



European Federation  
of Building  
and Woodworkers



PRESS RELEASE:

**2023 EUROPEAN YEAR OF SKILLS:  
INVESTING IN PEOPLE  
THE WOODWORKING AND FURNITURE SOCIAL PARTNERS COMMITMENT**

*Brussels, 12 December 2022*

The European social partners from the woodworking and furniture industries, represented by CEI-Bois and EFIC, jointly with their European trade union representatives, EFBWW, welcome the Commission decision to declare the year 2023 as “European Year of Skills”. In line with the statement made by President Von der Leyen during her State of the Union, our sector strongly agrees in the need to tackle the shortage of skills in Europe by putting an emphasis on new qualifications, investment on professional education, upskilling and attracting the right skills to help companies and strengthen Europe's growth.

In this respect, the woodworking and furniture European social partners plan to engage in the “2023 European Year for skills” by holding a dedicated expert meeting in the framework of their joint woodworking and furniture Sector Social Dialogue and producing a European best practices brochure to celebrate the commitment of our industries on skills while inspiring new initiatives and commitments by our industries for the next working generations.

The joint expert meeting will take place on the 13 of February 2023 in Brussels, in a hybrid format. It aims to tackle common challenges in terms of skills, identifying a way forward for cooperation and constitute the basis for fostering and developing mobility for apprenticeships in our sectors and across Europe. This in turn should contribute to reducing the skills and qualifications gaps for our industries, provide new opportunities of employment and support the European green and digital transitions.

The woodworking and furniture sectors in Europe employ over 2 million people in more than 300 thousand companies, most of them small or medium-sized enterprises, encompass a wide range of professions and are marked by innovation processes on different qualities. Our industries help maintaining employment in Europe while boosting excellence in the European manufacturing ecosystem and export the best of the Made in Europe through our sustainable, beautiful and design products.

In addition, the woodworking and furniture industries contribute to a low-carbon bioeconomy and circular economy, as wood is a natural renewable bio-based resource with carbon storage properties. Wood is one of the main raw materials in the furniture industry and wood-based products play a key role in achieving the EU Green Deal ambitions and the transition to a sustainable, green, and carbon-neutral Europe.

All the above-mentioned traits constitute a good reason for our companies to continue to invest in skilled and qualified employees all over the processing chain. A highly qualified workforce, able to innovatively integrate new skills and competences- especially needed for

the digital and ecological transition- into their traditional work processes, able to work with different materials, making intelligent use of the possibility of new combinations, is vital for a competitive woodworking and furniture sectors, competing on an increasingly international market.

The woodworking and furniture social partners are investing in new solutions for increasing productivity, enhancing job quality, and to climate neutrality and circular economy objectives.

Further information about the expert meeting and how to register will be provided in due time.

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[The European Confederation of Woodworking Industries \(CEI-Bois\)](#) represents 21 European and National organisations from 15 countries and is the body backing the interests of the whole industrial European wood sector: more than 180.000 companies generating an annual turnover of 152 billion euros and employing 1 million workers in the EU.

[The European Federation of Building and Woodworkers \(EFBWW\)](#) is the European Trade Union Federation grouping 76 national free trade unions from 34 countries with members in the building, building materials, woodworking, forestry and allied industries and trades.

[The European Furniture Industries Confederation \(EFIC\)](#) represents over 70% of the total turnover of the European Furniture Industries, a sector employing 1 million people in about 120.000 enterprises across the EU and generating a turnover of 100 billion Euros. The EFIC membership is composed of 17 national associations, one individual company member and several clusters.