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1. Final version of the new EWC Directive now available

Trilogue negotiations successfully concluded

After a lengthy evening session, a final agreement was reached in the early hours of 21 May 2025 (the clock in the background shows exactly 1:40 a.m.). The trilogue negotiations with representatives of the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the European Commission began on 6 February 2025 with very disparate positions (see [report in EWC News 1/2025](#)). The provisional agreement on the text of the new EWC Directive represents a success for the European Parliament and trade unions. According to participants in the negotiations, they were able to secure 80% of their demands.



The European Commission had already presented the draft bill for revising the EWC Directive in January 2024 (see [report in EWC News 1/2024](#)). All the important points included in the draft were incorporated into the final version, some with minor editorial changes. The most significant new provisions are as follows:

- In future, there will be two plenary meetings per year, which must be held in person. The meeting may only take place in a hybrid format or as a video conference if the EWC expressly agrees (right of veto).
- There is still no deadline for consultation procedures, unlike for the national works council in France (see [report in EWC News 1/2014](#)).
- EWC experts will in future be able to attend all meetings with management and may no longer be excluded. This applies in particular to US companies.
- In future, the costs of legal proceedings must always be borne by the company, which is an integral part of every works council system. However, this was previously unclear in some countries. In addition, all EU countries must report to the European Commission on the legal recourse available under national EWC law. This should prevent problems such as those encountered in Ireland in the future (see [report in EWC News 2/2022](#)).
- In future, all reasonable costs for experts, including legal experts, must be borne by the central management. The restriction to only one expert no longer applies.
- All "voluntary" EWC agreements concluded for the first time prior to September 1996 must be

brought into line with the new EWC Directive. The negotiation period for this is two years. If these negotiations fail, the EWC will no longer be dissolved, but the subsidiary requirements (EWC "by law") will apply immediately.

- In future, objective criteria and a deadline for the end of confidentiality will apply to any information which has been classified as "confidential".
- If the gender quota of 40% of seats on the EWC is not complied with, this must be justified to the workforce.

Negative aspects

The European Parliament and trade unions were unable to ensure that measures such as mass redundancies can be temporarily halted by the courts in the event of violations of EWC law. Furthermore, fines have not been aligned with the General Data Protection Regulation. Instead, each EU country will determine the level of fines on its own, which could lead to a downward spiral of undercutting and legal disputes. Another negative aspect is the long transposition period of three years before the new rules take full effect.

Next steps

The outcome of the trilogue negotiations still needs to be formally adopted. The European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs will vote on it on 5 June 2025, with the plenary vote expected to take place on 19 June 2025. The Council of Ministers has included the new EWC Directive on its agenda for its meeting on 19/20 June 2025. Unanimity is not required, so not all EU countries have to agree. If this timetable is adhered to, the new EWC Directive could enter into force in July or August 2025.

[Council of Ministers press release](#)
[European Commission press release](#)
[European Parliament press release](#)

Forthcoming event

Once it enters into force, a large number of EWC agreements will have to be adapted within a period of two years. To help you prepare for this, we are offering a seminar in Würzburg from 7 to 10 October 2025.

[The seminar programme](#)



2. Further developments at European level

New impetus for social dialogue?



On 5 March 2025, a "Pact for European Social Dialogue" was signed which aims to strengthen the role of social partners in shaping labour market, employment and social policies. The Social dialogue is an institutionally anchored forum for dialogue on social policy issues between trade unions and employer federations, with the participation of the European Commission. It has existed since 1985 and is part of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU.

The European Commission is obliged to consult the social partners before any legislative initiative concerning labour and social law and to give them the opportunity to negotiate agreements on these issues that can then be implemented through EU law. However, this is hardly ever used because the positions of employer federations and unions are generally too far apart. Most recently, negotiations on telework and the right to disconnect failed in November 2023 (see [report in EWC-News 4/2023](#)).

The new pact was negotiated at a Social Partners Summit in January 2024 (see [report in EWC-News 1/2024](#)). For unions, it is particularly essential that they continue to receive EU funding, especially for capacity building in Central and Eastern Europe. The European Commission will appoint its own representative responsible for social dialogue.

[Press release on the signing](#)
[Full text of the pact](#)

Call for social protection during restructuring

On 13 March 2025, European Parliament in Strasbourg adopted a resolution on the social and employment aspects of restructuring and the necessary protection of jobs and workers' rights. The initiator is Belgian socialist Estelle Ceulemans, who was General Secretary of the FGTB trade union confederation from 2018 until her election to the European Parliament in June 2024.



