Better Understanding of “Arduous Occupations” within the European Pension Debate

Background of the project

The European white paper “An Agenda for Adequate, Safe and Sustainable Pensions” (COM(2012) 55 final) explicitly refers to this issue of arduous work, by stating that: “Member States reform their early retirement schemes in different ways. Employers may be required to bear all or at least a significant share of the costs of early retirement benefits. Workers in particularly arduous or hazardous jobs can be offered alternatives to early retirement, such as job mobility. In some Member States, eligibility rules are being tightened – for instance by increasing the eligibility age. Some countries are also either reducing the levels of benefits provided by special schemes or closing these schemes. Whenever early retirement options are eliminated, it is important to ensure that the individuals concerned are enabled to work longer or, if this is not possible, can enjoy adequate income security.”

In its annex, the white paper refers to recent policy developments on arduous work in some countries, e.g. Spain and Hungary.

From the EFBWW study on (early) retirement in the construction industry (2011 - financially supported by the European Commission) it became clear that the issue of arduous work in relation to pensions has been a topic for discussion in many countries. As such, at the final EFBWW seminar on (early) retirement in the construction industry (Krakow 2011), the most prominent item of discussion was the arduous nature of construction work. Although the phenomenon and the problem of the arduous occupations in relation to pensions is generally acknowledged, the subject (of the arduous occupations) was completely neglected in many countries during the debates on pension reform.

In most member states there is a primary (and rightful) approach that arduous occupations should be prevented, often through health and safety regulations. Unfortunately, some occupations remain “arduous”. At the seminar it also became clear that very little information is available on: what arduous work is, how should it be measured, what the physical consequences are, ...

During an internal debate amongst several European Trade Union Federations, it was observed that the issue is certainly not limited to the construction industry, but affects several other
sectors such as the public services (e.g. nurses, fire fighters, ...), the industry (metal sector, ...) and services sectors where several occupations could be considered as arduous due to the structural physical work constraints (such as stress).

Based on these elements, several European Industry Federations together with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) decided to further assess and discuss the issue of arduous work in relation to pensions at a European scale. The EFBWW would take the initiative to set up a project in order to discuss the issue.

**General objective of the project**

Although the issue of arduous work is widely recognized, there is no horizontal policy line on how this issue should be resolved or criteria of what an arduous occupation actually is (several Member States already have specific methodologies, definitions and criteria). Gathering information on this issue, can be done partly through a sound desktop study and through a practical stakeholder inquiry which should asses existing cases. Since the issue covers various disciplines, such as ergonomics, statistics, medicine, law, social science it is indispensable that the project takes into account the specificities of each discipline. To determine what an “arduous occupation” is, a wide range of practical cases and views of the direct actors concerned (such as workers) need to be taken into account. In a second phase the project aims to assess existing policy measures and existing practices. Based on the available findings (EFBWW study 2011) we can roughly distinguish two categories of policy measures:

- Measures which aim to prevent that workers/employees work in physically or psychologically tough conditions in order to avoid that these workers/employees become fully or partially disabled. For example: through specific risk assessments, imperative trainings, external advice, inspections, medical follow-up, continuous monitoring, mapping risk activities, alternative career planning, ... The best examples can be found in several Nordic countries;
- Measures which aim to allow workers and employees to retire earlier when they are no longer in a capacity to work as a consequence of their constraints (for example back, muscles, joints) which could not be prevented and so-to-say belong to the job. In several countries (e.g. France, Belgium and Austria), the arduous jobs have a special recognition, which allows workers to retire earlier.

In a final phase a broad discussion (1,5 day seminar) would be organised gathering all relevant stakeholders and specialists to further discuss the findings.

The action will be implemented in a twofold manner:

**Part 1. A preparatory study in order to map, assess and exchange information regarding:**

1. Existing definitions, criteria, measurement instruments, statistics and methodologies to determine what an “arduous occupation” is (desktop research);
2. Existing cases and experiences of arduous occupations (field research);
3. The preventive measures in place which try to avoid that workers/employees become disabled due to physical or psychological constraints during their professional lives;
4. The mechanism of “solidarity” in the end of career debate where workers in incapacity are allowed to an early retirement scheme;
5. The place of the debate within the industrial relations (company and sectoral) on “arduous occupations”;
6. The place of the debate within the political debate of “arduous occupations”;

Part 2  A European seminar
Seminar in order to present the results of the preparatory study and to set up/agree on a common benchmark/formulation based on the objective findings of the study and field experiences, which could serve as a common policy guideline for trade union officials responsible in the debate of “arduous occupations”.

