



25 YEARS
EUROPEAN WORKS COUNCIL DIRECTIVE
AND 25 YEARS EWC SERVICE
25 years of EWC in 25 blogs

<https://www.sbiformaat.nl/ewc>

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1. Introduction

On 22 September 1994, the first European Work Council (EWC) Directive was adopted. This is exactly 25 years ago. The EWC Directive was a major milestone in labour relations: for the first time cross border employee representation has been institutionalised. With the adoption of the EWC directive, employees of multinational companies with more than 1000 employees, got the legal right to organise themselves at European level. 25 years later, the EWC database of the European Trade Union Institute contains around 1.100 agreements of active EWC's.

The mere existence of the EWC directive, giving rights and facilities to European employees, is already a success. It makes multinational companies aware that they cannot take measures without taking into account the interests of its employees. All 1.100 EWC's are relevant players in the field of the social dialogue at company level, some more- and some less successful. There are of course points to be improved: of all companies that should have an EWC, it is estimated that not even half of them have one. And for the existing EWC's, it is rather difficult and complex to enforce the legal rights, when ignored by a company.

The EWC Service has been supporting in establishing and training EWC's from the very start in 1994. We celebrated the success of EWCs with you in a series of 25 blogs in which we shared our 25 years of experience with the EWC. Some of the blogs were very topical at the moment and less now, like Brexit. But still, they show something about the context in which EWCs operate, so we decided to include them. But most of them are still relevant. Or amusing, we hope.

For this booklet, we subdivided the blogs in four chapters:

1. [Practice & tips](#)
2. [Legal issues](#)
3. [The daily EWC life](#)
4. [Research & facts](#)
5. [Vlog EWC platform](#)

Practice & tips

2. You never know until you ask

YOU NEVER KNOW UNTIL YOU ASK,



SO JUST ASK.

For many European Works Councils (EWCs) it is a struggle to get the right information, and to get it on time. Therefore, I was pleasantly surprised when I experienced something completely different.

We were in the office of the Austrian subsidiary of a multinational company. The company had announced its plans to sell its Austrian activities and had duly informed the EWC. The Select committee was, together with the Austrian EWC members, discussing the possible impact for the business and the employees.

“And what about Slovakia”, one of the Austrians said. “Slovakia?”, we had not heard that this country would be involved too. “Well”, the Austrian representative explained; “There are 25 employees in Slovakia, working solely for Austria; will they also be part of the

divestiture?” This was not discussed before since the Slovakian EWC seat had never been filled. We did not know how to find out more about the Slovakian situation, until one Austrian representative suggested: “The two managers responsible for the activities in Slovakia actually sit in this office, I can ask them what they know. Especially one of them is quite an open guy”, he added.

We invited this manager, who was happy to share his knowledge with the Select Committee and the other members of the EWC, and he explained exactly what activities the Slovakian colleagues were performing. He told us that the management in Austria was quite worried about what the mother company intended to do with this. He also promised the group assistance to establish contacts with the Slovakian colleagues. This of course was an exception. Nevertheless, how often do we really try?

[Have you ever received information from an unexpected source? Please share with us.](#)

[Sjef Stoop](#), EWC trainer and advisor

3. Interpreters



Okay, it is not always easy. When you try to make a joke and get a laugh in another language, it will sometimes fall flat, since some jokes are difficult to translate. If you are lucky, and your joke does come across, you experience a delay in reaction; It could be that the English speakers laugh right away, then you see the Fins grin, then the Germans smile and at last the Poles chuckle. A matter of different speed of translation and languages.

But, what would a European Works Council do without interpreters? They enable us to talk and to understand each other in all 24 European Union languages! With their simultaneous translation skills, they are able to transfer our messages to an understandable language within seconds.

As a side effect, interpreters force us to have better-organised meetings. It is just not an option to talk simultaneously, interrupt constantly or talk unclear and with a high speed.

And, most of the time, they even manage to adequately interpret my lame jokes.

Where would I be without the interpreters? Thanks folks, I hope to work with you for many more years!

[Mariëlle van der Coelen](#), EWC trainer and advisor

[Have you worked with interpreters or are you an interpreter? Please share your best story.](#)

4. Being riffed: the enrichment of the English language

In some multinational companies, restructurings are a permanent state of being.

“We embrace change”, employees read when turning on their computers in the morning.

“Change makes us grow!”, the screensaver screams in the faces of the workforce. “The only constant in our industry is change”, the CEO tells the EWC at a meeting.

In those companies, the English language also changes and new lingo is being invented.

Reorganisations become “reorgs”. Reduction in Force evolves to a verb: to ‘rif’ someone is to make someone redundant. “I haven’t seen Simon for quite some time”. “Oh, didn’t you know, Simon has been riffed”. People are being riffed.

The English language is being enriched...



[Do you have any specific labour related lingo in your company? Please share it with us.](#)

[Mariëlle van der Coelen](#), EWC trainer and advisor

5. The three lamest excuses of management for declaring a topic not transnational

In order for a topic to be subject of information and consultation in the EWC, it has to be transnational. So if you do not want to discuss something with the EWC, you tell them the issue at stake is not transnational. Here are the three lamest excuses of management why a topic is not transnational that we have heard over the last years:

1. "It is not in the scope of the EWC, since it is a global and not a European project".
Yeah, right.
2. When transferring production from Germany to Romania: "It only concerns Germany. The Romanian colleagues are very happy with the transfer". Uhm, okay?
3. When the CEO announces a global 10% cost saving operation in a press release: "It is not transnational. Each country will look for itself how the 10% cost reduction is being achieved". Ah, I see...