The resolution is now the European Parliament's official position on safeguarding workers' rights in the event of restructuring. It also aims to strengthen co-determination and corporate social responsibility. The text also calls for investment in innovation and future-oriented sectors in order to secure Europe's strategic autonomy and create high-quality jobs as part of a just transition to climate neutrality. To this end, the European Commission is to present a roadmap for concrete implementation of the "European Pillar of Social Rights" concluded in 2017 (see [report in EWC-News 4/2017](#)). The resolution is particularly significant because the European Commission is currently not taking any labour law initiatives and is seeking to roll back social standards with "omnibus" packages (see [report in EWC-News 1/2025](#)).

[Full Text of the Resolution](#)

EU postpones reporting requirements for supply chain monitoring



The controversial Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive for environmental protection and human rights has been in force since July 2024. Member states were to have two years to transpose it into national law (see [report in EWC-News 3/2024](#)). This deadline has been extended by one year. On 3 April 2025, the European Parliament voted 531 to 69, with 17 abstentions, in an urgent procedure in favour of a European Commission proposal (Omnibus I Package) to simplify legislation in the areas of sustainability and investment (see [report in EWC-News 1/2025](#)).

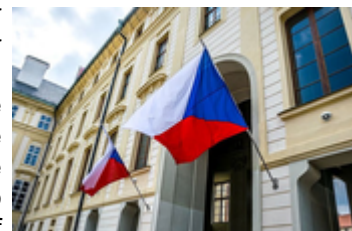
At the same time, European companies with more than 5,000 employees and annual turnover exceeding €1.5 billion, as well as companies from third countries with turnover exceeding €1.5 billion in the EU, will only have to comply with the due diligence obligations one year later, starting July 2028. The deadlines of July 2028 and July 2029, by which groups of smaller companies must apply the rules, remain unchanged. The Hans Böckler Foundation had previously warned that reducing and postponing reporting requirements would lead to a deterioration in transparency, impair the quality and effectiveness of reporting and consequently jeopardise political climate targets.

[European Parliament press release](#)
[Full text of the amended directive](#)
[The position of the European trade union federations](#)
[The position of the Hans Böckler Foundation](#)

3. Individual country reports

Czech Parliament prevents scrapping protection against unfair dismissal

On 7 March 2025, the Chamber of Deputies in Prague passed a major labour law reform. A controversial article that would have allowed unfair dismissal without justification was rejected. In addition to the opposition parties, the ruling Christian Democrats also rejected the article, while two right-wing conservative parties voted in favour. According to the Bohemian-Moravian trade union confederation ČMKOS, the complete abolition of protection against dismissal would expose all employees to the arbitrary decisions of their employers. Dismissals on grounds of age, gender, health or trade union activity could become possible and would spread fear of speaking out for better wages and working conditions. ČMKOS had declared its readiness to strike, even if it meant a nationwide general strike.



The other parts of the legislative package, however, were welcomed by all sides. These include the extension of the probationary period, a more flexible notice period that is advantageous for both parties, and an entitlement to return to the original job for two years after parental leave.

Unemployment benefits will be increased from 65% to 80% of previous net income, but will then be gradually reduced to 40%. People aged 52 and over will receive unemployment benefits for a longer period. In future, wages can also be paid in €. Companies have been allowed to keep their accounts in € and pay taxes in € since the beginning of 2024. The government hopes this will speed up the country's planned accession to the single currency (see [report in EWC-News 1/2024](#)). The changes will come into force on 1 June 2025. Unemployment benefits will be adapted with effect from 2026. The Czech Republic has the lowest unemployment rate in the EU and suffers from a shortage of skilled workers (see [report in EWC-News 4/2021](#)).

[Press report on the planned reform](#)
[Short guide on Czech labour law](#)

Better protection for employee representatives in Switzerland



On 21 March 2025, the Swiss government approved a package of 13 measures to protect high wages in Switzerland from being undercut by EU companies posting workers, particularly in the construction industry. The aim is to prevent EU companies from charging Swiss prices while paying foreign wages. The details had been agreed in advance by employer federations, trade unions and cantons. This removes a major obstacle to the country's approval of a new agreement to deepen relations with the EU. In May 2021, a similar framework agreement on precisely the same issues had failed (see [report in EWC-News 3/2021](#)).

The package to safeguard the current level of wage protection also includes the promotion of universally binding collective bargaining agreements. Switzerland has been participating in the European single market, which includes the free movement of workers, for years through bilateral agreements. These have been accompanied by "flanking measures" to mitigate any negative consequences and thus increase the prevalence of collective bargaining agreements. If collective bargaining agreements are to be reinforced, workers who are active in trade unions must be protected. However, Swiss legislation on dismissal does not conform to international standards in this regard. A complaint against Switzerland is currently pending before the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Geneva. A change in the law is therefore intended to provide better protection for elected employee representatives against arbitrary dismissal in the future.

