

European Federation  
of Building  
and Woodworkers



BWI ■ BHI ■ BTI ■ IBB ■ ICM

Brussels and Geneva 3 September 2015

*To: the Minister of State for Employment of the UK Government*

**The European Federation of Building and Woodworkers and the Building and Woodworkers International urge the UK Government to withdraw draft legislation which undermines fundamental rights and the right to organize and take industrial action**

Dear Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP,

The European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW) and the Building and Woodworkers International (BWI) would like to express our strong opposition to the UK Government's Trade Union Bill, to be discussed in the Parliament in the autumn of 2015. If approved, the Bill will severely restrict trade union rights, the freedom of association, and the right to take part in industrial action, as laid down in international laws and Conventions of the ILO, as well as in the European Convention of Human Rights and the European Social Charter of the Council of Europe. The EFBWW and the BWI strongly support the UK trade unions in their opposition to the Bill.

The right to bargain collectively and the right to take industrial action are intimately interlinked and form part of the concept of freedom of association, a right which is a fundamental prerequisite for trade unions to be able to bargain on behalf of the workers they represent. The proposed Bill risks to undermine industrial relations in the UK, making it more difficult to achieve settlements through bargaining, thus creating a more conflictual labour market in the UK, which is contrary to the said aims of the proposed Bill.

The EFBWW and BWI are particularly astounded by the removal of legal restrictions prohibiting temporary agency workers from being employed to replace striking workers during a dispute, the increasing thresholds for ballot turnout required for any lawful industrial action, the requirement to provide the employer with 14 days advanced notice of any industrial action, and the duty to provide a detailed "proposed plan of action" to the employer, the criminalisation of picketing and demonstrations in support of any dispute, the

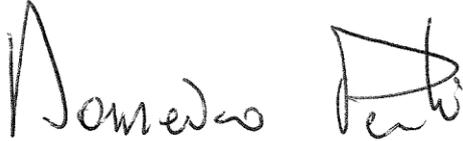
criminalisation of “intimidation” and the use of social media to progress industrial action, a requirement to provide 14 days’ notice of any social media postings relating to any dispute, and the removal of paid facility time for workers’ representatives, including health and safety representatives, to carry out their functions in protecting workers’ interests.

Strong and independent trade unions, able to bargain collectively, form part of a democratic society, and are fundamental for creating a labour market and an industrial model which promotes social dialogue, workers’ rights, market innovations and competitiveness. In the EU of today, Member States with the highest participation in trade unions and the strongest protection of trade union rights are at the same time ranked among the most competitive countries in the world. The proposed Bill will not only breach international Conventions and laws of the ILO, the EU and the Council of Europe, but will also fundamentally undermine the UK industrial model, thus creating inferior conditions for employment, growth and prosperity.

The EFBWW and the BWI urge the UK Government to withdraw the proposed Bill which undermines human and trade union rights, and instead call on the UK Government to position the UK among countries which support and facilitate social dialogue in the labour market, and which aim to create growth and employment with decent working conditions

Yours sincerely

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President EFBWW



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General Secretary EFBWW



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