



In a year full of challenges, EFBWW and BWI joined forces and cooperated more than ever to defend workers' rights on numerous levels. In a year when health issues were on top of everyone's agenda and with economic recovery being a priority, trade union action was vital for workers. The two organisations took action and developed several important campaigns. Some of the activities had already initiated in 2020 and continued during 2021.



"We are very proud that in 2021 the BWI and EFBWW federations significantly moved forward in building stronger relationships through joint policy initiatives and direct actions on the ground. Together, we became stronger, protecting migrant workers in the European Union and in the pan-European region, campaigning for gender equality, building networks within multinational corporations and promoting occupational health and safety as a fundamental workers' right. The spirit of solidarity is the key element of our joint actions" – said Ambet Yuson, BWI General Secretary and Tom Deleu, EFBWW General Secretary.



Cement Sector

One of the priorities was the cement sector: both federations developed a close cooperation regarding workers' rights at Holcim, HeidelbergCement and CRH. The EFBWW joined the Global Cement Network and appointed staff and EWC coordinators to join the G20 Cement Network. The EFBWW invited relevant BWI staff to its ad-hoc meetings to discuss the impact of EGD/CBAM on cement and other energy intensive building materials industries.

In March, BWI, EFBWW, and IndustriAll participated in the LafargeHolcim Global Council Network, where unions [called](#) for the cement giant to respect workers' rights, protect jobs, ensure workers' health and safety at work and drastically reduce precarious work. On [4 May](#) – the day of the Holcim Annual General Meeting - a global day of [action](#) was organised under the slogan: "LafargeHolcim, make a concrete commitment to workers' rights!".

BWI and EFBWW also acted jointly regarding HeidelbergCement. Two meetings were held, where unions exchanged on health and safety policies, especially in relation to COVID-19, employment situations of HC employees and of sub-contractors, and CBA negotiations. In October, at the company's global union [meeting](#), delegates expressed their concern about learning of plant closures and restructuring through the press and demanded that the company informs and discusses changes with its workforce. The network, together with IndustriAll, adopted a joint [statement](#), demanding genuine progress in improving the quality of social dialogue.

CRH was also object of the unions' concern and action. In a letter sent to the company's CEO, CRH was urged to respect workers' fundamental rights, engage in a constructive dialogue, follow legal standard for social dialogue in the EU, respect safety and health, and stop the excessive use of precarious forms of employment worldwide. On 12th October, a new Euroforum agreement was signed with CRH management. The EFBWW did not endorse the [agreement](#) as it does not meet the minimum standards and does not comply with the full provisions of the Directive.



Multinational Companies

As MNCs consolidate and merge, it is important that the two federations join forces to share information, develop a joint strategy, and agree on tools to effectively engage with MNCs in Europe and globally. A joint conference was scheduled for December 2021, but postponed to 2022. A joint meeting of the ad-hoc BWI MNC WG and the EFBWW EWC Steering Group was organised to discuss the cooperation paper on MNCs.



Migration

BWI and EFBWW cooperated on the issue of migration, particularly on third-country migration. Both federations developed a joint [statement](#) and organised a joint discussion. The EFBWW invited BWI as observer to the EFBWW-FIEC Project on 3rd-country migration.

On June 2021, a successful [webinar](#) “Is the EU becoming the new Gulf Region?”, was organised with more than 70 participants and high media coverage. The key issues discussed by both federations in the migration field are related to the role of labour recruiters (often disguised as Temporary Work Agencies) who recruit vulnerable workers and transfer them either to other intermediaries or to user-companies. Equal treatment, the right to organise, social inclusion and respect for international labour and human rights standards should be applicable to the migrant workers in the EU countries.

In June, BWI and EFBWW followed the investigation of the school building [collapse](#) in the Belgian city of Antwerp, where five workers were killed, and many were seriously injured. All were migrant workers. The EFBWW addressed EU institutions to ensure a fair investigation and compensations to the injured workers and their families.

More recently, a new case needed the cooperation of both organisations. More than 500 Vietnamese workers, employed by a Chinese company in Serbia, live and work in horrific conditions. BWI sent a [letter](#) to the Serbian Government calling for urgent action, and EFBWW and BWI issued a joint [press release](#) urging the European authorities to act in this case.

The EFBWW invited BWI to participate actively in the steering group of EFBWW’s EDMIN IV project.



Health and Safety Campaign

The EFBWW joined the BWI [global coalition](#) for OHS as a fundamental right. The EFBWW signed a [joint declaration](#) with all four employers’ organisations: FIEC, the European Construction Industry Federation; CEI-Bois, the European Confederation of Woodworking Industries; EFIC, the European Furniture Industries Confederation; and EPF, the European Panel Federation. The organisations are committed to support the recognition of healthy and safe workplaces as a fundamental right by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Asbestos is another example of cooperation on H&S topics between the federations. The EFBWW invited BWI to send a [joint letter](#) to push for a ban on asbestos in Ukraine. The EFBWW pushed in its EU lobby for a global ban on asbestos and ensured a first important [victory](#) for workers and the union movement, with the European Parliament adopting, by a large majority the legislative report on Protecting Workers from Asbestos (the “Villumsen report”) and called for a concrete asbestos Occupational Exposure Limit (OEL) of 1000 fibres/m³.



Women

Around 8 March, EFBWW and BWI called on governments to ratify convention 190.

The EFBWW will support the BWI work on Women and Gender Equality. During the BWI Global Conference on Women in Trades there will be a Joint European Workshop or Panel to highlight women issues in Europe. The Global Conference of Women in Trades was postponed to the congress week of BWI October 2022. The European Stop Macho Culture Campaign Network was formalised during the European Women’s Forum at the end of 2020 (Spain, the UK, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden). Three virtual Network meetings took place in 2020-2021. Over 30 affiliates in Europe took action on International Women’s Day in 2021 both at the workplace and virtually. The EFBWW invited relevant BWI staff to participate actively in the federation’s Women’s Network meetings, currently focusing on the gender questionnaire that was sent to all EFBWW affiliates.



Solidarity Actions

Additional solidarity actions were developed, namely for Belarus, Myanmar and the Philippines, reaching out to the EU commission and MEPs calling for additional sanctions. The EFBWW and BWI sent a joint [letter](#) to the EC and published social media messages to request an economic boycott on timber originating from Myanmar.