



European Federation  
of Building  
and Woodworkers



## PRESS RELEASE

### CONFRONTING EUROPE'S ASBESTOS DISASTER

27 May, 2015

**Brussels, Belgium and London, UK:** On 24 June, 2015, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions are hosting a joint conference on asbestos under the title: **Freeing Europe Safely From Asbestos.**

The European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW) are supporting the event together with the Belgian Asbestos Victims' Group (ABEVA), and the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS).

The objective of this all day session is to reinforce demands by EU politicians, trade unionists, asbestos victims and campaigners for a coordinated response to the European asbestos epidemic which is claiming over 15,000 lives a year.<sup>1</sup> Speakers will call for EU action on a safe removal strategy, a policy for the recognition and compensation of victims and recommendations for gold standard medical screening and treatment for Europeans at-risk of contracting asbestos-related diseases.

Topics such as EU legislation, asbestos management and/or removal, workers' training, decontamination, screening and the human impact of Europe's asbestos catastrophe will be covered by experts from more than a dozen countries. Commenting on this event, Ulrik Spannow Chairman of the EFBWW Occupational Health and Safety Coordination Group said:

“In the past workers were exposed to asbestos, but in fact they still are. In this connection, EFBWW sees the European ban of asbestos as an important but only the first step towards an asbestos free Europe. We therefore welcome the initiatives of the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee focusing on practical action on asbestos in the various policy areas concerned. We like to contribute to the implementation of these initiatives into practical policy action and consider the asbestos conference on 24th June as an excellent occasion to discuss the various aspects with European and national authorities.”

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<sup>1</sup> On April 30, 2015, the World Health Organization confirmed the devastation asbestos continues to cause in Europe in a media release which confirmed that 300 million Europeans are living in countries where the use of asbestos remains legal. The WHO Regional Director for Europe estimated that 15,000 lives were lost in Europe every year because of exposure to asbestos.

Notes to Editors:

1. More information from the named organizations can be obtained from:
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2. For more information on this event, see the website of the European Economic and Social Committee: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-europe-asbestos-free>