Aims of the project:

The EFBWW is aware of the upcoming discussion and whishes to anticipate the discussion by a broad internal discussion and exchange of ideas and experiences on arduous work and its link with (early) retirement schemes in various trades.

To this end the EFBWW has introduced a request for grants to organize a project with the following aims:

I. to exchange information among trade union officials based on a structure, as adopted by the project steering group.

II. To set up/agree on common recommendations and conclusions based on positive experiences, which could serve as a common policy guideline at national and European level.

III. present and discuss the outcome of the findings during a European seminar

Subject matter of the contract

The subject matter of the contract between EFBWW and the coordinating expert will be to (1) analyse the overall situation of “arduous work” in 9 Member States, (2) create a network of “arduous work” national experts in 9 EU Member States, (3) propose joint conclusions and recommendations, (4) prepare and participate in one meeting of the coordination group (together with the project manager), (5) prepare and participate actively in a European seminar (together with the project manager) and (6) ensure the final publication of the report.

By conducting a preparatory study more information and experiences will become available to discuss a common approach on arduous work and its relation to pensions in various trades.
The operations of the project proposal will be carried out within 9 EU Member States. The steering group will decide on the exact countries to be targeted upon. However, a provisional selection would be: Italy, Belgium, France, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Poland, Sweden and Romania.

In order to fully understand the sectoral matters on arduous work and their link with end of career schemes in the construction industry and various other trades, an interdisciplinary in-depth assessment is needed.

The study should not only concentrate on the regulatory aspects and the existing agreements. A practical in-depth assessment implies a realistic approach on arduous work and (early) retirement schemes “in various trades.

Therefore the following items need to be carried out:
- legislative research on the countries' arduous work policies, with the (juridical frame of the) collective agreements at all levels, with the various components and forms of definitions, interpretation, criteria, procedures (that are agreed upon by the social partners at all levels (from national level to shop floor level));
- Examining the role of the social partners and in particular the paritarian OSH funds;
- detailed research to provide a realistic view of the applicable link between arduous occupations and the “pension age” (in its broadest interpretation) in 9 countries;
- Compiling empirical data on arduous work and presenting it in an accessible format;

The research can take place in two phases:
1. Preparatory overview research of arduous work and its link with end-of career policies;
2. A European seminar (open forum discussion), where the research will be presented and discussed;

**Description of tasks to be performed by the co-ordinating expert**

a) Preparatory desk-top research
b) Establish a conceptual and methodological framework for the collection of data
c) Activation and coordination of a network of 9 national experts in those countries selected by the steering group

The national experts must have a proven experience on the matter of arduous work and preferably early retirement schemes and end of career policies and will use the preparatory multidisciplinary research document and the indicative questionnaire, drawn up by the coordination group, as a starting point in their search for complementary information (desktop, interviews and field work).

The national experts will draw up an additional report with complementary information on the national situation on the matter of arduous work and end of career policies. The results
of these reports will be inserted in the preparatory research document, in order to draw up a final draft report.

d) Participating in one meeting of the coordination group and in the European seminar
e) Organization of the collection of information by the national experts
f) Review of the collected information and requests for changes to the national experts with a view to clarifying the data, supplementing them or harmonizing their presentation
g) Revision of the translations with a view to ensuring clarity and good readability of the information presented
h) Editing final version in English, German and French.
i) Preparation of one coordination group meeting

Guidance regarding performance of the tasks and regarding the methodology

Performance of the tasks will have to be carried out within the contract period specified in the contract European Commission-EFBWW and with due regard to the order indicated in the description of the above-mentioned tasks and the schedule of the project activities enclosed.

Methods of work

The general supervision and evaluation of the project will be carried out by the steering group, co-ordinated by the project co-ordinator. The Coordination group will be composed of representatives from the European trade Union Federations. The expert will also assist the meeting from the coordination group.

