

EFBWW NEWSLETTER

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



13th EFBWW General Assembly

The 13th General Assembly, took place on 7 and 8 November 2019 in Vienna. The General Assembly is the highest democratic body of the EFBWW and meets every 4 years to decide on the general policy lines and to elect the leadership team. The theme of the General Assembly was very straightforward: **“Our Europe: fair, sustainable, solidly united”**.

In a rapidly changing world, we need to identify our strategic vision for achieving a better and more social Europe. After a good and very interactive discussion, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the Strategic Plan for the next 4 years. The main priorities for the EFBWW are :

- Equal treatment – fair mobility for all workers
- Combating climate change – ensuring a just transition
- Digitalisation for workers – the fair transformation of our sectors
- More investments – high-quality jobs and better vocational training
- A better work environment for a healthier workforce
- Stronger trade unions – organising and improving industrial relations

To make real progress and to actively defend the interests of our affiliates in these domains, the General Assembly also clearly outlined the tools to influence: i.e. lobbying to influence EU legislation; to build and maintain broad alliances; maintain a good and constructive European Social Dialogue in our sectors; invest in European Works Councils to influence multinational companies and to adopt a more proactive communication and campaigning strategy to influence policy makers and the public opinion.



Additionally, the General Assembly adopted Resolutions on the following topics :

- Women’s participation, diversity and equal treatment for all in EFBWW policies
- Equal pay for equal work in EU countries
- Creating a social Europe for workers! Facilitating decent work – actively shaping the transformation of the world of work.

The General Assembly also elected a new leadership team.

- Johan **LINDHOLM** (Byggnads, Sweden), EFBWW President
- Carsten **BURCKHARDT** (IG BAU, Germany), 1st Vice-President
- Brahim **HILAMI** (AC ABVV, Belgium), 2nd Vice-President
- Janna **MUD** (FNV, The Netherlands), 3rd Vice-President
- Tom **DELEU** (ACV BIE, Belgium), General Secretary
- Gunde **ODGAARD** (3F, Denmark), President of the Standing Committee Building
- Mercedes **LANDOLFI** (FILLEA CGIL, Italy), President of the Standing Committee Wood/Furniture/Forestry.
- Christian **ROY** (F.O. , France) and Christian **FÖLZER** (GBH, Austria) were elected as members of the EFBWW Auditing Committee.



Some 200 delegates and observers from the EFBWW affiliates were present. The General Assembly took place in a good and constructive spirit. The EFBWW wants to especially thank its Austrian affiliate, GBH, to be the co-host of this General Assembly

You can find the adopted documents (strategic plan, resolutions) on the EFBWW website under the item "Congress" (<https://www.efbww.eu/start/congress/1-a>).

State of play in the EU discussion on minimum wages and collective bargaining

In the political guidelines for the new European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen has stated that *"within the first 100 days of her mandate, she will propose a legal instrument to ensure that every worker in our Union has a fair minimum wage. This should allow for a decent living wherever they work"*. The discussions in the European Commission are underway.

The ETUC wants *"to engage robustly"* with the European Commission on this issue. To prepare for consultations and possible negotiations, the ETUC has tried to adopt a unified position with clear red lines, but allowing to make progress and fight back restrictions on collective bargaining created by the EU. However, the discussion on the possible legal instrument created several concerns, mainly linked to its potential impact on national systems of collective bargaining. The EFBWW and the other European industry federations (ETUFs) have adopted a careful approach in this debate, on the one hand not wanting to interfere directly in an ETUC debate, but on the other hand pushing for a consensus based position. A vote on such a contentious issue, potentially dividing the European trade union movement, should be avoided.

At the ETUC Executive Committee on 17 December, the broad range of opinions among the affiliates were in full display, from those who argued strongly for an EU Directive on minimum wages (in particular Eastern European and Irish colleagues), to those who argued strongly against a binding EU instrument on minimum wages (in particular Nordic colleagues). The result of the discussion was that the Executive Committee agreed

with the ETUF position, and changed the name of the Draft Resolution to an “Orientation document”, taking into account the discussion as it stands today. No proposed amendments to the document were discussed at the meeting. There was no vote.

To engage in future discussions, the EFBWW is preparing a more detailed position which will be based on the resolution demanding “equal pay for equal work in EU countries”, which was adopted at the General Assembly in Vienna. EU member states have developed different wage setting mechanisms with collectively agreed minimum wages, statutory and collectively agreed minimum wages and a combination of these mechanisms. The EFBWW therefore supports a European approach that improves minimum wages in EU member states, while respecting the different labour market systems in each EU member state. The EFBWW position will primarily adopt a sectoral focus, i.e. with input from the sectors through the standing committees. The Presidium will prepare a draft position paper and will also discuss the procedure on how to consult and actively involve the Executive Committee in this topic. The Presidium meeting will take place on 29th January.

Regulation 883 -

EU negotiations on Coordination of social security in a political deadlock

Currently, the interinstitutional negotiations on the Regulation on the coordination of social security systems are “blocked”. The new European Parliament (EP) decided to resume the EU negotiations, on the basis of its old mandate. In order to achieve progress, the EP demonstrated flexibility, while standing firm on core issues which were designed to tackle cross-border social security fraud. As the Finnish Presidency has a rather rigid mandate, the negotiations between the two legislative bodies are put on hold.