[Press report on the government's resolution](#)
[Trade union demands on wage protection](#)
[Unia trade union manifesto](#)

Changes for works councils and trade unions in Germany

Since 6 May 2025, Germany has again a "Grand Coalition" made up of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, as was last the case between 2013 and 2021. The coalition agreement aims to establish a framework for the growing challenges posed by digitalisation and artificial intelligence in the working world and to promote solutions based on social partnership. A change to the Works Constitution Act is planned to enable online works council meetings, online workplace assemblies and online elections in the future. This is intended to build on the reform of June 2021 (see [report in EWC-News 2/2021](#)).



Collective bargaining coverage, which is currently only 49% in Germany, is to be reinforced. This includes giving trade unions digital access within companies to recruit members and provide information about their collective bargaining agreements. In January 2025, the Federal Labour Court had still rejected this on the grounds of the current legal situation (see [report in EWC-News 1/2025](#)). In addition, trade union membership is to be made more attractive for members through tax incentives. The statutory minimum wage, which was only €9.82 in 2022, is to rise to €15 per hour by 2026.

No mention of European works councils nor co-determination on supervisory boards

Reinforcing European works councils and co-determination in European companies had already been included in the coalition agreement of the Grand Coalition in 2013 (see [report in EWC-News 4/2013](#)), but was never implemented. The coalition agreement of the "traffic light" government in 2021 even

mentioned putting a stop to the exodus from co-determination through SE conversions (see [report in EWC-News 4/2021](#)). This was also not implemented before the coalition broke up in November 2024. The current coalition agreement does not mention this issue at all. The German Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (see [report in EWC-News 1/2023](#)) is to be abolished.

[Full text of the coalition agreement](#)

[Overview of labour law proposals](#)

[Assessment of the coalition agreement by the German Trade Union Confederation \(DGB\)](#)

4. Recent court rulings

Landmark ruling on fines under the General Data Protection Regulation



On 13 February 2025, the European Court of Justice ruled on the level of fines for data protection violations. According to the General Data Protection Regulation, which has been in force since May 2018 (see [report in EWC-News 1/2016](#)), these must be "effective, proportionate and dissuasive" and may amount to up to 4% of the global turnover in the last financial year. In this specific case, it was disputed whether the turnover of the entire group or only that of the accused company should be taken into account.

The court ruling is related to a legal dispute in Denmark. The data protection authority accused furniture retailer Ilva of violating data protection law between May 2018 and January 2019 in connection with the stored data of former customers. The company, based in Århus, is the market leader in Denmark and has a presence in several Scandinavian countries. In the opinion of the data protection authority, the fine should have been 1.5 million kroner (€200,000). The first instance criminal court based its decision on the turnover of the company concerned and set the fine at only 100,000 kroner (€13,400). The Court of Appeal referred the question to the European Court of Justice, which considers the turnover of the whole group to be the basis for assessment if it is an "economic entity", even if it consists of several legal entities (subsidiaries).

Also relevant for EWC law

Since the wording "effective, proportionate and dissuasive" also applies to sanctions within the EWC Directive, the same basis for assessment should be considered in the event of violations of EWC law. It has not yet been decided whether 4% of global turnover in the last financial year will apply as the maximum limit here. The European Parliament is calling for this, but courts have only imposed fines of up to €44,000 (see [report in EWC-News 4/2021](#)).

[Full text of the court ruling](#)

[Report on the court ruling](#)

Fines for late transposition of the Whistleblower Directive

On 6 March 2025, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that five countries had to pay fines for late transposition of the Whistleblower Directive into national law. Germany must pay a fine of €34 million, while Czechia, Hungary, Estonia and Luxembourg must pay between €375,000 and €2.3 million. The Directive has been in force since December 2019 and protects whistleblowers who report illegal activities, breaches of law and misconduct from reprisals (see [report in EWC-News 4/2019](#)).



Not a single EU country had transposed the directive into national law on time before December 2021. This has now been done everywhere, albeit with considerable delay, most recently in Poland, where the law came into force in September 2024. Poland was fined €7 million in April 2024, plus a daily penalty of €40,000 until the requirements were met. A practical guide for employee representatives on this topic was published in December 2020 (see [report in EWC-News 1/2021](#)).

[Court of Justice press release](#)

[The court ruling against Germany](#)

[Report on the court ruling](#)

5. Latest EWC and SE statistics

EWC establishments on the decline, sharp rise in SE works councils



For twenty years, the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) has maintained an online database containing the texts of EWC and SE agreements, which is considered the most important source for research work. The Institute's work is financially supported by the European Union. The database also provides statistics, which have recently been updated. Since 1985, when the first EWC was established in a French group, a total of 1,800 European works councils and SE works councils have been established. However, a third of these no longer exist, primarily as a result of company

mergers.