What excuses have you heard in your company?

Please share the best examples.

Mariëlle van der Coelen, EWC trainer and advisor



6. The 5 best tips for working with interpreters

The 5 best tips for working with interpreters in your EWC meeting.

1. Send the PowerPoints to the interpreters before the meeting
2. Have a structured meeting
 - Ask the word by raising your hands
 - The chairperson gives the floor
 - Let the speaker and interpreters finish before you start talking
3. Speak well towards the microphone with sufficient volume in a normal speed
4. Be careful with jokes, metaphors and wordplay
5. Articulate very well numbers and names to avoid phonetic deviations

[Mariëlle van der Coelen](#), EWC trainer and advisor



7. The European works Council and dealing with psycho-social risks



In many companies I can see high work pressure and workloads leading to too much stress. Too much stress is not only harmful for the wellbeing of employees, but also for their health. Additionally, it increases the risk for accidents.

This is an increasing problem that affects the life of individual employees, but also has an impact on companies in general and the society at large.

In the past it happened too often that European Works Council members brought 'the workload/work related stress' to the table and Central Management just denied the mere existence of high workloads and psycho-social risks. They argued, in my view too often, that psycho-social risks are individual problems, impossible to manage and not the companies responsibility.

It seems, now, that psychological health issues are slowly taken more seriously by company management.

I have, together with our Health and Safety expert, colleague [Nicole Pikkemaat](#), developed a specific training for European Works Councils on work-related stress and psycho-social risk issues. In this training course we address the background and root causes of stress and possible solutions at individual- and company level. We exchange some of the good examples and practices that we have seen in different companies. We also check your own 'social psychological risk profile' and ask you to reflect on this. Being a trainer of European Works Councils is also at times a very stressful job. Last December, I was giving a work-related stress training course for the EWC members of a large multinational company. Together with my colleague Nicole Pikkemaat, we tried to create a stress-free atmosphere, and we played some relaxing music while preparing for the training. Then, when everything was ready to start, we missed the technician, the one person that we absolutely needed to be able to communicate and understand each other in the six languages required. As you can imagine, our stress levels got up, but even more for the technician who came in running half an hour late. We all took a deep breath and then we started the training course, with a real life experience of a stress-coping strategy.

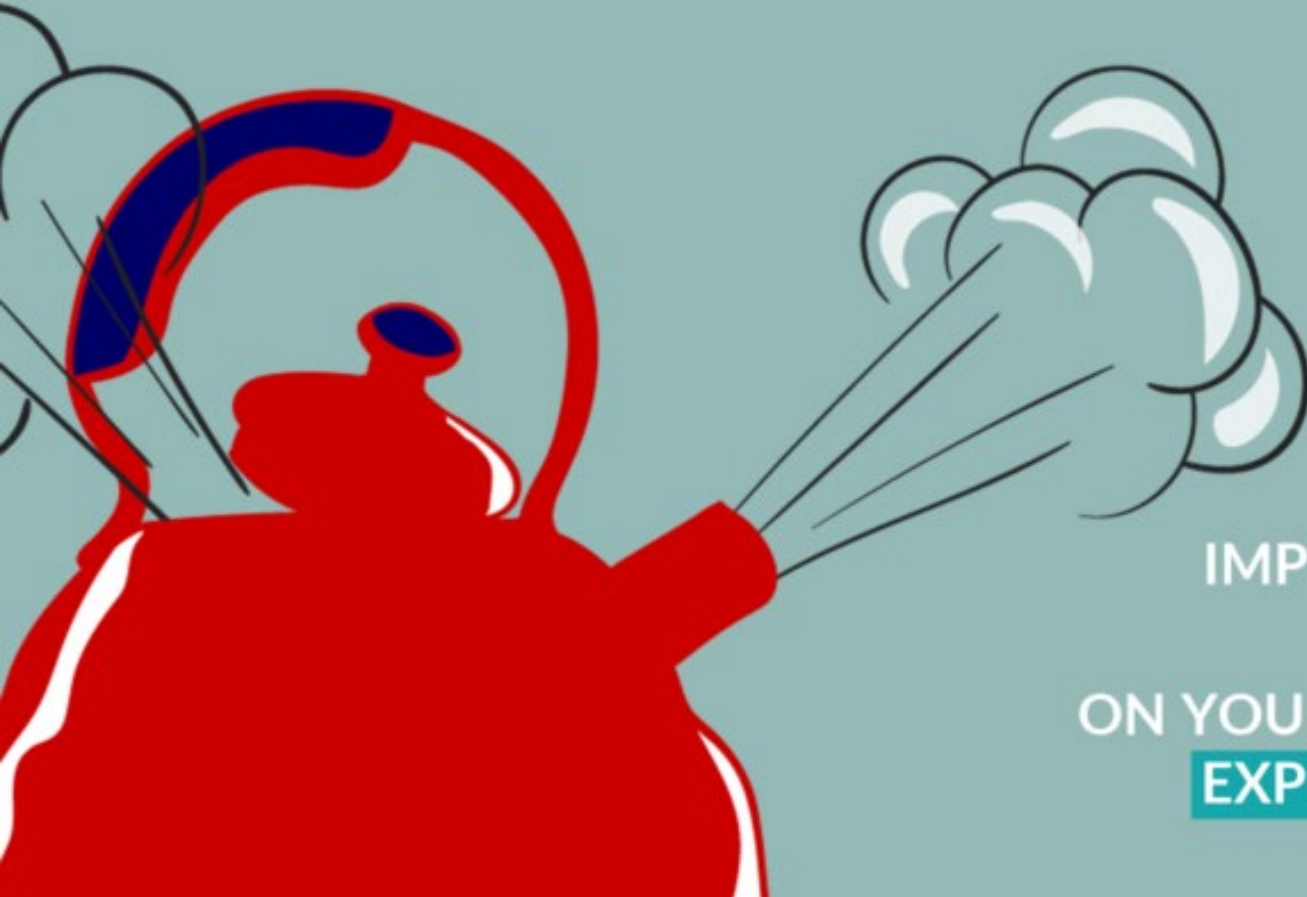
[How does your European Works Council deal with the topic of psycho-social risks?](#)