The three main points still to be resolved are: the prior notification in case of posting of a worker (with the exception of 'business trips'); the notion of working time in case a worker works in two or more Member States (the so-called pluriactivity); and the general cross-border export of unemployment benefits. Obviously the most difficult issue is the export of the unemployment benefits. Here it should be noted that the mobility of jobseekers looking for work abroad is actually rather limited, only affecting approximately 2 out of 1,000 unemployed persons. As to the two other issues, a political compromise should be possible. The EFBWW is closely monitoring the negotiations.

Asbestos in the European Parliament

The new European Parliament (EP) has put asbestos on its priority agenda for the year 2020, 7 years after its last resolution and 10 years after the last revision of the EU asbestos directive. The legislative own-initiative report with the title “Protecting workers from asbestos” is the 2nd on the list in the work program of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee (EMPL) of the EP. With this report, the EP will ask the EU Commission to present a legislative proposal. The new President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen has promised to take up legislative EP initiatives.

EMPL will decide on the timetable for this report, the rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs (those MEPs drafting and negotiating the content), in the 2nd half of January. It is now up to the EFBWW secretariat and the national affiliates to make this initiative a success for workers. Among the demands of the EFBWW are: digital

asbestos registries for buildings in all EU countries, significantly lower occupational exposure limits and stricter EU minimum standards for the training of workers who (potentially) get in contact with asbestos.

The EFBWW works closely with its national affiliates, the ETUC OSH committee, ETUFs and self-support groups. Among others, the EFBWW will co-organize a conference with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and a parliamentary breakfast in the EP on the topic next year. The dates for these events will be determined soon.



COP25

From 2-13 December 2019 the 25th UN Climate Change Conference took place in Madrid, Spain. It featured the 25th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 25) to the United Nations Framework Convention to Combat Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The COP25 was mandated by the UNFCCC to resolve the outstanding issues in the Climate Package, including: provisions under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which would allow countries to meet, in part, domestic mitigation goals through market mechanisms such as carbon markets; public registries for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement; communications of adaptation efforts under the Paris Agreement.

Trade Unions were disappointed with the final outcome of COP. Civil society observers were nearly put outside the process, parties decided on the bare minimum to keep the UNFCCC alive. During the COP some references to the gaps in the emission reduction and finance plans of the parties were made. A work program of the Forum on Response Measures that will deal with Just Transition and the creation of decent work and quality jobs has also been approved. The biggest discussion at the COP25 concerned Article 6 on market and non-market mechanisms. The focus of the parties was clearly not on upholding the objectives of the Paris Agreement, but on facilitating as much as possible trading emission rights. The Parties could not agree on a final joint text.

Ratification Istanbul Convention

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women (the Istanbul Convention) is the first instrument in Europe to set legally binding standards specifically to prevent gender-based violence, support victims and punish perpetrators. The EU signed the Convention on 13th June 2017.

As of November 2019, all EU Member States have signed the Convention, and 21 have ratified it. Seven Member States still have not ratified it: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia and the UK. In its resolution of November 2019, the European Parliament asked the Council to conclude the EU ratification of the Convention urgently, on the basis of a broad accession without any limitations, and condemned campaigns against the Convention based on deliberate misinterpretations.

EFBWW solidarity with the BWI campaign against union busting in Australia

At the EFBWW General Assembly in Vienna, the EFBWW and its affiliates have shown their solidarity with the Australian trade union movement and the BWI campaign against union busting in Australia.

The BWI and the Australian trade unions are happy to announce that a new proposal from liberal-right-wing government parties to further restrict trade union rights in Australia was blocked. Under the guise of liability and integrity requirements, the government could very easily withdraw the recognition of trade unions and the protection of trade union representatives. Allegations, without evidence, could already initiate such a procedure. The Australian trade unions and leftist opposition parties had mobilized massively against the proposals for months. There was also a worldwide solidarity campaign from the international trade unions. The Australian trade unions are happy with this success, but are already preparing for the next battle.

More info: www.bwint.org/cms/news-72/anti-union-law-fails-to-pass-in-australia-1579

More short news on OSH issues

At the ETUC Committee on OSH the EFBWW has proposed that the following points should be added to the priority list for the next years: the recognition of non-melanoma skin cancer as an occupational disease; the transformation of the EU Recommendation on occupational diseases into a minimum directive; the focus on bitumen as one of the substances that needs to be covered by the CM-Directive. The ETUC Committee welcomed all three proposals.

Two social partner projects, submitted by the EFBWW have been accepted by the Commission. One project, introduced jointly with EPF (Panel Federation), will deal with the implementation of the Voluntary Formaldehyde Agreement. A second one, introduced jointly with FIEC (construction industry), will deal with Respirable Crystalline Silica.

Vacancy : Communication Officer for the EFBWW

In line with the Strategic Priorities adopted at the General Assembly the EFBWW wants to reinforce its team with a Communication Officer. The new Communication Officer will coordinate the EFBWW press, communication and campaign activities and strategies. The Communication Officer will be based at the EFBWW office in Brussels.

Applications should be sent in English to gdr@efbww.eu including a CV and a letter of motivation.
Deadline for Application: 17 January 2020.

More info: www.efbww.eu/about-efbww/vacancies

Johan Lindholm
EFBWW President

Tom Deleu
EFBWW General Secretary



Merry Christmas and a happy New Year !!
Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année!!
Frohe Weihnachten und ein gutes neues Jahr!!
Prettige Kerst en een Gelukkig Nieuwjaar!!

EFBWW team:

Sam HÄGGLUND (General Secretary leaving), Tom DELEU (General Secretary elect),

Werner BUELEN, Rolf GEHRING, Thilo JANSSEN, Magdalena SIKOROWSKA,

Marina SAEGERMAN, Ann COCQUYT, Frank LEUS, Tanja VANMEENEN