There are currently 1,233 active European works councils and SE works councils. The increase was particularly strong in 1996 in the wake of the adoption of the EWC Directive, when 450 EWC agreements were registered, 202 of which were newly established. In 2008, a particularly large number of EWC agreements were revised in view of the upcoming revision of this directive. Since then, the curve (blue in the diagram) has fallen sharply, with only 45 new establishments registered in 2024. The situation is completely different for the establishment of SE works councils, which is the name given to European works council in companies with the legal form of a European Company (SE). These are based on the SE Directive and have only been able to be established since 2004. There are currently 227 SE works councils, 176 of which are in Germany alone. A new one is established every fortnight. 2018 was the first year in which more SE works councils than European works councils were established across Europe. There are now more SE works councils (176) than European works councils (117) in German companies. The reason for this is the possibility offered by the SE Directive to opt out of German co-determination (see [report in EWC-News 2/2024](#)). In most other EU countries, however, SE works councils are completely unheard of.

Consequences of Brexit not statistically analysed

Most European works councils continue to operate under German law, including some companies from the United States and Switzerland. France ranks second. Before Brexit, the United Kingdom ranked third, including companies from the United States. After Brexit, most of them relocated their EWCs to Ireland (see [report in EWC-News 1/2021](#)), but exact statistics are not available. Belgium, Sweden and the Netherlands rank next. Many Eastern European countries do not have a single EWC because there are no corporate headquarters there. However, they are represented by delegates in Western European councils. Only 3% of European works councils and 6% of SE works councils have not concluded an agreement due to failed negotiations with central management. They operate as EWC or SE works council "by law", which often leads to conflicts in their day-to-day work.

166 legal disputes since 1997

The database also records court proceedings relating to EWC and SE law, with an average of six cases per year. Most disputes arise over the scope and timing of information and consultation in the course of restructuring. The peak year was 2008, when there was a total of 16 court proceedings. The most significant decision in the entire history of EWC case law was the *Gaz de France* case in France (see [report in EWC-News 1/2008](#)). Of the 166 known court cases, around half were settled out of court. In the first few years after the EWC Directive came into force, most lawsuits were filed in France, but later the focus shifted to the United Kingdom. Even after Brexit, there are still court cases there because the British EWC Act has not been repealed. Particularly spectacular was the case involving the Swiss personnel services provider Adecco, which ended up before the UK Supreme Court (see [report in EWC-News 4/2024](#)).

In Germany, an attempt to stop a plant closure in Spain with a preliminary injunction failed in 2011 (see [report in EWC-News 3/2011](#)). In Austria, the Supreme Court ruled on EWC issues of pan-European significance in 2023 (see [report in EWC-News 4/2023](#)). In July 2025, the Supreme Court of Ireland will deal with EWC law for the first time (see [report in EWC-News 1/2025](#)). In SE law, there were two landmark decisions in 2024 with very negative consequences for employees (see [report in EWC-News 4/2024](#)).

[The EWC database](#)
[Overview of the latest statistics](#)
[Compilation of key court decisions](#)

6. Escaping co-determination through SE conversion

German family-owned company avoids full-parity co-determination

On 15 January 2025, an SE agreement was concluded for Trox in Ratingen. The company, headquartered in Neukirchen-Vluyn (Lower Rhine), has 5,000 employees worldwide and is the global market leader in room ventilation and air conditioning. As part of the SE conversion, employee representation on the supervisory board was frozen at one third (two out of six seats). In future, the two employee representatives will be elected from the SE works council, which replaces the European works council that has been in place since 2017.



It has nine members, five of whom are from Germany, and represents ten EU countries plus Norway. Small countries share one seat but are invited to meetings when they are directly affected. There will also be one guest delegate each from the United Kingdom and Switzerland. The SE works council will meet twice a year in person and elect a three-member steering committee. All other meetings will take place via video or telephone conference. It will have access to all establishments within the scope of the SE agreement and will be able to inform the workforce in all countries via its own intranet site. For consultations in exceptional circumstances, a deadline of seven weeks applies, including one face-to-face meeting of the SE works council. Only then may the central management implement its restructuring plans. In the event of disputes arising from the SE agreement, a conciliation procedure is provided for, which ends with a binding conciliation decision.

[Press release on the SE conversion](#)

Building equipment manufacturer completely rules out co-determination



On 29 April 2025, an SE participation agreement was signed for the TECE Group, based in Emsdetten (Westphalia). The family-owned company has 1,700 employees at five locations and manufactures sanitary systems. The 14 members of the future SE works council represent 17 countries in the European Single Market. The largest country is Poland with 660 employees, followed by Germany with 580 (four seats each). The 170 employees in Spain elect two delegates; countries with small sales offices are not represented. Two plenary meetings are held in person each year, with a third meeting held via video conference without central management. The chair and two deputies form the steering committee, which usually meets via video conference. The same applies to other committees that the SE works council may decide to establish.

