



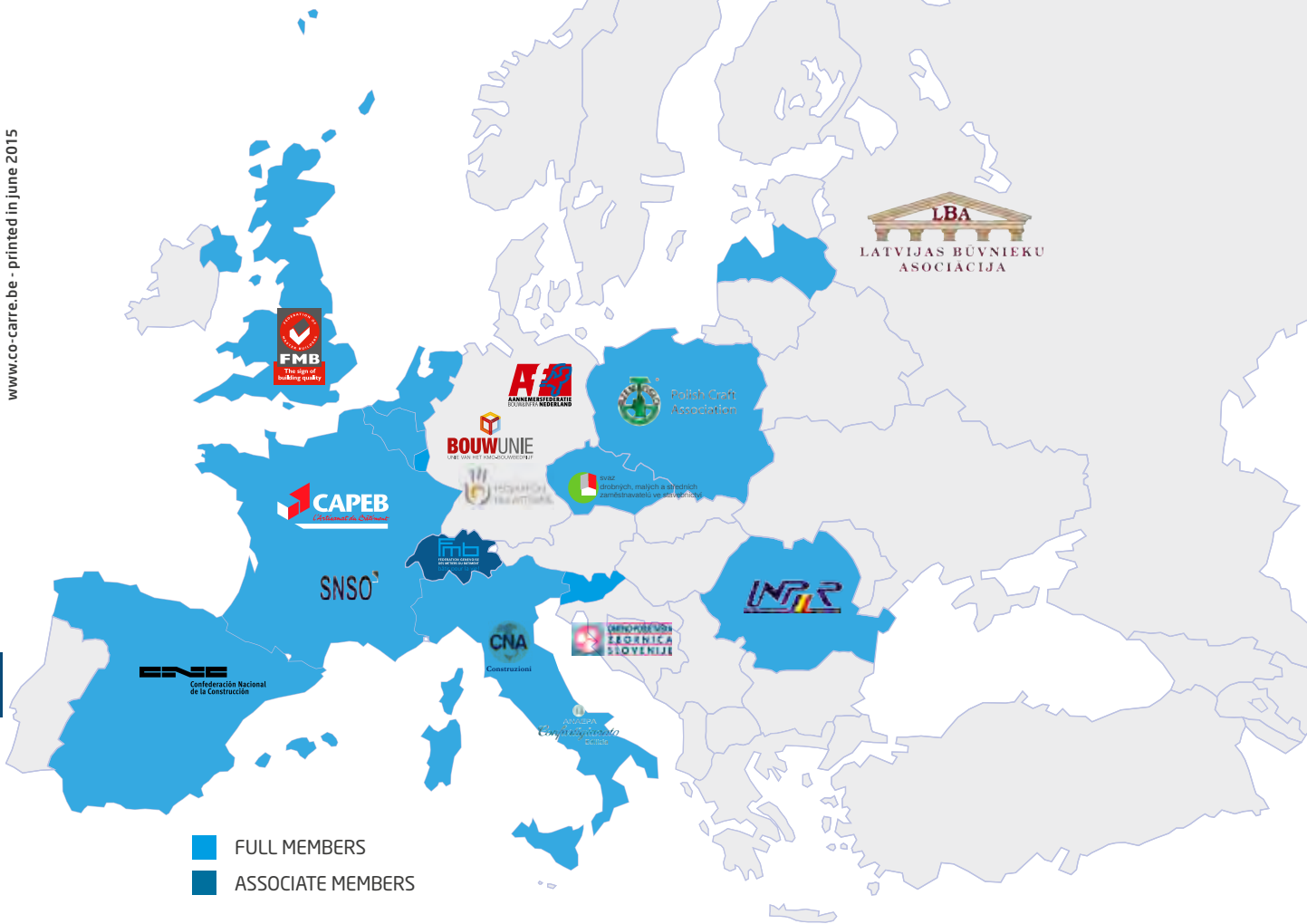
Annual report
14-15

EUROPEAN BUILDERS
CONFEDERATION

25 YEARS

EBC
CONSTRUCTION SMEs EUROPE

The Voice of Construction SMEs in Europe



@EBC_SMEs

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EBC's Annual Report
 2014-2015 is also
 available on
 the EBC website



EBC is a member of UEAPME
 and a founding member of SBS

A logo celebrating 25 years, featuring the number '25' in a large, stylized font with 'YEARS' written in a smaller font above it, all enclosed within a circular graphic element.

