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"Fair working conditions and fair competition through social partnership"

The Europe Day of the German and Austrian Construction Industry entitled "Social Partnership for Europe" took place on 16 October 2018 in Brussels.

"Fair working conditions and fair competition through social partnership", is the key sentence of Manfred Purps' (board member of SOKA-BAU) welcome speech that already summarised the fourth Europe Day of the construction industry. It was the first time that the paritarian institutions of the German and Austrian social partners of the construction industry – BUAK and SOKA-BAU – organised and hosted the Europe Day together.

More than 100 guests from European institutions, European and national social partners, diplomats as well as academics followed the invitation to the premises of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the official cooperation partner of the Europe Day 2018. One of the prominent guests was H.E. Dr. Elisabeth Kornfeind, Austrian Ambassador in the Kingdom of Belgium. On the eve of the conference she emphasized the importance of "A Europe that protects". In his speech, Dr. Christoph Leitl (EUROCHAMBRES) made the connection to the organisers of the event by saying "The social partnership in the construction industry is a model for Europe – if you do not work together on the construction site, there will be no building". On behalf of the EESC, Oliver Röpke also urged: "We need more justice in the single market".

François Biltgen, judge at the European Court of Justice, gave the keynote at the event with prominent guests: "The social dialogue between the European social partners has led to important framework agreements that have also found significance in the case law of the ECJ. The ECJ may be the engine of European social policy, but the engine also needs a vehicle it can pull, and that is EU social law".

The (future) distribution of roles between politics and social partnership was the core topic being discussed in two high-ranking panel discussions moderated by Dr. Lehmann (ZDF). The panelists focused on the aspect of "Safeguarding social standards by paritarian institutions in Europe" and included the MEPs Evelyn Regner (S&D), Terry Reintke (Verts/ALE) and Thomas Mann (PPE) as well as representatives of the social partners. The representatives of the paritarian institutions BIM Ing. Hans-Werner Frömmel and Josef Muchitsch (both BUAK/Austria), Jean-Louis Peyrude (AEIP/EU) and Carlo Trestini (CNCE/Italy), vividly illustrated the significant positive impact of their institutions to the European Social Model: the effective fight against undeclared work and social dumping through close international cooperation. It should be pointed out that there is hardly any other industry in which

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workers are as mobile as they are in the construction industry, an industry employing more than 15 million people across the EU. According to figures provided by SOKA-BAU and BUAK, more than 85,000 workers were posted to German construction sites and around 15,000 workers were posted to Austrian construction sites in 2017.

Keeping this in mind, Josef Muchitsch, Member of the Austrian Parliament and Chairman of Bau-Holz stressed: "The European social partners must play a stronger role and do more for a fair Europe in European politics. The social funds in particular are an instrument that the social partners can use to a much greater extent to combat wage and social dumping".

The representatives of the European social partners Ulrich Paetzold (FIEC) and Dietmar Schäfers (EFBWW), as well as Andreas Strohbach from the European Commission, were unanimous in their common goal to fill the social partnership even more with life in Brussels. However, this also includes the controversial fight for positions in different matters: Be it the recently adopted EU Posted Workers Directive, be it the planned European Labour Authority or the Commission's proposal to improve access to social protection for all workers and the self-employed.

On behalf of the social partners of the German construction industry, Uwe Nostitz (ZDB) clarified in his speech: "We need reliable policies which bring tangible improvements for people as well as an ideal, a model of a European idea with which people can identify".

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BUAK

The Construction Workers' Annual Leave and Severance Pay Fund (BUAK) is a corporate body under public law. As a social partners' institution it is equally representing the employees and employers. The main task is the administration of the leave- and severance pay entitlements as well as the worker bad weather compensation. Another task is the administration of the alternative entitlement to winter holiday provision and the since 2014 newly added activity field bridging allowance. BUAK Corporate Pension Insurance Fund (BVK) is fully owned by BUAK and is organised as a limited liability company under Austrian law (GesmbH). Since 31 December 2017, it holds severance pay contributions in trust for 217,211 construction employees, 95,319 employees not subject to BUAG, and 13,505 self-employed workers.

SOKA-BAU

SOKA-BAU is a paritarian institution established by the social partners of the German construction industry (Hauptverband der Deutschen Bauindustrie e. V., Industriegewerkschaft Bauen-Agrar-Umwelt and Zentralverband des Deutschen Baugewerbes e. V). It unites two institutions under one roof: the Urlaubs- und Lohnausgleichskasse der Bauwirtschaft (founded in 1949) and the Zusatzversorgungskasse des Baugewerbes AG (founded in 1957). Together these two institutions protect the holiday entitlements for domestic and posted blue-collar workers, manage the occupational pension fund and co-fund the vocational training for workers and companies of the construction industry.



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BUAK

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