The workforce has been permanently deprived of co-determination on the supervisory board. Instead, the SE works council receives copies of all documents relating to the general shareholders assembly, agendas of the management and supervisory boards, and sustainability reports. The SE works council is informed and consulted in accordance with the standard rules of the SE Directive, including the double consultation procedure typical for SE. Comments and suggestions from the SE works council must be discussed with the serious aim of actually influencing the planned decisions. Only after a second meeting with the SE works council can the central management implement measures. The documents are not translated by human translators, but using digital translation tools into the respective national language.

Right to hold employee assemblies

The SE works council has a right of access to all subsidiaries within the internal market. It can hold employee assemblies in all countries where there is no employee representation. Travel expenses and simultaneous interpretation are financed by central management. In the course of 2026, a new plant will be opened in Novska (Croatia) and production will be relocated there from Wuppertal (Germany).

Status proceedings at Chinese battery manufacturer

On 6 May 2025, the works council of Contemporary Amperex Technology Limited (CATL) in Thuringia filed an application with the Erfurt Regional Court to have the composition of the supervisory board determined by the



court in status proceedings. To date, CATL has neither one-third participation nor full-parity co-determination, even though it employs around 2,400 people in Germany. Similar status proceedings have also been underway since April 2024 at the direct bank N26 in Berlin (see [report in EWC-News 2/2024](#)). The issue has become particularly controversial after conversion to a European company (SE) was initiated on 18 February 2025, which completely rules out co-determination on the supervisory board. On 30 April 2025, the EWC Academy held a training session for the German works council members (photo).

CATL is the world's largest manufacturer of batteries for electric cars with a market share of 40% and is now one of the ten largest automotive suppliers worldwide. In December 2022, the first production site outside China was commissioned in Arnstadt (Thuringia). A plant in Debrecen (Hungary) is to be added by the end of 2025 (see [report in EWC-News 2/2023](#)). CATL plans to build a large battery plant in Saragossa (Spain) together with Stellantis. However, as there are currently no employees outside Germany, the special negotiating body has only ten German members.

[Press report on the legal dispute at N26](#)

[Short report on social partnership in Chinese companies](#)

[Study on co-determination practices in companies with Chinese investors](#)

7. Recently established European Works Councils

Japanese chemical group pre-empts new EWC directive



On 18 December 2024, an EWC agreement was concluded for graphite and carbon product manufacturer Tōkai Carbon. The company, based near Tokyo, had acquired production facilities in France, Germany, Italy and Poland in recent years, thereby falling within the scope of the EWC Directive. It mainly supplies the tyre, solar cell and semiconductor industries. The newly established EWC operates under German law and represents 1,500 employees in these four countries; the United Kingdom has not been included. The central management is based in Wiesbaden.

As provided for in the new EWC Directive, two plenary meetings are held each year, one of which is a video conference. The EWC Board consists of three members and will grow to seven as the EWC expands. They meet with central management four times a year, including twice via video conference. Extraordinary meetings are always held in person, and the EWC Board can request that all EWC members be allowed to attend. The consultation procedure for restructuring should normally be completed within six weeks. The EWC's catalogue of topics includes skills training during transformation processes, reducing the carbon footprint, sustainability, and occupational health and safety. The EWC and central management can establish working groups, e.g. on digitalisation.

As in the new EWC Directive, men and women must each hold at least 40% of the seats on the EWC. There are clear criteria to ensure confidentiality. In each individual case, the central management shall explain whether, why, to whom and for how long information is to be treated as confidential. All costs for setting up, operating and training the EWC shall be borne by the central management, including legal advice, legal representation and court proceedings. The EWC may call in one paid expert per subject area, not just one per meeting. It may also be accompanied on an ongoing basis by a coordinator from the European Industrial Trade Union Federation (industriALL). The right to training is in accordance with the German EWC Act; both in-house training and participation in external events are possible. A conciliation body consisting of three persons shall be set up to settle any disputes. In the event of termination of the EWC agreement, there is no threat for the EWC to be dissolved; instead, the subsidiary requirements (EWC "by law") come into force immediately.

Mexican packaging manufacturer establishes EWC in Denmark

On 26 February 2025, an EWC agreement was signed at the head office of Envases Europe in Løsning (Central Jutland). The group has 92 production sites on three continents with 12,000 employees worldwide and primarily manufactures food and beverage cans. In addition to Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Austria, Hungary and the Netherlands are also represented in the EWC. The EWC can also inform all European employees, e.g. in the United Kingdom.



The EWC chair is always appointed from Denmark and the deputy chair from Germany. They make up the select committee and only they are informed in exceptional circumstances. In addition, there is a

secretariat for administrative tasks consisting of the EWC chair, a management representative and a secretary. Two EWC meetings are held each year, one of which is via video conference and the other a face-to-face meeting at different locations. At the first two meetings, only whisper interpreters are provided on a trial basis and the number of languages is significantly reduced. The EWC can use the costs saved for experts, training, plant visits and campaigns.