[Mariëlle van der Coelen](#), EWC trainer and advisor

Legal issues

8. Brexit; burning bridges?

THE **BREXIT** STORY IS SLOWLY REACHING ITS BOILING POINT



THE
IMPACT OF
BREXIT
ON YOUR **EWC**
EXPLAINED

The Brexit story is slowly reaching its boiling point. In this utter confusion, the situation for European Works Councils (EWCs) seem to be a little more straightforward. In March 2019, the European Commission published a 'Notice to stakeholders' clarifying the matter. In case of a 'no deal', the EWC Directive will no longer apply to the UK. In the old 'Withdrawal Agreement' that was concluded under Theresa May, the same would have been the case, but only after a transition period.

This means that the UK employees will no longer count to determine if a company has the required number of employees to establish an EWC. However the existing EWCs that would no longer reach this threshold, are not automatically dissolved. Since the EWC Agreement is a private agreement between two parties, it may still be valid under national law, depending amongst others, on what clauses the

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agreement may have on falling below the thresholds. It is important to realise that such an EWC will no longer function under the rights and obligations of the current EWC Directive.

Companies that have established an EWC under UK legislation will, as of the withdrawal date, immediately move under new jurisdiction. If the company does not appoint a subsidiary for this role, it will be automatically the member state with the highest number of employees.

Finally, but most importantly:

what will happen with the UK colleagues in the EWC?

They will not have the automatic, legal right to be represented in an EWC anymore. It all depends on the particular EWC Agreement. If the scope of the Agreement is defined in terms of the EU&EEA, the UK is out after Brexit. That is, unless there is an additional clause in the Agreement allowing for some time before changes in the covered countries take effect.

The 'Notice to Stakeholders' that the EC published explicitly refers to the article 13 of the EWC Directive. This states that where the structure of the company changes significantly, negotiations must start to amend the Agreement. The withdrawal of the UK may lead to such a significant change. Better for the existing EWCs would be to proactively engage with management and agree that the UK colleagues will continue to be full members of the EWC. In many companies, the EWC and Central Management have already agreed that also in future, 'whatever mess the politicians make of it', UK employees will continue to be part of the European Works Council. Sadly enough, we also have some examples of managers, that argue 'so you want to be out, then you have to go out all the way', and do not want the UK colleagues participating in the EWC anymore, thus ignoring the deep controversies that split the UK at the moment. Europe is facing increasing tensions, between the different EU and non-EU countries and also in internal country politics.

We believe that the EWC could be a much needed tool to re-unite and bring people together. Let us not forego this opportunity.

[Sjef Stoop](#), EWC trainer and advisor

9. “Pay the Lawyer!”

Last week the British Central Arbitration Committee (CAC) issued an important decision concerning European Works Councils (EWC). The CAC is the committee that rules on complaints by EWCs that are subject to British legislation. This decision concerns the failure to adhere to information and consultation procedures of the EWC Agreement of the US telecom company Verizon. Next to that the EWC had also submitted a complaint concerning the payment of the legal assistance.

The complaints concerning information and consultation were easily dealt with, because during the hearing the Company admitted that they had been wrong. For instance, the EWC had complained that the Employer had failed to invite the affected to countries to the extraordinary meeting. The Employer, in hindsight, agreed that this was an omission and they should have invited these country representatives to the meeting.

The EWC had also complained about the excessive use of the confidentiality clause, and the company’s firm restriction to communicate with the other EWC members. Even after the meeting, the Select Committee members were not allowed to contact the representatives from affected countries. Also in this case a the Company agreed that this use of the confidentiality clause was not appropriate. They should have identified which information was restricted with a motivation and a timeframe. Since the Company admitted that the complaints of the EWC were justified, the Arbitration committee did not address these issues.

The EWC’s complaint concerning the payment of the legal costs was more controversial. This complaint dealt with the right for the EWC to call in legal support when going to the CAC and to the duty of the company to pay for the costs of this



legal support. The Verizon EWC lawyer quoted the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union that states: “Legal aid shall be made available to those who lack sufficient resources in so far as such aid is necessary to ensure effective access to justice.”

The Company referred to the ‘Emerson case’, a CAC decision of 2016. At that time, the CAC had ruled that: “The CAC is not a body where lawyers are required” and a failure to pay legal costs as such, is not in breach with the UK EWC Regulations. This ruling was very much to the detriment of EWCs that needed to claim reimbursement of legal costs. The Verizon EWC lawyer however, explained that the ‘Emerson case’ should be assessed in its own context and on its own merits. In this particular case the Emerson Company had offered to pay the costs of the legal expert at the hearing which made this case an entirely different one.

