 49

Jasmin Redzepovic, BWI Assistant Education Secretary & Policy Director Cement and Building Materials, +41796776619

The European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW) is the European Workers' Industry Federation for the following sectors: building, woodworking, forestry and allied industries and trades. The EFBWW has 76 affiliated unions in 35 countries and represents a total of 1,500,000 members.

The Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI), represents 12 million workers in the building, building materials, wood and forestry sectors in 127 countries worldwide.