For the European Builders Confederation, 2015 is a year of celebrations and changes. Already honoured to be EBC's President, I have the good fortune that my mandate starts on the 25th anniversary of our association. Indeed, 25 years have gone by since the foundation of EBC, with many challenges and struggles, but above all with achievements and successes that we are going to celebrate focusing on the future. To do so, EBC has modernised its public image by adopting a **new logo and a new website**.

From an economic point of view, in spite of the "slight shudders" of recovery at the European level for the real economy, micro and small enterprises of the construction sector in Europe are still severely affected by the recent crisis.

I make a call to the recently elected European Parliament and to the new College of Commissioners to accept our request to **strengthen the social dialogue in Europe**, to automatically apply the "Think Small First" principle, to relaunch investments for the **energy-efficient building renovation**, and to reduce **red tape** by adapting administration to the needs and realities of our enterprises.

EBC has evolved and today represents a fundamental part of the construction sector in Europe. For this reason, I will devote all my efforts to make 2015 a turning point for the struggle of EBC to be recognised as **a full European social partner**. The micro, small and medium-sized enterprises constituting 99.9% of the construction sector in Europe need appropriate representation in the European sectorial social dialogue for construction.

In this 25th year of EBC, I will continue the efforts made by my predecessors and, thanks to the renewed European institutions, I will bring new ambitions to our association. My goal is that construction SMEs,



the drivers of sustainable economic growth in Europe, work in an environment that encourages their development.

In this framework, I would like to underline the increasing importance of **young people and women's participation** in the construction sector in Europe. In view of the demographic situation, it is vital that our entrepreneurs share their knowledge to stimulate the interest for the careers in our sector.

Likewise, equal opportunities in our trades and the importance of women's participation in our sector must become a reality and not remain wishful thinking. That is why we have decided to make of this issue the theme of our 25th anniversary.

Finally, I want to directly call on the European Parliament to reconsider the **Posting of Workers Directive**, a source of concern and unfair competition for our enterprises in the Member States.

I also call on all my European colleagues gathered in EBC to keep actively defending and promoting our enterprises and the local jobs they represent.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be 'Patrick Liébus'.

Patrick Liébus
EBC President

FOREWORD BY THE PRESIDENT

PRESENTATION OF EBC

A voice for construction SMEs in Brussels

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An increasing number of national regulations are little more than national adaptations of European legislation in the energy, social, fiscal and standardisation domains, usually implemented without properly assessing their impact on SMEs.

Six national associations representing construction craftsmen in several European countries therefore joined forces in 1990 to establish the EBC – European Builders Confederation – the voice of construction SMEs in Europe.

Through its 15 members and partner organisations EBC represents 2 million craftsmen and SMEs. Via its Secretariat in Brussels, EBC works in close collaboration with the European Union of Craft and SMEs (UEAPME), organisation of which EBC is a member. EBC is also a founding member and project partner of Small Business Standards (SBS), the newly created association representing SMEs in the standard making system.

Whom the construction sector represents ?

The construction industry ranges from general contractors, house-builders and bricklayers to specialised trades such as carpenters and joiners, plasterers, plumbers, heating & cooling and renewable energy installers, electricians, painters and interior decorators, tile-fixers, including entrepreneurs dealing with the production and processing of construction products. Depending on the national context, EBC national members affiliate SMEs from all these sub-sectors of the construction industry.

THE MISSION

Anticipate,
exchange, position
and then act



We represent, defend and promote the interests of the building sector's micro, small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, in close coordination with our national member organisations. Our mission is:

- To ensure construction micro-enterprises and SMEs' specific needs are taken into consideration during the European legislative process in order to create an SME-friendly business environment and to make it possible for construction SMEs to be the driver of sustainable economic growth in Europe
- To put forward construction SMEs' contribution to the European decision-making in the field of sustainability, Health & Safety at Work, entrepreneurship, SME access to markets, standardisation, fair competition in the Internal Market, among others

- To increase understanding of small and medium construction businesses' role - which represent the vast majority of the sector - for employment and sustainable development, and make them heard vis-à-vis the European Institutions, the European Standardisation Organisations and other international organisations

- To enable representatives of small and medium construction enterprises to participate in the European sectoral social dialogue, thus increasing its relevance and reinforcing its impact. Social dialogue is crucial for a healthy functioning of our economy. However, it has to be representative in order to work well. This is why EBC is asking to be included as a full member in the European Social Dialogue Committee for Construction and give the input of builders on its important subjects.

