

Information from the Heinrich Böll Foundation concerning the accusations made by the “Freie Arbeiterinnen- und Arbeiter-Union” (FAU)

What is all this about?

The Heinrich Böll Foundation, affiliated with the German Green Party, is mandated with political education, as are all the political foundations. We organize debates, seminars, and conferences, issue publications, and use the Internet for background information and contributions to discussions from around the world.

Many events are hosted in our conference center in Berlin. Like most major event organizers, we use external service providers for seating arrangements, for conference technology, and for catering for our guests. This applies to cleaning services, reception, and technical facility management as well.

Precarious working conditions, rock-bottom wages? The facts

Our work is financed predominantly by taxpayers' money. We are required to use it sparingly and economically, and indeed we do so. We are subject to the law applicable to public funding and procurement (*Zuwendungs- und Vergaberecht*), as are other institutions financed by the German federal government. We invite tenders for services and accept the most economical bid. Of course, we also champion the introduction of a compulsory minimum wage. But we cannot simply hire firms that pay the minimum wage called for by the Greens. However, we pay strict attention to their paying at least the collectively agreed wage rates (*Tariflöhne*). In some areas, the external workers even earn more than the agreed rates for civil service employees (*TVöD*).

Why do we work with external service providers?

The workload for conferences is uneven, depending on the number and size of our events. It makes sense to work with external service providers who serve a large number of customers and can offer their staff continual employment. All in all, this arrangement is more cost-effective. We strive to be a good employer and to offer our staff family-friendly work schedules, good working conditions, and fair pay. But at the same time, we want to use our funds most of all for our core mandate: political education. Spending more money on personnel and administration would come at the expense of our political education projects.

Have we fired staff members because they filed suit against us?

We emphatically reject this accusation! We did not terminate anyone. The contract with the service provider for event services ended on schedule as of July 31, 2013. We invited tenders again, and accepted one of the bids. The previous firm did not

submit a bid this time around. The new firm pays wages according to iGZ, the collective wage agreement for temporary employment.

Why, then, does the Heinrich Böll Foundation find itself in court?

Three employees of the former service provider have filed suit. They want to be employed by the Foundation because the collective wage agreement for the civil service (which applies to us) provides for a higher hourly rate for low-qualification positions than the collective wage agreement for temporary employment. But the court proceedings are not about pay. In fact, they are about the question whether the external workers were employed under a service contract or whether de facto an employment contract existed between them and the Foundation. That is the only question to be decided by the court.

Why it is inappropriate to direct protests toward the Greens

In attempting to put pressure on the Greens during its conflict with the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the FAU, an anarcho-syndicalist organization, is treating the Foundation as if it were a subdivision of the Green Party.

But that is not the case. We value our independence and are responsible for our own decisions. The FAU is in conflict with the Foundation. Attempting to make the Greens liable for this reveals a peculiar concept of democracy.

Further Information: www.boell.de