The fact that both the EWC lawyer and the chair of the Arbitration committee in the Verizon procedure were involved in the Emerson case as well, made the hearing even more interesting. This perhaps explains the miraculous somersault in the final verdict. On the one hand, the committee stated that a failure to pay legal costs as such, does not constitute a breach of the EWC Agreement or the UK Rules. “However this does not mean that it can never constitute such a breach.” As a general principle, the assistance of an expert is “necessary” and falls within the “means required”. The expert is entitled to reasonable payment and the reasonable expenses of his or her appointment should be borne by the Company.

So it is clear and we believe this also supports other EWCs taking legal action! If the EWC decides to go to court, the Company is expected to pay the ‘reasonable’ legal costs.

For the full text of the decision, please

see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cac-outcome-verizon-ewc-the-central-management-of-verizon-group>

[Have you ever considered the need for legal support? And if so, was it granted?](#)

[Sjef Stoop](#), EWC trainer and advisor

<https://www.sbiformaat.nl/ewc>



10. Brexit – now for real on 31 January 2020

The UK will leave the European Union on January 31st at midnight (Greenwich +1 hr). The most probable scenario at the time of writing this blog is that there will be a transition period until the end of 2020.



This transition period has been agreed upon between the European Commission and the UK government in a withdrawal agreement. The agreement has passed the House of Commons in the UK and is now in the House of Lords. When the whole UK Parliament is in agreement, the last hurdle is to be found

in the European Parliament. The Members of the European Parliament will have to vote on 29 January 2020.

Although it is expected that the withdrawal agreement will pass both the UK and the EU parliament, nothing is sure yet until the 29th of this month. The whole Brexit has been full of surprises so far. Without the withdrawal agreement, on the 31st of January we would have a crash-bang-wallop hard-Brexit.

But let's take the most probable scenario: Brexit takes at 31 January 2020 under the ruling of the withdrawal agreement. The withdrawal agreement will ensure that Union law will be applicable during the transition period, until 31 December 2020. There are exceptions to this rule, but the European Works Council (EWC) is not one of them. This means that until the end of the year, the UK will be in the scope of your EWC agreement, meaning that the employees in the UK are part of the total number of employees, transnational topics that involve the UK are matters for Information and Consultation in the EWC and you will keep the UK members on board.

If you have an EWC agreement under TICER, the UK transposition regulation of the European Works Council Directive, nothing will change until the 1 January 2021 and you

can still go the Central Arbitration Committee in case of disputes.

Does all the above means that you do not have to do anything? Well, we would recommend that you take action to keep the UK on board of your EWC also after the transition period ends. More details on this you can find in our former Brexit

blog: <https://www.sbiformaat.nl/blog/brexit-burning-bridges>

[Have you prepared your EWC for Brexit? Please let us know.](#)

[Mariëlle van der Coelen](#), EWC trainer and advisor

11. The European Works Council in action



A very common discussion that we often have in the EWC is 'how to escalate' the EWC issues. How to put pressure on management so that they start listening to you!

Unfortunately, for this we do not have just one size fits all solution. It is very much depending on the case and the situation to choose the right tool and procedure. Most EWCs use arguments & facts to convince management to listen and to give an opinion on the intended changes. You start asking questions and further information and based on this, the EWC can give its views.

Nevertheless, what can you do if management is not listening and not in compliance with the Agreement that you have? First, you will probably tell them nice and friendly, then less friendly and more formal using your legal framework. This is entirely obvious, and most EWCs get to this level at a certain point in time. Then

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it gets a bit more adventurous. If you are still in dispute and you believe this is an important topic, you have to continue and put even more effort into it. You can do a few things.

First, you will need to ensure that your colleagues support your view. Therefore, you have to communicate a lot!

Bring your points across in all countries and use your network with the local councils and the Trade Unions. Sometimes, if you are not yet discussing the issues with the highest management level, you can escalate your issue to a higher level. If you do so, please be sure that you have a real case and you have enough facts supporting the case. In any case be sure to inform your company contact person of the steps you are about to take. The last and final resource is going to court. Make sure you have your necessary documents and your arguments ready for such an official legal procedure. The legal procedure, the how you go to court, depends on the law of which your EWC Agreement is based. Going to court puts a lot of pressure on the group, the Select Committee and is very time consuming but do not be scared to take this step. Use the rights you have to make use of an expert, a lawyer, ensure the commitment of the entire EWC, and just do it!

[Have you ever considered taking legal action? Did your EWC go to court? Please share your experiences.](#)

[Petra Molenaar](#) EWC trainer/expert

12. The British Central Arbitration Committee outcomes in cases Verizon and Vesuvius EWC's



Recently, the British Central Arbitration Committee (CAC) published two interesting court decisions that are favourable for European Works Councils. The first court decision was published on December 11, 2019 and dealt with the complaint of the Vesuvius EWC. The second one was nine days later, and dealt with a complaint of the Verizon EWC. We distilled 6 important lessons from these two cases:

1. The EWC is entitled to financial information. In case of a restructuring this includes the financial costs of the restructuring. Without this information the EWC will not have the “full picture of the commercial rationale”. This also includes the overall redundancy costs as an element of the restructuring costs. Asking for the overall redundancy costs does not imply that the EWC duplicates the role of the local negotiators.
2. The employer has to provide EWCs with requested financials, even if certain financial data are not (directly) available.
3. There is no minimal threshold which applies to transnational matters falling within the scope of the EWC, unless specifically negotiated and agreed in the relevant

EWC agreement. Anyway, without disclosing the financial data the EWC 'would not be in a position to understand whether or not, the likely overall costs were indeed small in relative terms as the company might contend'. Hence, according to the CAC, the EWC must be able to check the financials and does not have to take every statement from the company for granted.