EBC PUBLICATIONS

- EBC Manifesto for the 2014-2019 European legislative term
- A quarterly information newsletter
- The Construction Voice, a monthly letter for the press and the EU decision-makers
- An annual report



EBC IS ALSO ACTIVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA. FIND OUT MORE ABOUT EBC ACTIVITIES ON TWITTER, LINKEDIN AND YOUTUBE



- Press releases
- Position papers
- Publications on the projects managed by EBC

All these publications are available on the EBC website

www.ebc-construction.eu



EBC has a brand new website, which is clear, user-friendly and up-to-date to showcase the latest information on EBC's activities. Have a look at it at www.ebc-construction.eu

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Engineering
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STRUCTURE OF EBC

10  **91.9%**
European construction
entreprises with less than
10 employees

20  **96.9%**
European construction
entreprises with less than
20 employees

50  **98.9%**
European construction
entreprises with less than
50 employees

250  **99.9%**
European construction
entreprises with less than
250 employees

+250  **0.1%**
European construction
entreprises with **more**
than **250 employees**



THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR



10%

of the GDP of the
European Union



3 millions

entreprises in the
sector



13 millions

workers in the
sector



40%

of greenhouse-gas
emissions

SMALL AND MEDIUM CONSTRUCTION ENTREPRISES

80%

Produce 80% of the
construction
industry's output



83%

Employ 83% of the
total sector
workforce



Create local jobs
for traditional manual
activities which are not
subjected to
delocalisation



Have a huge
potential to reduce
YOUTH
unemployment,
offering increasingly
more qualified jobs



PERFORMANCES AND TRENDS OF THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, reports that the **first months of 2015 have been harder than expected** for the construction sector in Europe. By contrast, Euroconstruct (a private network for construction forecasts in 19 European countries) considered that, after seven years of deep crisis, the European construction market entered a new phase of growth in 2014: moderate in 2014 (+1%), growth was expected to consolidate in 2015 and to keep a positive trend in the following two years according to Euroconstruct. However, Eurostat findings for the first quarter of 2015 showed that the construction sector and its SMEs, the overwhelming majority of the construction enterprises, are still severely hit by the crisis.

Production of the construction sector in Europe

The EU-28 index of production for construction fell during most of 2012 and until March 2013. During the remainder of 2013 and along 2014 construction production followed a light upward path. In 2014, the three main segments within the construction market were expected to grow in the short-to-medium term, with the **residential sector** and the **new non-residential investments** even expected to be very important in 2015 - 2017, according to Euroconstruct.



Source: Eurostat, April 2015

Nevertheless, Eurostat is less optimistic. Indeed, the EC agency found that production in construction fell by 3.7% in the euro area and by 2.4% in the EU28 in February 2015 compared to February 2014. Eurostat explains these decreases with the falling of **building construction** by 4% and of **civil engineering** by 2.7% for the euro area, while in the EU28, the decrease of 2.4% is due to building construction falling by 2.7% and civil engineering by 0.5%. Among Member States, the largest decreases in production in construction were registered in Germany (-8.1%), France (-7.9%), Italy (-5.8%) and Portugal (-4.5%), and the highest increases in Romania (+19.5%), Sweden (+9.4%), the Czech Republic (+6.2%), Hungary (+5.1%) and Slovenia (+4.9%) for the period between February 2014 and February 2015.

Growth of the construction industry in the EU Members States

At a macro level, Eastern Europe was the driving force of the construction industry in 2014, showing a significant growth rate (+4.8%) which should surpass 3% in the next two years, mainly thanks to an improved capability in using EU project funds. By contrast, the construction sector in Western European countries has not reached a growth rate of 1% (0.8%) in 2014 and should not exceed 2% in the next three years: **Germany** is set to slow down in the near future, **France** faces the lowest new buildings rate in the last five years and **Italy** still sees construction activities heavily decreasing.

The slow economic growth in 2014 was thus weak since the labour market is fragile in many countries, the credit market is tight and public accounts correction is still underway. After years of general austerity measures, with output, wages and prices stagnating and levels of unemployment at record highs, the slight recovery of the construction sector foreseen in 2014 seems hard to follow in 2015. Indeed, even if Eastern European economies returned to robust economic growth after a sharp slowdown in 2012 - 2013, Western EU members are still struggling to keep alive their construction micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

INVOLVING WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FOR MORE INCLUSIVE CONSTRUCTION SMEs

25 YEARS



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IN 2015 EBC CELEBRATES 25 YEARS representing micro, small and medium-sized construction enterprises. The focus of the year is involving **women and young people for more inclusive construction SMEs**. EBC and its members are very committed to this issue and will engage with concrete actions to include more women and young people in the sector.