Acquisitions are not disclosed to the EWC until the information has been made public. Trade union coordinators can attend all meetings but are not paid by the company. External experts are paid but cannot attend meetings with management. The EWC agreement runs until March 2027. If no new agreement has been concluded by then, the subsidiary requirements (EWC "by law") will automatically apply. There are no provisions for dissolving the EWC.

8. Pan-European company agreements

Diversity and inclusion at French environmental group



On 26 March 2025, a framework agreement on diversity and inclusion was concluded in Paris for Veolia. It applies to 120,000 employees in the European Single Market and the United Kingdom. The French group operates in the water/wastewater, waste management and energy supply sectors.

The framework agreement was drawn up by a special negotiating body set up by the EWC specifically for this purpose in consultation with central management. It contains ten guidelines for dealing with gender diversity, sexual orientation, disabilities and social and ethnic origin. A follow-up committee made up of EWC and trade union representatives will have access to a range of social indicators collected within the group. Veolia has had a European works council since 2005 with exemplary regulations, which were further improved in June 2015 (see [report in EWC-News 2/2015](#)). Since December 2013, there has been a pan-European agreement on occupational health and safety (see [report in EWC-News 1/2013](#)).

[Report on the signing](#)
[Download the agreement](#)

French care group seeking to improve occupational health and safety

Since 10 April 2025, the SE Works Council of Clariane (formerly Korian) has been negotiating an improvement to the protocol on health, safety and the prevention of accidents at work, which was first concluded in November 2021 (see [report in EWC-News 4/2021](#)). Since then, nine meetings of the European Health and Safety Committee have been held to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the protocol. In a new protocol, the SE works council wants to address the following additional issues: psychosocial risks and depression, work organisation and structural workloads, well-being at work, absenteeism (and its impact on colleagues), violence by third parties, and occupancy rates and staffing levels.



Clarine, based in Paris, is one of Europe's largest listed care companies. It has 63,000 employees who care for almost 900,000 people in 1,220 facilities in France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain. The EWC was established in June 2020 and later converted into an SE works council. In November 2022, it signed a joint declaration with central management containing concrete recommendations for strengthening social dialogue and reducing absenteeism (see [report in EWC-News 4/2022](#)).

[Report on the start of negotiations](#)

9. The view beyond Europe

Vestas wind technicians in the USA join a union



On 6 March 2025, the Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA) announced that a small group of technicians at Danish wind turbine manufacturer Vestas in Michigan had spoken out in favour of union representation for the first time. They criticised inadequate health and



safety standards, 16-hour shifts and holidays without adequate pay. The UWUA, which has 45,000 members in the USA, will negotiate a collective bargaining agreement on their behalf. Before the vote, the company ran an anti-union campaign to avoid collective bargaining. Such methods are widespread in the USA, including among German automotive companies (see [report in EWC-News 2/2024](#)).

[UWUA press release](#)

[International Confederation of Labour press release](#)

Swedish group violates its own framework agreement in the United States

On 14 April 2025, a delegation from UNI Global, the international umbrella organisation for service sector unions, was prevented from entering an Elanders plant in New Jersey. The majority of the workforce at the logistics centre, which supplies customers in the New York fashion industry, has joined the SEIU union and is demanding a shop-floor agreement. However, management did not recognise the union and, with the support of external consultants, began to exert pressure on the workforce ("union busting"). This violates the international framework agreement that Elanders signed in January 2009 at the same time as establishing a European works council (see [report in EWC-News 1/2009](#)). It includes the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. The Swedish printing and packaging company became a global provider of supply chain management, particularly contract logistics, through the acquisition of the German LGL Logistics Group in 2016.



[Report on the visit to New Jersey](#)

[Full text of the framework agreement](#)

Minimum wage for seafarers to be increased



On 15 April 2025, shipowners and trade unions agreed at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Geneva to increase the global minimum wage for seafarers by 6.2%. From January 2026, it will be \$690 (€607). Shipping is the only industry with an officially recognised minimum wage. It has been in force since 1958 and is intended to ensure decent work and enable seafarers to support their families.

[Report on the conclusion of negotiations](#)

[Opinion of the International Transport Workers' Federation](#)

10. Websites and digital tools

Works council app facilitates communication with employees

The "meinBR-App" application for works councils has been available in Germany since January 2025. The communication tool was developed over five years ago by the Austrian Trade Union Confederation (ÖGB). More than 250 works councils in Austria are already using it. The app offers customised functions for flexible, secure and independent communication with the workforce. It gives visibility to the work of the works council. Important information can be sent directly to the smartphones of the workforce via push notifications. It can also be used to create, send and evaluate forms and registrations. Users can choose between a smartphone app and desktop access.