4. Nor is the excuse valid that 'certain information is not even given to the board of directors'. It is not a legitimate argument that the EWC should not be provided with more information than that is provided to the board, if this information is within the remit of the EWCs right to information.
5. If an EWC claims it is not sufficiently informed, it must be able to point out specifically what kind of information is lacking. On the other side, as can also be learned from point 1, the EWC's right to Information & Consultation is not limited to the impact on employees only. The EWC must be able to understand a decision and the rationale for that decision. Whether the information provided by an Employer is sufficient in any given context, can best be established by both parties in mutual agreement. There is no "bright line" test to determine whether the information provided by an Employer is sufficient in any given context.
6. Likewise, no party can unilaterally declare the information and consultation processes to be closed. Neither is it up to the Employer unilaterally to label a document an "opinion statement". Whether a document is an "opinion statement" is a matter for the EWC to decide.

For a more extended analysis of these two CAC decisions, please see [British Central Arbitration Committee confirms basic EWC rights](#)

[Sjef Stoop](#), EWC trainer and advisor

The daily EWC life

<https://www.sbiformaat.nl/ewc>



13. The EWC as a tool for personal empowerment



“If I would not have been a member of the EWC and the Select Committee, I would never have taken the step to become a politician”, a Polish EWC member told me three years ago. Now he is mayor of a small Polish town. We are often not aware, but being a member of the European Works Council is a huge learning experience. In working in diverse

groups, with people from so many different backgrounds, training in communication skills and learning about all aspects of your company, you will gain a lot of skills and knowledge. Sometimes you also need to be courageous to bring employees' issues across in discussion with company management. To be confrontational can be far beyond your comfort zone, but you will surely learn a lot and develop yourself. Apart from the Polish mayor (whom I still miss as EWC member), we also personally know a French and Norwegian deputy mayor and many more examples of EWC members that were offered new and interesting jobs, since they developed themselves to active, skilled and knowledgeable employee representatives. Go for it, EWC members!

[Mariëlle van der Coelen](#), EWC trainer and advisor

[How did the EWC empower you? Please share your experience.](#)

14. Fly away!

Working in an EWC means that you travel a lot. Spend time on airports and planes. Surely it is not every time that you enjoy these travels. Especially when your flight is delayed, you miss your connecting flight or when the weather is so bad that the pilot needs to abort break his landing and take you to a less desired airport...

But still... I feel like a woman of the world. One of my treats is going to Starbucks, order a nice and large coffee and allow myself a snack to go with that coffee. Install in a good position and have fun people watching. The variety of people and cultures on an airport like Schiphol Amsterdam is just huge!!!

On the plane I can get some work done, chill with my favorite Netflix, play hide and seek with the two year old in front of me. Or just stare out the window on a clear day and try to see where I am (not a chance by the way).

Nothing beats home. That is true. But having the opportunity to travel and go shopping in Milan, just for an hour or so. There are more boring days at the office than these.

I am writing this blog on a plane. My neighbor and I just exchanged our most interesting

flying experiences and decides mutually that we could do without the complementary meal.

Flying awakens the child in me. I still have the desire to ask for a look in the cockpit and one of these travels I might find the courage to actually ask if I can have a look.

Keep you posted...

[Maayke Somers](#), EWC trainer and advisor



15. Guilty Pleasures – Food unites!

One of the advantages of being a member of a European Works Council is that you get to taste many different foods. One of my 'old-time' favourites is to ask all the members to bring something special, nice and tasty food, something that is specific for your country. You cannot imagine how creative everyone gets to bring the country specials. Sometimes bottles of the best wines and home-brewed spirits are carried around Europe to have everyone taste 'the best' from home.

Bringing these delicious cakes, chocolates, sweets or cheese and many more, and explain what you have brought, gives a positive vibe and unites the group. It often also leads to an easy and informal chat with Management about all the 'guilty pleasures' put on the table. It could also happen that the home-brewed bottle is secretly shared



under the table in a restaurant in the evening, or that the salty Dutch black liquorice suddenly disappears in the garbage bin.

Tasting the different country flavours is a good cultural learning experience and an enrichment for all!

I love the different cultural flavours and I hope to be enriched every time that I travel to a new European country or meet a new European Works Council.

[Petra Molenaar](#) EWC trainer/expert

16. Goodbye 2019 – Welcome 2020



— HAPPY NEW YEAR —

As we are nearing the end of 2019, it is an appropriate time for us to look back at the year in which the European Works Council celebrated its 25th birthday. With this anniversary, the EWC should be mature and grown up.

However, the ETUI survey among 1.600 EWC-members showed that there is still a lot of room for growth. In 2019, the EWC Service team has done its best to help EWCs to release this growth and develop their potential. It has brought us to all corners of Europe: Belgrade, Milan, Genoa, Vienna, Marseille, Barcelona, Madrid, London, Upsala, Oslo and many other more destinations. We are always out and about to strengthen European Works Councils.

