



European Federation
of Building
and Woodworkers



Press release

More than 300 delegates from European construction, building materials, wood and forestry trade unions will meet in Helsinki, Finland to celebrate the 14th EFBWW General Assembly.

From 12 to 14 December, more than 300 trade union representatives from European construction, building materials, wood and forestry trade unions will meet in Helsinki, Finland, for the 14th EFBWW General Assembly. During the three-day event, participants will discuss the main achievements of the last four years, set the priorities for the next Congress period, and elect the new leadership.

Before the opening of the General Assembly, on 12 December, the EFBWW will organise three side events. The first side event will be dedicated to gender equality in our sectors. At this event we will launch the practical manual for negotiators of collective bargaining agreements (CBA), including a toolbox with good practices on how to integrate gender aspects in CBA's. There will be also side events on organising and communication and campaigning. The EFBWW will also organise a solidarity event with Ukraine.

During the opening of the General Assembly, Dr Guy Standing, author of the book *The Precariat, The New Dangerous Class* (2011), will be the keynote speaker. He will address the impact of precarization and social dumping on our sectors, the impact on democracy and the need for a solid trade union answer.

Together with Nikolaj Villumsen (MEP The Left, DK) we will also celebrate our victory for a better protection of construction workers against asbestos. This was one of the major EFBWW battles in the past congress period and we won!

During the Congress, the EFBWW will also present its activity report, highlighting its main achievements (leaflet attached). We will debate the steps needed for a fair Internal Market and how to ensure that the twin transition is a just transition and the EFBWW affiliates will decide on the priorities for the next Congress period.

On the Congress webpage ([EFBWW Congress](#)) you can find all the information about the General Assembly and the different side events. The webpage will be regularly updated with new information, pictures, videos and reports about the different events. You can also follow us also on our social media channels: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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The European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW) is the European Workers' Industry Federation for the following sectors: building, woodworking, forestry and allied industries and trades. The EFBWW has 77 affiliated unions in 36 countries and represents a total of 1,500,000 members.

OUR TOP 5 ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2020-2023



In the last four years, unexpected developments affected Europe and the world: the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, staggering inflation causing a cost-of-living crisis, threats to democracy and attacks on human and workers' rights. Despite the difficult context, the EFBWW and its affiliates did achieve significant progress in many areas.



1

ASBESTOS

Our fight to stop asbestos deaths finally resulted in a major victory for our workers. The European institutions approved new legislation that will better protect construction workers from asbestos: the occupational exposure limit will be reduced to 2,000 fibres per m³ (50 times lower than the current limit), investments in training of workers and better prevention will be scaled up, asbestos encapsulation will be banned.

2

FIGHT SOCIAL DUMPING AND LABOUR CRIME

Our subcontracting campaign brought the voice of subcontracted workers to the political heart of Europe, calling for an end to exploitation in subcontracting chains and demanding new rules to promote direct jobs and limit subcontracting. In 2019 we launched an official complaint for "illegal state aid" against the unfair posting bonus in Slovenia. After years of lobby work and campaigning, the scheme will finally be abolished. We contributed to an ambitious resolution that was adopted by the European Parliament, asking for new digital enforcement tools and sectoral social ID-cards to increase transparency and safety on construction sites. With the support of the European Commission, we have started a project to look at a possible EU legislative framework in this area. The construction sector is taking the lead and showing the example.

3

JUST TRANSITION

The EFBWW welcomed the goals and objectives of the European Green Deal and successfully lobbied for an ambitious Renovation Wave. We focused on skills and quality jobs in the revised Energy Performance of Buildings Directive demanding for a just transition that leaves no one behind. We successfully pushed for the inclusion of the cement sector in the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism.

4

ORGANISING AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Confronted with a declining membership and at the urgent request of our affiliates, we made the first steps in the field of organising with several workshops and training seminars. We adopted a policy paper that sets a clear framework for an own EFBWW organising strategy. This will be one of our strategic priorities in the next Congress period. Following the adoption of a resolution on gender at the last Congress, the EFBWW published a practical manual for gender mainstreaming in sectoral collective bargaining agreements.

5

COVID-19: HEALTH BEFORE PROFIT

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought the world to a stand-still. We reacted immediately and went digital with the speed of light. We created an online space to assist our affiliates to exchange information and good practices. Together with our sectoral social partners, we lobbied the EU institutions to secure a central role for our sectors in all the EU economic recovery programs and available funding.

To safeguard its operating capacity, the EFBWW took important decisions towards financial and organizational sustainability. We strengthened our advocacy and lobby work. We made important investments to improve our internal and external communication, experimented with campaigning techniques and engaged in alliances and partnerships. We continued and increased our commitment to social dialogue. We strengthened social partnership in construction, wood and forestry and cement. The many joint initiatives and projects are good examples.

At international level, the EFBWW and BWI strengthened their cooperation. Our combined efforts pushed the International Labour Organisation to recognise occupational health and safety as a fundamental workers' right.

The last four years show that, indeed, together we are stronger.

**Build together, fight together, win together.
Together for a social and green Europe.**



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