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I have to apologise for a delay in the production of this issue of CLR-News, but I expect that we can compensate this delay by bringing out two issues in a row before the summer break.

The reasons for this hiccup are manifold. First of all, it has been a very busy spring-time; secondly, we had to deal with a variety of items and files related to labour relations and finally some of the European policy files that we followed through the years came more or less to a political end (social clauses in public procurement, the enforcement directive for posting of workers). Most of the results need more in-depth analysis and it still will take some time before we can publish something about the impact.

The central theme of this issue is closely connected to the themes that were discussed at an EFBWW-workshop in November 2013, dedicated to ‘sustainable building’. During a two-days meeting, union representatives and works councils’ members active in some of the largest contractors discussed the complicated change that is needed in the industry with the convergence to a more environmental-friendly industry. In the workshop this notion was broadened up by using the definition of the sustainable company as developed in an ETUI-project, in the meantime published in two volumes. A sustainable company is in that view a company that combines social and environmental goals with long-term investment. And in such company a balance of interests has to be found between different stakeholders like the owners, the management, the workforce, the local and regional community and dependent suppliers and subcontractors. The concept has been elaborated as an alternative to the ideology of shareholder-thinking that has had such disastrous social consequences in recent years.

However, to develop an alternative vision is one thing, to implement such a vision in an industry that has to a certain extent very traditional working methods and a workforce that is mainly fit for that traditional way of producing is
another. The input of different speakers at the workshop led to very interesting debates among the participants and we thought that there was enough material for an issue of CLR-News.

Therefore it was also self-evident to ask Colin Gleeson, the keynote speaker at the workshop, to act as the sub-editor of this issue. If we look at the result of his work, the outcome is broader than just a stock-taking of the themes that were discussed during the workshop. He comes up with reflections on the gap between design and performance that start with the technical aspects. But his contribution makes clear that even a knowledgeable and skilled site workforce must operate within the context of the industry where detailed design and project management are critical factors. A further complication that will influence the production process is the contract of employment, whether direct, subcontracted, agency or labour only self-employment along with the conditions of payment, the use of bonus and piecework. He concludes that the performance gap is a complex amalgam of the technical and social conditions of labour. Judith Ryser takes stock in her contribution of the consequences of sustainable interventions for the built environment. Her conclusion is that the construction industry tends not to be involved in the development of concepts and projects with ‘eco-cities’.

In the report section we bring one report of an interesting conference in Toronto that fits in the subject. Beside, we publish the reports of our annual meeting and a preceding brainstorm session. You can read in these reports that there is enough work to come. Also included are a project announcement on the comparison of precarious construction work and a review of the European Wage Report.

As ever we invite you to come up with critical remarks and suggestions for contributions.