During the project the steering group will meet 2 times:
1. to prepare the preparatory research (Brussels)
2. to analyse and finalise the draft report (Berlin)

The European coordinator will prepare and attend the second meeting of the steering group.

Time schedule and reporting

The schedule of activities is laid down in the project description, which could be modified by the steering group.
The expert shall finalize the project within a maximum period in line with Commission instructions.

The coordinating expert shall consult with the project manager in EFBWW:
a) as regards organization of the steering group meeting
b) as regards dispatch of the draft version to the members of the steering group
c) as regards preparation of regular interim meetings with the project manager
**Contract**

The Contract between EFBWW and the co-ordinating expert will be based on a standard contract taking into consideration the financial regulations of the European Commission and obliging the consultant to respect the obligations laid down in the contract European Commission-EFBWW.

The successful consultant will submit to EFBWW a draft contract EFBWW-expert which includes “back to back” obligations from the contract European Commission-EFBWW also in the relationships consultant-subcontractors.

**Payment**

Payment shall be made on the basis of invoices, once the tasks have been performed and the results of the work have been accepted by the steering group.

**Selection criteria**

The consultant will be selected on the basis of the following criteria (as mentioned in the public procurement directive 2004/18, Articles 45, 47 and 48):

a) personal situation of the tenderer  
b) economic and financial standing  
c) technical and/or professional ability

Tenders failing to satisfy all the criteria will be excluded from the further procedure.

**Award criteria**

The contract will be awarded to the bidder whose bid represents the economically most advantageous tender taking into account the following criteria:

1. Legal skills and expertise on the issue of arduous work and (early) retirement (35%)
2. Management and organizational capabilities (15%)
3. previous working experiences with social partners (15%)
4. quality of the network of national experts (25%)
5. language and communication skills (10%)

**Content of the tenders**

All interested parties must at least present the following requirements:  
a) comments and solutions on the proposed structure of the project;  
b) comments and solutions on the proposed conceptual and methodological framework for the collection of data;  
c) draft indicative questionnaire to be used for the national experts;  
d) a detailed offer/prices for the European co-ordinating expert and 9 national experts
In case the tender is limited to a reduced number of national experts (9), this should be specified and clarified. A reduced number of national experts in the tender is not an element of automatic exclusion on the condition that the co-ordinating expert agrees that the members of the steering group propose national experts, with whom the co-ordinating expert will collaborate.

The content of the tender presented by the consultant must correspond to the specifications indicated in the previous points

**Evaluation procedure**

The economically most advantageous tender will be identified by the evaluation of each award criterion on a scale between 0 and 10. These results will be counted using the relative ponderation indicated in % behind the award criteria in item 9.

**Submission of tenders**

The tender must be sent or delivered in duplicate, under a sealed cover. The envelope should be marked “appel d’offres – à ne pas ouvrir par le service du courrier”. If self-adhesive envelopes are used, they must be sealed with adhesive tape and the sender must sign across the tape.

Interested parties should send their bid:

a) either by registered mail posted no later than **10 February 2014** (date as postmark), to the following address:

EFBWW  
Sam Hägglund  
Werner Buelen  
Rue de hôpital 31, boîte 1 (12ième étage),  
1000 Bruxelles  
Belgium

b) or delivered by hand, i.e. by delivery in person or by an authorised representative (including private courier services) not later than 4 p.m. on 10 February 2014 to the same address.

Late delivery will lead to the exclusion of the tender from the award procedure for this contract.

For tenders submitted by private courier services and hand delivered requests, EFBWW secretariat will sign a receipt stamped on the date of reception, which will serve as proof of delivery.

**Copy:**
Project description and timetable. Please take note that the EFBWW will request the European Commission to extend the duration of the project by 3 months.
Better Understanding of “Arduous Occupations” within the European Pension Debate

Detailed working programme

Call for Proposals VP/2013/002

Information and training measures for workers' organisations
Budget heading 04.03.03.02

Brussels, May 2013
Werner Buelen
1 Background of the project

The European white paper “An Agenda for Adequate, Safe and Sustainable Pensions” (COM(2012) 55 final) explicitly refers to this issue of arduous work, by stating that:

“Member States reform their early retirement schemes in different ways. Employers may be required to bear all or at least a significant share of the costs of early retirement benefits. Workers in particular arduous or hazardous jobs can be offered alternatives to early retirement, such as job mobility. In some Member States, eligibility rules are being tightened – for instance by increasing the eligibility age. Some countries are also either reducing the levels of benefits provided by special schemes or closing these schemes. Whenever early retirement options are eliminated, it is important to ensure that the individuals concerned are enabled to work longer or, if this is not possible, can enjoy adequate income security.”

