



Solidarity Agreement between CITUB/KNSB and FGTB/ABVV

Agreement signed by

CITUB/KNSB (Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Bulgaria), Macedonia Square 1, 1301 Sofia, Bulgaria, represented by Plamen Dimitrov, president of CITUB/KNSB,

and

FGTB/ABVV (General Federation of Belgian Labour), Rue Haute 42, 1000 Brussels, Belgium represented by Robert Verteneuil, president of FGTB/ABVV,

General rules

1. Objectives

Under the conditions of the Economic and Monetary Union and facing the challenges of a more and more integrated European labour market and growing migration there is a strong wish of our unions to increase protection of and support for workers and trade union members across the borders of our countries. For that reason, CITUB/KNSB and FGTB/ABVV have reached the following agreement: Strong unions working together make a stronger social Europe in the future.

2. Membership and services

When working abroad, a trade union member has the right to the services set out in the guidelines for the practical use of this agreement or the right to become a member of FGTB/ABVV or relevant trade union affiliated to the CITUB/KNSB or its member organisation in the host country. In the case of more than one year's employment abroad, a worker will be required to become a member in the host country in order to benefit from services. The duration of membership in his/her home union should be recognised in relation to the provision of services. Notwithstanding, mutual recognition of each other's membership is taken in account.

3. Support

Both unions will support each other's members in an appropriate way, by among others providing information, advice and legal consultation and assistance. They will try to give the best possible service concerning employment issues or other similar labour related issues.

4. Collective issues

In the case of collective grievances and/or other issues regarding working conditions of members, meetings can be organized in order to find a solution to the problem, to exchange best practices, to make up a collective file for political purposes and other relevant issues between unions and their federations.

5. Evaluation

Evaluation of this agreement for the purpose of improving this contract shall take place on a regular basis at least once a year. To this end, the Parties shall establish an organization and documentation to monitor the implementation and mutual information on the implementation of the Agreement.

6. Languages

The agreement has been adopted in four languages: English, Bulgarian, French and Dutch.

Guidelines for the practical use of this Solidarity agreement

1. Any member of a trade union organisation mentioned above is allowed to benefit from the services referred to in this agreement when employed in Bulgaria/Belgium.
2. To benefit from the services referred to in this agreement the trade union member should proof that he/she has a fully paid proof of membership (for instance within CITUB/KNSB via the affiliated company/multinational company level union, regional structure, the CITUB/KNSB member organisation or the CITUB/KNSB itself) for a period of minimum 1 (one) year.
3. The services to the members will be provided by the home and host trade union or by the relevant host affiliated organisation represented in the company in which he/she is employed. After 1 year of working in the host country there should be transfer of membership to the host union.
4. The following services will be provided by the host union to the members if they do not entail any considerable extra costs, as defined under point 5., either in organisational, material or expenditure terms.
 - a) Inclusion in collective and other agreements
 - b) Information (trade union press, documentation, info service)
 - c) Consultation with regard to labour, social and employment matters
 - d) Legal consultation, legal protection and legal representation in all matters relating to labour and social law, e.g. occupational safety and health, as well as juridical representation in employment cases if the conditions of the host country's national law are met.
5. The host union will be contacted in case of legal support to investigate how representation of the worker can be guaranteed. If legal support would exceed a maximum of 1000 euros in Belgium and the minimum wage in Bulgaria¹, there will be specific contact, by for instance taking over the expenses by the home organization in bilateral agreement.
6. Union officials and shop stewards will be informed about the agreement and about its practical consequences as they will be amongst the ones providing the services. If they encounter any difficulties or are not aware about this agreement they should contact the relevant national coordinator.

Practical background information

1. Achieving a system of transnational trade union services that operates well will be a long process.
2. It is better to take numerous small steps rather than too few meaningless big steps (which look good on paper but do not amount to anything). It is also to be remembered that this is a learning experience.
3. It is especially important to get the first step(s) right, because if we do not, the whole process may be put off for a while yet again.
4. Some central (practical) coordination is needed in order for this to be successful.
5. Providing services for members at the transnational level can only be successful when the parties of the agreement act in a spirit of cooperation.
6. In order to increase transparency and ensure maximum cooperation, each affiliated organisation will be asked to nominate a contact person or indicate which department would be responsible in all matters concerning the Solidarity Pact.

Sofia, 24th of June 2018,

Plamen Dimitrov,
President of CITUB/KNSB

Robert Vertenuel,
President of FGTB/ABVV

¹ 510 BGN = EUR 260,76 since 1.01.2018