

Maastricht - Brussels

Back to the Future - a march for Rights

Concept note for participating orgs and individuals
Updated 21 August 2025

Friends of the Earth Europe (FOEE), the European Coalition for Corporate Justice (ECCJ) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) are inviting you to join, as an individual and with your organisation, on a series of events in Maastricht, Brussels and in-between, against the impacts of the EU's deregulation agenda on people and planet

[Q&A](#) // [Sign-up form for the March](#)

Dates:

September 21-23

Political context:

The EU has engaged in an unprecedented rollback of social and environmental legislation in a sweeping deregulation agenda, under the vague banner of "competitiveness". But social and environmental protection are not an economic luxury, they are a matter of life or death for many communities and workers across the world.

Our core demand is the protection of human rights, environmental and climate provisions in EU policy. It's a direct response to the Omnibus 1's dismantling of the EU's due diligence directive (CSDDD), but also a vehicle for all other social and environmental protest against the EU's deregulation legislative agenda.

The action:

As affected stakeholders and conscientious objectors - unions, communities affected by corporate negligence, activists and politicians - we will walk in relay for three days from Maastricht to Brussels. The Maastricht Treaty contributed to Europe's political mandate for workers rights, environmental protection and democratic participation - and solidified the union citizens' democratic representation by enhancing the role of the EU Parliament. These rights are more threatened than ever, as the European Commission turns away from progress to cut environmental and social legislation in rushed, top-down procedures. We march to defend these rights in the Europe we want.

Ethical motivation:

Long marches have a moral and political tradition, and our march pays honor to what is at stake for affected communities due to the deregulation agenda: weakened access to justice for victims of corporate abuse, weakened oversight of corporate negligence, and increased vulnerability to climate and environmental risks. In the race to the bottom of so-called

competitiveness, it's a handful of companies who win due to weaker rules, while people pay the price.¹

Summary of events:

When: September 21st to 23rd

September 21st:

A public demonstration leaves the city center of Maastricht and accompanies the marchers to the NL/BE border, just on the city's outline. Speeches, batucadas and banner deployments will occur.

Carrying mandate and energy from the crowd, the select group of marchers walk 20 km over 6 hours to Diepenbeek just outside Hasselt, and are then taken by shuttle bus to accommodation for the night.

Meanwhile, in Maastricht in the afternoon, a projection of documentary movie The Pickers is organised, followed by a panel debate.

September 22nd:

Shuttle bus takes walkers to the starting point for day 2. Marchers walk 20 km over 6 hours, broken up by breaks and meals, to Linden, just outside Linden. Walkers are taken by shuttle bus to accommodation in Leuven for the night.

September 23rd: Shuttle bus takes walkers to Bertem, outside of Leuven. Walk 20 km over 6 hours towards Brussels.

On arrival in the European district, another large-scale public demonstration welcomes the marchers, and amplifies the anti-deregulation message addressed to Von Der Leyen, the European Commission and the rest of EU co-legislators. The event will include a concert and speeches.

Precise schedule and itineraries may vary.

Forms of participation:

Organisers: FOEE is the principal organiser with narrative oversight and/or budget participation from ECCJ and ETUC, and logistical partnership with a series of local organisations in Belgium. FOEE will facilitate the communications strategy and the majority of press outreach.

Supporting organisations: Starting now, help us mobilise political figures, community representatives and high-profile activists (unionists, NGO leadership, influencers) that are relevant in your national context.

Provide us with mobilisation relays in Maastricht and Brussels, promote the events on your

¹ [One of many examples, American oil companies pressuring the EU to rollback on environmental, human rights and climate protections](#)

communication channels both before and during, and if you have access to local volunteer networks, offer them the ability to participate as stewards and volunteers for the events.

Protesters: Members of the public, activists, unionists, students, community representatives, political figures, concerned citizens are all invited to participate in the large-scale events in Maastricht and Brussels.

Marchers:

- Are encouraged to join for the entirety of the march, but can choose to participate for one of the three days. This is to encourage largest participation at the beginning and the end of the march while allowing flexibility to participants
- Are welcome to participate as representatives of stakeholders including unions, communities affected by corporate negligence, activists and political figures.
- Participation numbers are limited for budget and logistics reasons. We're happy for you to volunteer yourselves regardless, and we will be communicating quickly with you to confirm registration.
- Marchers are highly encouraged to do their own individual communication on their social media channels or niche press contacts, in order to diversify the audience exposed to the event's political messaging, in line with broad narrative guidelines to be provided.

Logistics for marchers

Route: Following the shortest walking route from Maastricht to Brussels that passes alongside Hasselt and Leuven.

Accommodation will consist of rented hostel rooms or gites

Food will be provided for marchers by the organisers via travelling distribution by van at set points for rest and meals.

Care will be served via decentralized care structures such as buddies and affinity groups. There will also be a flexible emergency response unit available if necessary.

Travel to and from the march:

- The marchers will be expected to organise their own travel to the point of departure on the beginning of the day they wish to participate. Should you need financial support, we will consider it on a case-by-case basis.
- A certain amount of care work and organisation will be provided for marchers along the route, to guarantee the safety and well-being of all participants.
- Marchers who are joining for only certain moments of the route will need to independently organise their travel to and departure from their chosen section of the march.

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