In its annex, the white paper refers to recent policy developments on arduous work in some countries, e.g. Spain and Hungary.

From the EFBWW study on (early) retirement in the construction industry (2011 - financially supported by the European Commission) it became clear that the issue of arduous work in relation to pensions has been a topic for discussion in many countries. As such, at the final EFBWW seminar on (early) retirement in the construction industry (Krakow 2011), the most prominent item of discussion was the arduous nature of construction work. Although the phenomenon and the problem of the arduous occupations in relation to pensions is generally acknowledged, the subject (of the arduous occupations) was completely neglected in many countries during the debates on pension reform.

In most member states there is a primary (and rightful) approach that arduous occupations should be prevented, often through health and safety regulations. Unfortunately, some occupations remain “arduous”. At the seminar it also became clear that very little information is available on: what arduous work is, how should it be measured, what the physical consequences are, ...

During an internal debate amongst several European Trade Union Federations, it was observed that the issue is certainly not limited to the construction industry, but affects several other sectors such as the public services (e.g. nurses, fire fighters, ...), the industry (metal sector, ...) and services sectors where several occupations could be considered as arduous due to the structural physical work constraints (such as stress).

Based on these elements, several European Industry Federations together with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) decided to further assess and discuss the issue of arduous work in relation to pensions at a European scale. The EFBWW would take the initiative to set up a project in order to discuss the issue.
2 General objective of the project

Although the issue of arduous work is widely recognized, there is no horizontal policy line on how this issue should be resolved or criteria of what an arduous occupation actually is (several Member States already have specific methodologies, definitions and criteria). This can be done partly through a sound desktop study and through a practical stakeholder inquiry which should assess existing cases. Since the issue covers various disciplines, such as ergonomics, statistics, medicine, law, social science it is indispensable that the project takes into account the specificities of each discipline. To determine what an “arduous occupation” is, a wide range of practical cases and views of the direct actors concerned (such as workers) need to be taken into account. In a second phase the project aims to assess existing policy measures and existing practices. Based on the available findings (EFBWW study 2011) we can roughly distinguish two categories of policy measures:

- Measures which aim to prevent that workers/employees work in physically or psychologically tough conditions in order to avoid that these workers/employees become fully or partially disabled. For example: through specific risk assessments, imperative trainings, external advice, inspections, medical follow-up, continuous monitoring, mapping risk activities, alternative career planning, ... The best examples can be found in several Nordic countries;
- Measures which aim to allow workers and employees to retire earlier when they are no longer in a capacity to work as a consequence of their constraints (for example back, muscles, joints) which could not be prevented and so-to-say belong to the job. In several countries (e.g. France, Belgium and Austria), the arduous jobs have a special recognition, which allows workers to retire earlier.

In a final phase a broad discussion (1,5 day seminar) would be organised gathering all relevant stakeholders and specialists to further discuss the findings.

The action will be implemented in a twofold manner:

Part 1. A preparatory study in order to map, assess and exchange information regarding:

1. Existing definitions, criteria, measurement instruments, statistics and methodologies to determine what an “arduous occupation” is (desktop research);
2. Existing cases and experiences of arduous occupations (field research);
3. The preventive measures in place which try to avoid that workers/employees become disabled due to physical or psychological constraints during their professional lives;
4. The mechanism of “solidarity” in the end of career debate where workers in incapacity are allowed to an early retirement scheme;
5. The place of the debate within the industrial relations (company and sectoral) on “arduous occupations”;
6. The place of the debate within the political debate of “arduous occupations”;
Part 2  A European seminar
Seminar in order to present the results of the preparatory study and to set up/agree on a common benchmark/formulation based on the objective findings of the study and field experiences, which could serve as a common policy guideline for trade union officials responsible in the debate of “arduous occupations”.

