



<b>Title</b>	Book Review - Gerhard Bosch, Claudia Weinkopf, Georg Worthmann: Die Fragilität des Tarifsystems. Einhaltung von Entgeltstandards und Mindestlöhnen am Beispiel des Bauhauptgewerbes
<b>Authors(s)</b>	Imboden, Natalie, Erne, Roland
<b>Publication date</b>	2011
<b>Publication information</b>	Imboden, Natalie, and Roland Erne. "Book Review - Gerhard Bosch, Claudia Weinkopf, Georg Worthmann: Die Fragilität Des Tarifsystems. Einhaltung von Entgeltstandards Und Mindestlöhnen Am Beispiel Des Bauhauptgewerbes" no. 3 /2011 (2011).
<b>Publisher</b>	European Institute for Construction Labour Research
<b>Item record/more information</b>	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10197/3844">http://hdl.handle.net/10197/3844</a>

Downloaded 2023-03-15T17:09:45Z

The UCD community has made this article openly available. Please share how this access benefits you. Your story matters! (@ucd\_oa)



© Some rights reserved. For more information

Natalie Imboden and Roland Erne (UCD, Dublin)

***Review – Gerhard Bosch, Claudia Weinkopf, Georg Worthmann: Die Fragilität des Tarifsystems. Einhaltung von Entgeltstandards und Mindestlöhnen am Beispiel des Bauhauptgewerbes / The fragility of the wage bargaining system. Compliance of wage systems and minimal wages in the construction industry in Germany, Edition Sigma, 2011, 200 pp. ISBN: 9783836087285, € 16.90***

Published in *CLR News* 3/2011, 80-82 (available at: <http://www.clr-news.org/CLR-News/CLR%20News%203-2011.pdf>)

Gerhard Bosch, Claudia Weinkopf and Georg Worthmann provide a comprehensive analysis of wage bargaining institutions, practices, and outcomes in the German construction industry. Whereas the authors detect a dramatic erosion of the German collective bargaining system in the construction sector since the mid-1990s, they also emphasise the importance of the legally binding minimum wages for skilled and unskilled workers that became universally applicable after the adoption of the posted workers legislation (*Arbeitnehmerentsendegesetz*) in 1997.

The core of the study is based on a survey of 1000 unionised construction workers and statistical data provided by SOKABau, the social fund of the bargaining parties in the construction industry. The authors find that the wage-related rules and regulations specified in collective agreements are widely neglected, as collective agreements are not enforced anymore in their entirety. Only the specific terms and conditions that have been made universally applicable due to the adoption of the 1997 *Arbeitnehmerentsendegesetz* – such as minimum wages and holiday entitlements – still provide protection at the bottom of an increasingly precarious labour market (Bosch, Weinkopf and Worthmann 2001: 194).

The erosion of wages and labour standards in the German construction industry reflects the declining strength of works councils in a more and more competitive market as well as the adoption of opening clauses in collective agreements that permit deviations from collectively agreed pay rates that are above the universally applicable minimum wage. However, the hollowing out of labour standards is also a result of a particular political context; namely the legal ability of the German employers' national umbrella organisation (*Bundesvereinigung*

*der Arbeitgeberverbände*) to veto the joint request of the social partners in the construction industry to extend the collective agreements to their entire industry by means of a ministerial order (18).

The conclusion that politics matters is also highlighted in the final sections of the book in which the authors compare the German developments with the situation in other West European countries. Whereas the enlarged European single market is putting construction workers' wages and working conditions under pressure, the authors also show that national actors can protect domestic labour standards if they want to. The French and Dutch collective bargaining systems, for example, have been strengthened in recent years due to an increased use of universally applicable agreements (21). Hence, collective bargaining is not eroding in all countries despite the increasingly transnational labour market in the enlarged European Single Market. All depends on the political strategies that employers, unions, and political authorities adopt in response. An interesting political answer to the increasing number of transnational subcontractors is given by the Dutch Liability in Series Act (*Wet ketenaansprakelijkheid*). This act makes any contractor liable for social security contributions and taxes that its subcontractors fail to pay (133). Dutch unionists demand the extension of this mechanism to salaries. The French and the Dutch cases also demonstrate that it is possible to make not only minimum wages legally binding, but also entire wage scales set out in collective agreements (194).

In short, this is an appealing book which shows that politics still matters.

#### References:

Bosch, G, C. Weinkopf and G. Worthmann (2011): *Die Fragilität des Tarifsystems. Einhaltung von Entgeltstandards und Mindestlöhnen am Beispiel des Bauhauptgewerbes*. Berlin: Edition Sigma.