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elhn
LABOUR HISTORY



CfP for the conference

The body and health in feminist labour history

Warsaw, The Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences

14-16 October 2026

Deadline for submissions 15 November 2025

This three-day conference, called by the European Labour History Network working group “Feminist Labour History” and hosted by the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, aims to explore new perspectives in the study of the history of labour through the lens of gender and intersectionality. The conference builds on and moves forward the debates on and within feminist labour history which took place during the conferences of the European Labour History Network and the 2019 conference of the FLH Working Group in Bologna.

The conference, “**The body and health in feminist labour history**”, Warsaw, **14-16 October 2026**, focuses on the history of gendered labour from the perspective of the body and health.

Historically, conceptualizations of bodily differences built on the understanding of gender, race, ethnicity and age have played a significant role in establishing the division of labour in society and related cultural imaginaries, as well as inequalities, hierarchies and labour regulations. Ava Baron and Eileen Boris argued that, “as a category for historical analysis, ‘the body’ allows for incorporating difference more fully, for it is one of the most powerful and pervasive cultural symbols that define who and what we are.”¹ Bringing the focus on the (gendered) body into the discussions on feminist labour history, and drawing on the ‘bodily turn’ in the humanities and approaches from fields such as the history of medicine and health and sensory history can make feminist labour history more inclusive and enhance our understanding of the historical engendering of various types and forms of labour and gendered experiences of work.

We invite proposals for individual papers focusing on one of the following topics:

- Occupational health and safety, including toxic substances, stress, and other environmental harms in the workplace and their impact on working-class communities
- Medical discourses on woman’s body at work
- Histories of labour and reproductive health (menstruation, pregnancy, menopause)
- Bodies, violence, and sexual harassment in the workplace
- Embodiment: representation and corporeality
- The history of racialized bodies and the colonial body at work
- The relation between the construction of bodily difference (in terms of biological needs and nutrition) and the wage (such as equal pay), employment, classifications of jobs into light and heavy work, discourses of productivity, and the sexual division of labour
- A sensory history of work: the ways in which beyond labour conditions the working environment, including smells, noise, temperatures, weather conditions, impacts the labouring body
- Dressing the labouring body: uniforms and work clothes
- The disabled body and labour

We would like to draw the attention of interested colleagues to the additional conference theme which the Feminist Labour History Working Group is organizing for the 6th European Labour History Conference, University of Barcelona, 16-19 June 2026: “The spaces of work and

¹ Ava Baron, Eileen Boris; “The Body” as a Useful Category for History Working-Class History. *Labor* 1 May 2007; 4 (2): 23–43, here 24. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1215/15476715-2006-061>

labour: gendered perspectives on the local and the global”. Please consider both calls for papers, when deciding which of the two conferences you will submit your proposal and/or when submitting different or complementary proposals for each conference.

Please send a 500-word abstract and a short academic CV (max 500 words) in one Word file to flh.conference.warsaw@gmail.com by **15 November 2025**. The proposal should include name, surname, current affiliation and contact details of the proponent.

Limited travel funding will be available for selected early career scholars (funding available within the STER project of the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange at the Anthropos Doctoral School).

Scientific Committee: Eloisa Betti (University of Padova), Eileen Boris (University of California in Santa Barbara), Natalia Jarska (Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences), Leda Papastefanaki (University of Ioannina), Eszter Varsa (Central European University) and Susan Zimmermann (Central European University)

Organizing Committee: Marta Chmielewska, Natalia Jarska