[Testimonials on the use of the app](#)

[The app for Austria](#)

[The app for Germany](#)

Research network on the globalisation of work



The Interuniversity Research Centre on Globalisation and Work (CRIMT) focuses on changes in working life on a global scale. Coordinated by the



University of Montreal (Canada), it brings together 184 academic research workers specialising in industrial relations, human resource management and labour law. They come from 19 research institutions, many in North America, but also in Belgium, France and the United Kingdom. The website features a range of publications and invitations to webinars and conferences on international labour relations.

[The CRIMT website](#)

Occupational health and safety from an Anglo-Saxon perspective

An Australian consultant and journalist has been running the SafetyAtWorkBlog for over 10 years. He takes an informed and critical look at safety issues in the workplace. The blog has received several Australian and US awards as a digital source for news and analysis on occupational health and safety.



[The SafetyAtWorkBlog](#)

Self-help for vulnerable groups of the population



Acorn is an international association with 250,000 members in 15 countries that acts like a trade union for its members, primarily people on low and middle incomes. Acorn organises self-help, training, campaigns and research on local issues such as housing costs, unemployment, stagnating wages and inadequate public services.

Recent issues include hospital accessibility and the role of microfinance in poverty reduction. The association was established in the United States in 2002 and has European branches in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Belgium, Italy, Malta and the Czech Republic.

[Acorn's website](#)

11. New publications

Case studies on co-determination in the use of artificial intelligence (AI)

On 5 February 2025, the Hans Böckler Foundation published an empirical study entitled "Bots in the office – artificial intelligence and the transformation of office work in the digital age". It is based on 80 interviews in 21 companies and contains numerous case studies. These include a large technology group that uses AI in payroll accounting, a software developer that uses chatbots in customer support, a logistics service provider that uses AI for HR purposes, a major bank, an insurance company, a start-up and a car manufacturer. The study examines current practices in the use of AI and changes in office work. The authors see a strong ethical and moral orientation among new tech employees, which offers opportunities for co-determination. A practical guide to AI aimed at works councils was published in January 2025 (see [report in EWC-News 1/2025](#)).



[Brief description of the study](#)

[Download the study](#)

[Information sheet on the health risks of AI-supported systems](#)

History of the European umbrella federation for service sector trade unions



On 3 March 2025, a review of 25 years of UNI Europa was published. The union began its work in January 2000 after its four predecessor organisations decided to merge (similar to the formation of ver.di in Germany in 2001). The publication is divided into three chapters. The first part traces the trade union history of the four founding federations: the international federations for white-collar workers and technicians, telecommunications and postal services, printers and graphic designers, and arts and media. The second part describes the main reasons for the merger. The third part



presents specific trade union actions that have been implemented since the federation was established. Today, UNI Europa has 242 member unions in 50 European countries, representing a total of 7 million workers in the service sector. The professions represented by UNI Europa account for 60% of the total working population.

[Brief description of the brochure](#)

[Download the brochure](#)

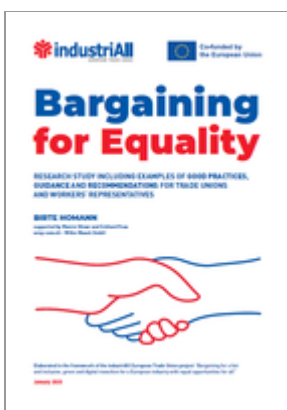
Current employment trends in EU countries

The EU's annual employment report has been available since 12 March 2025. It provides an overview of employment and social policy developments and the measures taken by the Member States. The focus is on the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (see [report in EWC-News 4/2017](#)). The employment rate has reached a new record high in the EU. The Netherlands and Sweden are at the top of the list, while Italy has the most ground to make up. The Netherlands has the highest part-time employment rate (almost 40%), while Bulgaria has the lowest (less than 5%). Spain has had the highest youth unemployment rate for years, while Germany has the lowest. The shortage of skilled workers is particularly acute in Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, the Czech Republic and Germany (in that order), while it is low in Romania and Bulgaria. Real wages are rising again, but have not yet made up for the losses incurred during the coronavirus pandemic. The largest wage increases were in Romania and Hungary. In addition to the EU-wide comparison, the report contains an evaluation for each individual country.



[Download the employment report](#)

Guide to collective bargaining for gender equality in the workplace



On 20 March 2025, the European Industrial Trade Union Federation (industriALL) published a guide "to equip trade unions with the tools and strategies needed to put equality firmly on the collective bargaining table". The report is the result of an EU-funded project on equal opportunities in the green and digital transformation. A step-by-step guide covers everything from assessing and analysing inequalities in the workplace to guidance on preparing and conducting negotiations, suggestions for implementation, follow-up and impact assessment. The aim is to go beyond traditional notions of gender equality and also combat forms of discrimination, harassment and prejudice in order to ensure equal opportunities for all. This issue is also being taken up by European works councils. In November 2024, for example, the Spanish clothing group Inditex reached a pan-European agreement on the prevention of violence against women and harassment in the workplace (see [report in EWC-News 1/2025](#)).