In Geneva on 18th and 19th June 2015 the **EBC Annual Congress** debated the topic of equal opportunities for young people and women in construction. The construction sector can provide valuable opportunities to include very large sections of the population that are underrepresented in this sector.

The conclusions of the Annual Congress will be discussed during a **dinner-debate** at the end of 2015 in the European Parliament. EBC is also organising a **photo exhibition** in the European Parliament with the contributions of pictures from its members. It will show the stories of young people and women who succeeded in the construction sector.



Simplification initiatives for the construction sector

EBC welcomes the **Fitness Check** of the most relevant EU legislation impacting **on the construction sector in the area of internal market and energy efficiency**. This Fitness Check started in 2015 to assess the impact (both positive and negative) and the effectiveness of a number of EU legislative texts on the competitiveness and sustainability of the construction sector. Other positive news are the evaluation of the **Late Payment Directive** and of the **standardisation system**.

The Revision of the Small Business Act

On the other side, it's worth noting that the Work Programme **did not set a revision of the Small Business Act (SBA)**, in spite of the consultation carried out at the end of 2014. In its reply to the consultation, EBC identified cutting red tape and facilitating access to finance as the top priorities of the SBA. Moreover, EBC was very satisfied with skills being included as a new and fifth priority area.

EBC believes that this is a missed opportunity to improve the effective impact of the SME policy. First and foremost the Small Business Act needs to be applied. Otherwise, it will not be useful for SMEs, regardless of whether its revision is carried out or not. The Small Business Act should become an inter-institutional agreement the European Institutions abide by for the real application of the "Think Small First" principle both at national and European level.

12 The new SME Policy means simplification first

The new European Commission, which started its mandate in November 2014, is reviewing its SME policy. A first positive news is its revised better regulation agenda.

In the **Work Programme for 2015** the European Commission proposed only 23 new initiatives and 80 existing proposals to be withdrawn or amended for political or technical reasons. This reflects a new positive commitment to cutting red tape and scraping unnecessary legislation. Simplification is essential to small businesses. Given their size, they have very few resources to cope with excessive burdens.

Nevertheless, EBC strongly believes that simplification just cannot come **at the expense of health and safety of workers and environmental concerns**. It is fundamental to find the correct balance between the rightful protection of workers and the environment with the needs of small businesses that cannot put up with burdensome red tape.





The implementation of the Public Procurement Directive is underway

On 26th February 2014 the European Union adopted the Public Procurement Directive, which replaces the 2004 directive on public works, supply and service contracts. The Member States have until 17th April 2016 to implement the new rules in their national law.

Implementation in the Member States

EBC is monitoring the implementation process in the European countries, also thanks to its members' input. At the moment of writing this report (May 2015), **only the United Kingdom has enacted the directive** in its national legislation.

However, other European countries are falling behind. Certain Member States are taking unexpected decisions against the spirit and the letter of the European directive, by eliminating de facto the "apply or explain" principle for the division of contracts into lots or by imposing rules and procedures that make it even more difficult for SMEs to be paid in due and correct form. Knowing that the **size of the contract** and **timely payments** are two of the most important factors in SMEs' access to public procurement, EBC is vigilant to ensure that the implementation of the directive will respect the provisions introduced in favour of these businesses.

The role of the European Institutions

EBC appreciates the work of both the **European Commission** and the **European Parliament** in keeping a close eye on the implementation. Early in February 2015 EBC was contacted by the Commission to share information on the main concerns SMEs have regarding implementation.

EBC has indicated as key points the **correct implementation of:**

- the most economic advantageous offer
- the "apply or explain" principle for the division of contracts into lots
- the direct payment of subcontractors
- the simplification measures
- the provisions against late payments

EBC also supports the efforts of the Commission in organising "implementation workshops", e-platforms for the exchange of best practices and bilateral meetings to evaluate the implementation of the public procurement directive.

EBC speaks about SME access to public procurement in the Procurement Week

Procurement Week is an international conference - organised every year by Bangor Law School - that aims to explore the many facets of Public Procurement such as Public Tendering, Business Development, Procurement Law and International Trade. Procurement Week 2015 took place in Cardiff (UK) in March 2015 and brought more than 800 attendees from over 30 countries.