We have supported EWCs in restructurings and take-overs, helped them to have meetings that are more effective, have given trainings and we

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have supported the setting-up of new EWCs. I personally was most impressed by the employee engagement and expression of solidarity when a multinational company decided to close two factories. The 488 employees tried hard to prevent the closure and mitigate the consequences. The EWC has actively supported them in reaching their goals. When, during a EWC meeting at the company's headquarters, 100 European colleagues from another part of Europe travelled in to demonstrate and preserve jobs, I realised again that I have a job that matters, being able to support workers and help building a sustainable future.

Well, we hope that 2019 has been a good year for you and your EWC's.

For 2020, we wish all the best. You can continue to count on our support!

On behalf of the SBI Formaat EWC Service team, [Mariëlle van der Coelen](#)

17. Breakfast again?

The European Works Council is mostly about serious stuff as restructurings, mergers and take-overs, or financial data. We notice that EWC members have different experiences in labour relations in their countries and therefore sometimes have different perceptions on the roles and responsibilities of employee representation. But also in the day to day interaction between EWC members from all over Europe, more basic differences become apparent.

Have you ever tried to establish diner time together? When the Germans prefer to have their evening meal around 18 o'clock, the Spanish delegates rather start at a time when their northern European colleagues have begun to starve.



And have you ever been served a Dutch lunch consisting of cheese sandwiches and milk? We have seen puzzled reactions from the non-Dutch EWC members: breakfast again?

Of course with a bit of flexibility, curiosity and humour, the day the day interaction between EWC members is doable and often even fascinating. The same goes for the different perceptions of labour relations.

When you are listen to each other carefully and are willing to release you own conviction in the search for a compromise, you will get there as an EWC. Actually, when learning from each other's backgrounds, being an EWC member can really be an enriching experience.

[Where did you discover cultural differences and how did you overcome them? Please share your experience.](#)

[Mariëlle van der Coelen](#), EWC trainer and advisor

18. A letter to the pope

EWC members stem from different countries. Each European country with its own historical, cultural and legal background has its own typical labour relations. And apart from their countries' culture, EWC members also bring their own personality to the EWC meeting. We just can't leave ourselves at home.

This makes the work in the EWC sometimes difficult, but more often inspiring and from time to time remarkable. We as experienced EWC advisors sometimes think we have seen it all, but every now and then an event in the EWC catches us by surprise.

An EWC member from a factory of which the closure was being discussed, did everything to prevent the shutdown. At the next EWC meeting he proudly reported that he had written a letter to the pope. The pope! The other members looked at him in amazement and so did the EWC advisor.

Anyway, the pope did not prevent the closure of the production site, but at least the plan was postponed and in the end the social plan was above average. An intervention from above?

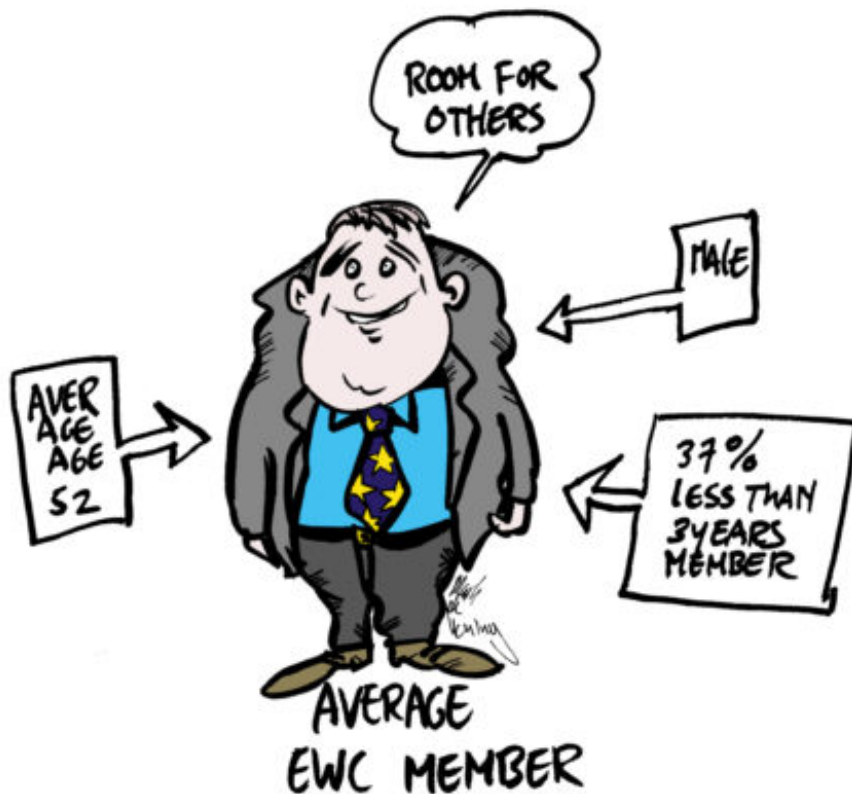


[Have you ever been surprised by your fellow EWC members? Please share with us.](#)

[Mariëlle van der Coelen](#), EWC
trainer and advisor

Research & facts

19. Remarkable outcomes ETUI, 1



This year soon, the ETUI will publish the results of the largest survey of European Works Council representatives taken to date. This survey brings together the opinions on many EWC relevant topics of more than 1600 employee representatives from over 300 different EWCs. In this blog and some of our blogs to follow, we will give you a sneak preview on some of the most interesting outcomes.

