

## **New European Bauhaus: How European wood-based panels can bring beauty, sustainability and inclusivity to the built and living environment**

**Open Part of the EPF Annual General Meeting, 23 June 2023  
Ciudad de la Cultura de Galicia, Edificio Fontán, Santiago de Compostela, Spain**

The cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, the majestic destination for pilgrims walking “El Camino”, was an inspiring backdrop for recent discussions of the New European Bauhaus (NEB) in Iberia and beyond. Mirroring the NEB’s ambition of inspiring a new way of building and living, the event took place not in the old town, but rather in the modern Fontán building, part of the magnificent city of culture of Galicia built on the hill overlooking the city. It was here that more than 100 speakers, guests, and representatives of the press gathered with members of the European Wood-based Panel Federation (EPF) for a day of discussion on how to bring aesthetics, sustainability and affordability to our future built and living environments.



Between words of welcome from Xesús Domínguez of the Santiago Mayor’s office, from EPF Chairman Martin Brettenthaler, and from President of host ANFTA Manuel Alonso, delegates began the day with [an uplifting message from Elisa Ferreira, Portugal’s Commissioner to the European Union.](#)





Mrs Ferreira welcomed and encouraged the collaborative work between Spain (winner already of 11 NEB prizes) and EPF. She applauded the federation's commitment to becoming a Role Model Industry in terms of carbon neutrality and circularity and she urged EPF to continue investing its tremendous energy towards innovative and creative sustainable solutions. As she put it, NEB is a combination of sustainability and style, and she echoed European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in noting that it is the heart and soul of the European Green Deal.

After EPF Managing Director Clive Pinnington had delivered the [sector's 2022 results and five highlights from its advocacy programme](#), MEP Marcos Ros Sempere addressed the audience both as a Rapporteur on NEB to the European Parliament, and as a trained architect. His core message was that NEB is not a directive, but rather a cultural paradigm shift. He celebrated Spain's active role in the project and explained that for the European Parliament, what is particularly important is to bring stability to the programme. The Parliament calls for clear definition of what is a NEB project. Both a labelling system and the NEB Compass will be useful in this regard.



**Roundtable 1: NEB in Buildings and Construction**  
Discussions on how wood and wood-based panels can positively influence beauty, sustainability and togetherness in line with NEB goals.



The first roundtable of the day, moderated by journalist Mrs Joana Petiz, featured

- Andreja Kutnar, Director, InnoRenew CoE, Member of the Wood4Bauhaus Alliance
- Alicja Herbowska, Deputy Head of Unit (NEB), DG JRC, European Commission
- Vanesa Baño, Architect and Project Manager, Innovawood
- José Pedro Sousa, Architect linked to NEB, Member NEB High-level roundtable
- António Carlos Rodrigues, Grupo Casais CEO, AICCOPN Vice-President

Mrs Herbowska set the scene, noting the commitment of the European Commission to NEB, and celebrating that the community driven project now counts more than 100 partners, including the Wood4Bauhaus Alliance, represented on the podium by Mrs Kutnar and Mrs Baño as well as by EPF. Mrs Kutnar presented the NEBAcademy, recognising and welcoming the challenge to reskill or upskill 3 million construction workers in Europe to use new innovative materials, especially nature-based sustainable ones, such as wood. She called on Research institutes to engage in such training. This theme of connecting the dots between ambition and reality was picked up by Mrs Baño who looked forward to linking innovation with architects to bring them access to a new generation of biotic products. Mr Rodrigues was able to bring a real world example of this, being a hybrid wood and concrete building for which Casais is a pioneer, and which they have been able to now build and then replicate in 14 countries, thanks to digitisation. Mr Pedro Sousa, a member of the NEB High Level Roundtable, concluded the discussion powerfully, reflecting that our global population is only getting denser, and thus lightweight, offsite manufactured materials such as wood can become an answer, for example when placed on top of existing structures, a highly suitable NEB solution to the growing challenge of population densification.

**Roundtable 2: NEB in everyday life, especially furniture and trends in housing**  
Discussions on the impact of new ways of living and working.  
Bioeconomy, circularity and wood recycling will be central themes.



Roundtable 2, moderated by interior designer and journalist Ainhoa Ruíz de Morales, took discussions from the outside (construction) to the inside (furniture and living) with guests:

- Edi Snaidero, EFIC President
- Rui Silva, Director, Member Services, Spain & Portugal *Relais & Châteaux*
- Sebastián Molinero, Andimac Manager
- Javier Miguez, 'La Bodeguillas' group Manager

Mr Snaidero opened with the comment that EFIC represents all types of furniture, not just wood and wood-based panels. The view of the furniture sector is that design and quality are no longer enough. Sustainability is essential today. Mr Silva, thinking about the design of hotel rooms, agreed this, and took the idea further by exploring the role of recycled materials. In the past, he felt that these had been hidden, whereas now they could dream to take centre stage. Mr Miguez considered this from a restaurateur's perspective, highlighting that room decor is now increasingly part of the dining experience. In part because of this, restaurant interiors are often renewed every 3-5 years. Mr Molinero considered the above from the perspective of the private home, sharing the view that these will increasingly need renovation as they age, and at that point items such as energy saving and environment should be considered, topics which might not have been common when many buildings were purchased or built. From the group the idea of a label emerged, linking back to the comments of MEP Ros, and the first roundtable where Mrs Herbowska had confirmed that the European Commission has great interest in such a concept, to help consumers to recognise sustainability, assuming that beauty and inclusiveness are more readily recognisable.



The event was formally closed by José González Vázquez, Counsellor of the Ministry of Rural Environment of the regional Government of Galicia (Xunta de Galicia), Spain. Mr González expressed the great pleasure of Galicia in hosting this gathering, highlighting that the region is 70% wooded and itself accounts for 50% of all Spain's forestry resource. The sector is thus pivotal to the Galician economy and the regional government welcomes the sharing of knowledge and learning towards best practice, through events such as this.

Thanking the Galician government for these remarks, panellists and participants for their contributions, hosts and sponsors for their support, Mr Brettenthaler and Mr Alonso welcomed everyone to continue discussions over lunch and looked forward to the next EPF General Assembly on 19-21 June 2024 in Riga, Latvia.



Thank you



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About EPF – the European Panel Federation has members in 30 European countries and represents the manufacturers of particleboard, MDF, OSB, hardboard, softboard and plywood.

The EU wood-based panels industry has an annual turnover of about 25 billion euro and creates over 100,000 jobs directly.

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