EBC was invited to speak about SME access to public procurement. Riccardo Viaggi, EBC Secretary General, explained the **main improvements of the Public Procurement Directive** and underlined that now the responsibility lies with Member States for a quick and fair implementation.





Energy efficiency and small-scale projects to target microenterprises under the “Juncker Plan”

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EBC welcomes the Investment Plan for Europe, announced in November 2014, which aims at mobilising € 315 billion for strategic investments and to stimulate growth of the European economy. EBC also appreciates the fact that the legislative process is well underway.

However, although the Plan is intended to target **SMEs** in particular, they **are concerned that they may be cut out** of this initiative. Under the proposed structure, the projects to be financed under the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI) would be too big for SMEs, which would not be able to submit projects nor to participate in them.

The Plan should therefore **finance small-scale projects** to give small companies a concrete chance of being involved. EBC also calls for reserving part of the **granted guarantees to energy efficiency investments**.

The work of the European Parliament

EBC warmly appreciated and supported the work done by certain MEPs of the European Parliament’s **Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE)** about EFSI. On 14th April 2015 the ITRE Committee voted its opinion on the EFSI regulation’s proposal, approving an amendment to earmark € 5 billion for energy efficiency projects and € 5 billion for SMEs. Regrettably, the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee along with the Committee on Budget of the European Parliament jointly rejected this amendment.

Benefits for the European economy

Around 70% of the European building stock is highly energy inefficient. EFSI could represent an important occasion to renovate the residential housing stock in Europe. The European Institutions should take this opportunity to increase energy security, reduce energy-poverty and green-house gas emissions, while supporting growth and jobs in a sustainable way.



Late payments: Construction SMEs ask a revision of legislation

In November 2014, the Late payment information campaign launched by the European Commission came to an end with a closing seminar in Brussels. This event was the occasion to **assess the implementation of the Late Payments Directive at the national level** since the end of the implementation phase in March 2014. After a presentation by Intrum Justitia of its European Payment Index 2014, the former Vice-President of the European Commission and now European Parliament Vice-President Antonio Tajani insisted on the need to efficiently and concretely use the 315 billion euro investment plan announced by Jean-Claude Juncker.

Then EBC President, Mr. José Antonio Calvo Delgado was invited to speak as one of the stakeholders. He underlined that, at that time, the **Late Payment Directive had not been properly implemented** in 14 EU countries. He emphasised that SMEs must not be treated as the private banks of big companies and public authorities.

Director General from DG GROW and then European SME Envoy Mr. Calleja Crespo concluded by explaining how late payments create **a vicious circle**: delays impede SMEs to develop while SMEs are too afraid to pressure for the due payments in order not to lose clients.

The European Commission started an **evaluation and a study of the Late Payment Directive** in early 2015. In this framework, the EBC secretariat was contacted by the Technopolis Group as the consultant in charge of gathering general input on the impact of the directive in Europe. EBC members will also be consulted at national level for more information on the local situation.

EBC supports a revision of this legislation, as 50% of the Member States did not correctly apply it by early 2015. In this context, EBC believes that **the automatic claim of the interest for overdue payments and sanctions for those who don't respect the directive should be introduced.**



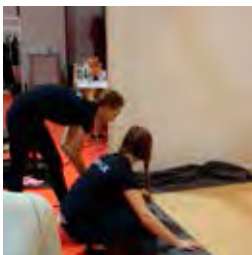
Construction 2020 needs political support

On 25th March 2015 EBC participated in the **High-Level Strategic Forum on Construction 2020**, promoted by the European Commission's DG GROW (Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs). The High-Level Forum presented the conclusions of the Thematic Groups about stimulating the investment conditions, improving human capital and enhancing resource-efficiency in the construction sector.

EBC has been supporting this initiative since its launch in 2012. The **Latvian Presidency** has proposed useful initiatives for the construction sector. Despite these good intentions, EBC believes that without a full **support of the Council** and the coordination between Construction 2020 and the legislative initiatives of **the European Commission**, the plan will not produce the expected positive effects.



SOCIAL AFFAIRS



Apprenticeship pledges to boost employment in construction

In July 2013 the European Social Partners, the European Commission and the Presidency of the Council of the European Union signed a joint declaration to create the European Alliance for Apprenticeship. The Alliance intends to promote the access to and the quality of apprenticeship, which is considered as a fundamental tool in facing youth unemployment and skills mismatch.