[Brief description of the guide](#)

[Download the guide](#)

12. The EWC Academy: examples of our work

German-Polish works council seminar in Gdańsk

From 2 to 4 April 2025, a seminar was held in Gdańsk for the second time (photo: seminar participants in front of the Crane Gate, landmark of the former Hanseatic city). The participants, half from Germany and half from Poland, exchanged views on labour relations in their countries and the functioning of their European works councils. Poland is the most important EU country in Eastern Europe and its economy is closely linked to Western Europe. For this reason, Polish delegates can be found in more than half of all European works councils. Since December 2023, Poland has had a new pro-European centre-left government (see [report in EWC-News 4/2023](#)). At the end of the



seminar, a trade union secretary from Solidarność gave a tour of the former Lenin Shipyard, the birthplace of the strikes against the communist regime.



EWC and SE introductory seminar at Montabaur Castle



From 22 to 25 April 2025, 20 works council members from nine companies attended the annual introductory seminar at the Montabaur Castle Training and Conference Centre, located directly at the high-speed train station halfway between Frankfurt and Cologne. The seminar was a combination of taster days for newcomers with an insight into the practical work of employee representation in individual countries, training in communication and hands-on practice of a European consultation procedure. Issues relating to SE conversion were the subject of a separate

working group.

Unilever to spin off ice cream division

British consumer goods group Unilever plans to spin off its ice cream division by the end of 2025 and list it on the stock exchange. It will operate under the name "The Magnum Ice Cream Company" and will be based in Amsterdam. In 2024, it generated sales of €8.3 billion. On 28 April 2025, the European works council's select committee discussed for the first time what impact this will have on the structure of European employee representation. Of the 36 EWC members at Unilever, nine work in the ice cream division. With the support of the EWC Academy, various options for the split into two separate divisional works councils and the future after the IPO are currently being discussed.



Restructuring and the sale of entire business units are common at Unilever, e.g. the sale of the margarine division to a financial investor (see [report in EWC-News 2/2017](#)). The EWC has been running a campaign for years under the slogan "People before profit", demonstrating that increasing profitability can be compatible with the workforce's expectations in terms of skills and capabilities. In March 2019, it concluded a pan-European framework agreement with central management on strategic HR development (see [report in EWC-News 1/2019](#)). On 27 May 2025, the EWC was able to secure a three-year guarantee of employment conditions for the entire workforce of the ice cream division in the EU and the UK. The statutory guarantee in the event of a transfer of undertakings is only twelve months.

[Report on the spin-off of the division](#)

[Report on the three-year employment guarantee](#)

13. Current seminar schedule


The EWC Academy and its predecessor organisation have been conducting conferences and seminars for members of European works councils, SE works councils and special negotiating bodies since January 2009. So far, 981 employee representatives from 326 companies have taken part including many of them on multiple occasions. This corresponds to 25% of all transnational works councils in Europe. These include 30 companies with the legal form of SE (European Company). In addition, there are numerous in-house events and guest lectures given to other organisations.

[Overview of forthcoming seminar schedule](#)

EWC and SE seminar in Paris



From 23 to 25 September 2025, a seminar will be held in Paris for the fifth time. The aim is to gain a better understanding of the industrial relations and union system in France. This is particularly important for employee representatives at European level since the characteristics of information and consultation under the EWC and SE Directives are strongly influenced by the French model. A special highlight of the seminar is a visit to a trade fair for French works councils.



[The seminar programme](#)
[Report from the last seminar in Paris](#)

Seminar on renegotiating EWC agreements in Würzburg

The annual legal seminar will take place at Steinburg Castle in Würzburg from 7 to 10 October 2025. The new EWC Directive is expected to be adopted in the course of 2025. As the new standards will not automatically apply in all cases, a large number of EWC agreements will have to be adapted. Special rules apply in this regard and the negotiation period is limited to two years. This seminar will address the critical issues in order to prepare for this.



[The seminar programme](#)

18th Hamburg Conference for European and SE Works Councils



The next Hamburg Conference will take place on 26 and 27 January 2026. As always, the latest developments in the EWC and SE landscape, case studies ("best practice") from a number of companies and current court rulings will be presented. The conference will focus on further developments in the revision of the EWC Directive. The detailed programme for the conference will be available after the summer break.

In-house events

An overview of possible topics for in-house events can be found here:

[Examples of in-house seminars](#)

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