Let's start with gender equality. Here, it seems, there is still progress to be made. Only 20% of EWC members is female. Looking more specifically for the Select Committees, this is even lower: 15%.

Age is also an interesting issue. The youngest EWC member that participated in the ETUI survey was 26 years old, and the oldest 73. The average age of EWC members is 50 years. The age of Select Committee members tends to be higher on average: 52 years old. How would this compare to the average age of

employees? Maybe not even so bad if we look at the large multinational companies in which EWCs are concentrated, taking into account that young people often do not get a permanent employment contract and on top of that, new employees normally do not take on the role of EWC in their first years of tenure?

Finally, let's look at the years of office of EWC members. Almost 37% have been members for less than three years and about 20% have been a member for more than 10 years. One EWC member has been in the EWC for 30 years.

What do you think is a bigger problem: a high turn-over of membership, leading to lack of experience in the EWC, or people holding on to their position too long? What about the average age in your EWC? Do you recognise the figures? [Please share with us.](#)

If you would like to learn more about the outcomes of the ETUI survey, please join our EWC Platform on 15 November in Utrecht. One of the researchers, Stan de Spiegelaere, will be sharing the most remarkable results. . You can still sign in for this platform meeting, see link below. Please note: this conference will be in Dutch only.

<https://www.sbiformaat.nl/eor-platform> →

*The ETUI will soon publish a report on this survey including information for you to work with. Check their website (www.etui.org) in the coming weeks.

Source: De Spiegelaere & Jagodzinski (2019) Can anybody hear us? An overview of the 2018 survey of EWC and SEWC representatives. European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), Brussels.

[Sjef Stoop](#), EWC trainer and advisor

20. Remarkable outcomes ETUI 2: training



True, we provide training for European Works Councils, so we might be a bit biased. Nonetheless, we believe that a lot more people are surprised to find out that many EWCs do not make use of the right to training that the EWC Directive has given them.

According to the ETUI survey, **38%** of EWCs did not receive training over the last three years. What the exact reasons are for this lack of training is hard to establish, but

a reasonable assumption may be that members of the European Works Councils do not feel strong enough to request such a training. We may assume this because according to ETUI, the number of EWCs that did not receive training is about 35% higher for EWCs without a trade union coordinator, compared to EWCs with a trade union coordinator. It seems likely that -in general- a EWC with a trade union coordinator is stronger than one without. What do you think?

In one of our next blogs', we will focus on the topics of the training.

[When did your EWC receive training for the last time? Please share.](#)

[Sjef Stoop](#), EWC trainer and advisor

21. Did you know

Did you know according to the most recent overview of the ETUI, in total 18.000 employees in Europe represent their country in a EWC there are 1115 EWCs, including SE-WC's to in European Companies ('Societas Europaea').

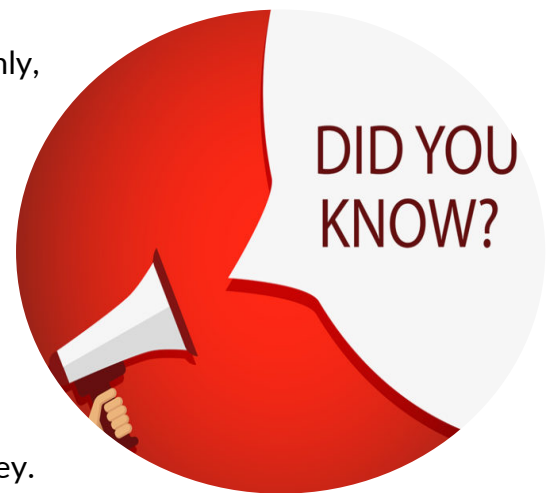
The oldest EWCs date back to the 1983. They were set up on a voluntary basis, 11 years before the EWC Directive was adopted and 13 years before the Directive came into force by September 22, 1996. 402 EWCs were established in 1996, just before the September 22 date, to avoid falling under the legal obligations as prescribed in the directive.

The largest number of EWCs is to be found in companies with headquarters in Germany, followed by France, the US and the UK, less than 10 companies headquartered in Central and Eastern European countries have established an EWC

The countries with most EWC members are Germany (18,2%), France (15,0%) and the UK (12,6%). Following these there is a number of countries with 7-5% of all EWC members (Italy, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands). All other countries represent less than 5% of the total population of EWC members.

EWCs can be composed of employee representatives only, or be a joint body of employee representatives and management representatives. Over 75% of the EWCs in Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden are employee only EWCs. In France, the UK and Finland, over 80% of the EWC's in France, the UK and Finland are joint bodies.

Based on ETUI Facts & Figures and the ETUI 2017 Survey.



[Sjef Stoop](#), EWC trainer and advisor

[Please share with us: Where are the headquarters of your company? And what is the home country of your EWC?](#)

<https://www.sbiformaat.nl/ewc>



22. The largest survey of EWC's to date: an interview with Stan De Spiegelaere

As a researcher at the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), Stan De Spiegelaere has been part of the largest survey of EWCs to date. In this interview with Petra Molenaar of SBI Formaat's EWC Service he answers a few questions about the results. Watch the full interview (5,43 min)