3  Partners involved in the project

The European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW) will manage the project. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) will be a partner in the project and coordinate the involvement of the European Industry Federations (ETF, EFFAT, IndustriAll, UNI-Europa and EPSU).

The research will be subcontracted to a team of external qualified researchers.

The affiliated trade unions of the EFBWW will provide the necessary help, support, information and advice during all the stages of the research.

4  Countries Involved

The operations of the project proposal will be carried out within 9 EU Member States. The steering group will decide on the exact countries to be targeted upon. However, a provisional selection would be: Italy, Belgium, France, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Sweden and Romania.

5  Supervision

The general supervision and evaluation of the project will be in the hands of a steering group. The steering group will be composed of max. 6 representatives from the European Industry Federations and ETUC + the European coordinator.

The steering group will examine, discuss and evaluate the preparatory study report, examine what kind of general difficulties occurred and which questions need further assessment. Based on the existing practical situation the steering group will provide assistance to the researcher(s).

During the project the steering group will meet 2 times:
1. to prepare the preparatory research
2. to analyse and finalise the draft report and prepare the seminar
The final report (max 65 pages) will be available in English and will be translated into French and German. A general overview with conclusions will be translated into six languages (max. 7 pages). The final report will be disseminated broadly at national and European level in order to: inform all relevant stakeholders, start a genuine debate on the "arduous work" in connection to the on-going pension debate, based on objective measurable facts. Eventually the results could be used to engage a European cross-sectoral or sectoral social dialogue.
TIMING

Better understanding of “arduous occupations” within the European Pension debate with adopted modifications

Joint project of EFBWW (construction and wood) and the ETUC [involving EPSU (public services), UNI-EUROPA (Private services), IndustriAll (industries), ETF (transport) and EFFAT (Food and catering services)]

Timing of the activities

01.9–1.12.‘13 Composition of the joint steering group:
- 6 persons (1 EFBWW, 1 EPSU, 1 UNI-EUROPA, 1 IndustriAll, 1 ETF and 1 ETUC)

20.01.‘14 First meeting of the steering group (Brussels):
- Identification of the countries involved (max. 9)
- Identification of the potential candidates for project coordinator and national experts
- Agreement on terms of the tender and the selection criteria
- Agreement on the methodology and project timing
- Agreement on the draft structure of the final report

27.01.‘14 Launch tenders (deadline 10.02)
- One tender for a European coordinator
  Total budget = 24,000 €
  Contract from 14.02.'14 till 31.08.’14
- 9 tenders for 9 experts / 9 countries
  Total budget = 54,000 € (6,000€/expert), Countries to be identified by the steering group,
  4 domains of expertise for each expert: ergonomics, OSH, statistics, social protection law
  Contract from 14.02.’14 till 31.08.’14

10.02.’14 Deadline tenders

14.02.’14 Meeting project manager (and interested members of the steering group) and European coordinator

21.02.’14 Finalization of the draft questionnaire by the European coordinator

27.02.’14 Approval of the final questionnaire by the steering group (electronic communication)

25.04.’14 Deadline mid-term report of:
  European coordinator
All national experts

09.05.’14 Meeting of the steering group + European coordinator (Berlin)
  - Assessment mid-term report
  - Preparation preliminary draft conclusions on the basis of the mid-term report
  - Preparation agenda, structure, speakers seminar

26.05.’14 Meeting project manager + European coordinator + interested members of the steering group (Brussels):
  - Progress meeting
  - Discussion final draft conclusions

02.06.’14 Deadline final draft report

02.06.-10.06.’14 Assessment by the steering group of:
  - the final draft report
  - final draft conclusions

16.06.’14 Incorporation of comments made by the steering group

18-20.06.’14 European seminar:
  6 languages
  Max. 60 participants (all experts included)
  Arrival 18.06 (evening) – Departure 20.06 (evening)
  Venue: Copenhagen (Denmark)
Overview of the professions to be assessed

1. Processing line workers in the meat sector - (EFFAT)
2. Bus drivers working in the public transport sector - (ETF)
3. Distribution Centre worker (like a typical Amazon worker which combines Commerce sector and Logistics sector) – (Uni Europa)
4. (Metal) foundry-worker – (IndustriAll)
5. Carpenter - Floor Coverer – (EFBWW)
6. Child care worker – (EPSU)