<http://sbiformaat.nl/ewc-survey-results>



[Petra Molenaar](#) EWC trainer/expert

<https://www.sbiformaat.nl/ewc>



23. An EWC training in figures

13 LANGUAGES
INTERPRETED -
26 INTERPRETERS
IN 13 BOOTHS



2 TRAINERS



27
PARTICIPANTS



17
COUNTRIES



DOZENS OF PLANS MADE - 9
SMART ENOUGH TO TAKE UP



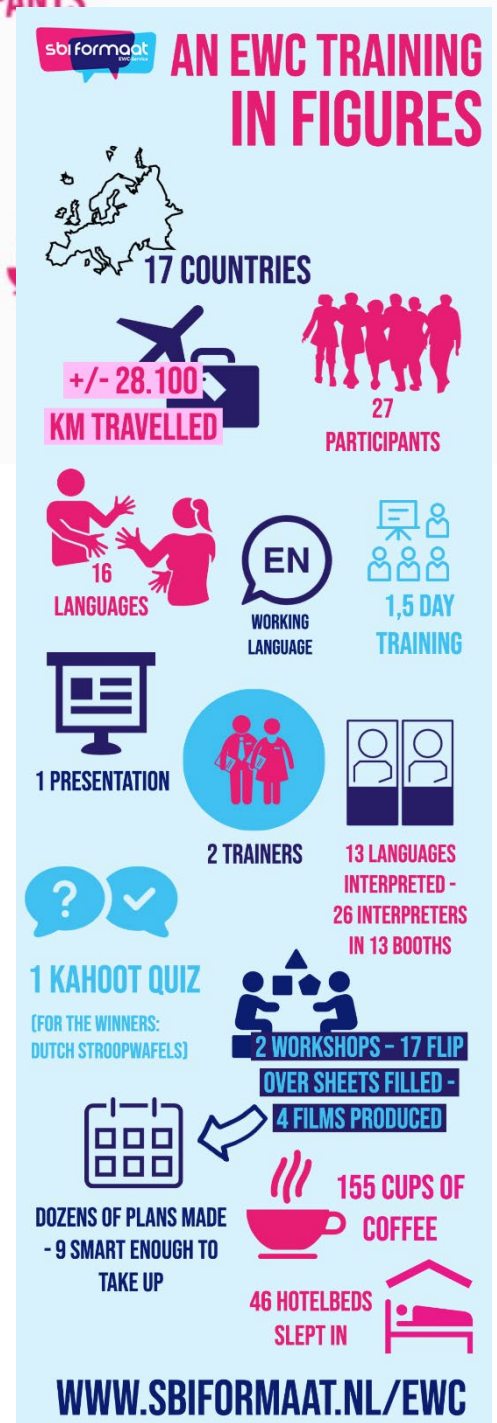
2 WORKSHOPS - 17 FLIP
OVER SHEETS FILLED -
4 FILMS PRODUCED

10 FEBRUARI 2020 / MARIËLLE VAN DER COELEN

A graphical representation of a training course for a European Works Council in all its complexity.

<https://www.sbiformaat.nl/blog/ewc-training-in-figures/>

[Mariëlle van der Coelen](#), EWC trainer and advisor



<https://www.sbiformaat.nl/ewc>

24. The 10 most popular topics for EWC trainings



For 25 years now, SBI Formaat provides training for European Works Councils. These are the 10 most popular topics for EWC training.

- No. 1 The legal background of the European Works Council including rights and duties.
- No. 2 Understanding company strategies (scenario exercises).
- No. 3 Cooperation in the EWC and internal organisation.
- No. 4 Strategy of the EWC: Goal setting and action plan.
- No. 5 Communication.
 - Within the EWC
 - EWC – management
 - EWC – constituency
- No. 6 Labour relations and employee representation in the different European countries.
- No. 7 Employee rights in Transfer of Undertaking.
- No. 8 The EWC and the protection of personal data (General Data Protection Regulation).
- No. 9 Health & Safety and Work-related stress.
- No. 10 How to deal with confidentiality?

[Which topics are most important to you? Share your experience with us.](#)

[Mariëlle van der Coelen](#), EWC trainer and advisor

Vlog

25. Listen to what EWC platform participants tell about their frustrations but also their pride in being a European Workscouncil member

We look back on a successful platform meeting for European Works Councils on November 15, 2019. This platform meeting is a biannual event for people involved in EWCs to exchange knowledge and experiences organised by our EWC Service and FNV. In this platform, we had the researcher Stan De Spiegelaere present the results of the largest EWC survey ever.

Next to that, we celebrated '25 years of European Works Councils', and our EWC expert Petra Molenaar, interviewed a few of the participants on their EWC experiences.

Paul Verhaag, EWC Canon and Angelique Nahon, EWC Brocacef elaborate on some of their frustrations but also their pride in being a European Workscouncil member.

Enjoy watching our short Vlog



Also, Stan De Spiegelaere, researcher at the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) answers some questions about the results of the largest survey of EWC's to date.

Listen the answers on Q&A playlist on our [Youtube channel](#)

<https://www.sbiformaat.nl/ewc-vlog>

[Petra Molenaar](#) EWC trainer/expert

<https://www.sbiformaat.nl/ewc>



Contact us

We are a team of four enthusiastic and dedicated EWC-trainers/advisers at our disposal. With the help of our EWC-Service, you'll be able to get off to a flying start: we have been working in this area since the early stages of EWC's (1994) and are more than happy to share our many years of practical experience with you. The EWC-Service relies on an extensive international network in the field of industrial relations and cooperates with a number of European trade unions. To ensure continuity, we allocate one permanent trainer/adviser to each EWC. If your permanent contact should be unavailable, one of our other team members will jump in.

Do you have a question or would you like more information about our services?
Please feel free to contact us for more information.



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