Apprenticeship pledge

In this context, the European Commission invites key actors – particularly companies and national industry associations – to make an **apprenticeship pledge** to strengthen the **supply, the quality and the image of apprenticeship**. Several companies and associations of different sectors have already made a pledge.

At the beginning of 2015 the European Commission's DG GROW (Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs) contacted EBC and other construction sector's representatives to encourage an apprenticeship pledge in this sector.

EBC makes a pledge

EBC is fully involved in this initiative. Indeed, EBC has made a pledge to encourage small companies to engage with training and national associations of construction SMEs to **support apprenticeship among their members**. Moreover, EBC has committed to raise awareness about the importance of Vocational and Educational Training and about the most effective **work-based education systems** through the exchange of best practices. EBC will take part in the signing ceremony for the new pledges in Riga on 22nd June 2015 organised by the European Commission.

This is an important occasion that small and medium-sized construction businesses should use to demonstrate they are key components in training young people.



Sectorial social dialogue: Eurofound concludes representativeness study after three-year process

EBC, as the representative of construction SMEs at the European level, has tried to become a full European social partner for the construction sector since 2005. Indeed, in a continuous effort to improve industrial relations and social dialogue, EBC has long been a strong supporter of a more inclusive and representative committee for sectorial social dialogue in Europe.

EBC welcomes the finalisation of the draft report

Also taking into account a request by the European Builders Confederation, in 2012 the European Commission mandated Eurofound to conduct a representativeness study for the European Social Dialogue for the construction sector, which officially and concretely started at the beginning of 2013. This study is designed to provide **basic information needed for the setting up and functioning of sectorial social dialogue committees at European level**, and to update data on social partners' representativeness.

After long and laborious rounds of comments to the initial draft reports, at the time of writing, the European study on the representativeness of European social partners in construction is **about to conclude**. In April 2015, EuroFound invited EBC and the other pertinent stakeholders to a meeting in order to evaluate the "final draft overview report" of the representativeness study.

EBC welcomed this final draft report. Despite taking an overall unexpected length of 3 years, this exercise comes to an end in a timely manner and with a fundamental importance in the context of Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker's will to drive a "New Start for Social Dialogue".



National social dialogue is multi-faceted

EBC appreciated the bottom-up character of this study that gives an unprecedented picture of social dialogue and industrial relations in construction. The very large number of employers/business associations has shown that **social dialogue in construction at national level is very diverse and multi-faceted**.

In the same sense, the study confirms the **overwhelming majority of SMEs in the sector**, showing the added-value that SME organisations could bring to the European Sectorial Social Dialogue. The study also reveals that EBC member associations represent the majority of enterprises included in the sample.



Undeclared Work Platform in slow progress - EBC fully supportive

In April 2014 the European Commission proposed the creation of a European Platform to improve cooperation at EU level in order to prevent and deter undeclared work more effectively. This Platform would bring together all national enforcement bodies involved in tackling undeclared work - such as labour and social security inspectorates and tax and migration authorities - as well as other stakeholders, such as EU-level representatives of employers and employees.

In October 2014, the Council reached an agreement to establish this new European Platform, which will also increase public awareness through the exchange of best practices, analyses and opinions.

Slow progress in the legislative process

After an exchange of views in January 2015, the Employment Committee of the European Parliament took its position in favour of the establishment of the Platform on 7th May 2015, opening the way for negotiations with the Council of the European Union and the European Commission.

The MEPs of the EMPL committee - following the work of rapporteur MEP **Georgi Pirinski** (Bulgaria, S&D) - approved the compulsory participation of Member States and the membership of social partners to the Platform. However, they excluded the regularisation of abusive situations from the scope of the Platform.

Despite being a high priority of the **Latvian Presidency** of the EU's Council, the Parliament took longer than foreseen to agree on a position due to the **extreme political sensitivity of the topic**. At the time of writing this report, the submission of the document to the plenary of the European Parliament was not scheduled.

EBC supports the platform

EBC welcomes the vote and is supportive of such initiatives, as undeclared work is a phenomenon that **causes serious damage to construction SMEs**. Along the legislative process, EBC has fomented the full activation of the Platform through cooperation and the exchange of information between labour inspectorates and ministries of the Member States.

To EBC, a **better enforcement** of inspection policies, more resources for **effective inspections** and **compulsory cross-border cooperation** are needed to tackle this phenomenon heavily affecting working conditions and fair competition. In this framework, EBC particularly welcomes **the inclusion of the European social partners as members of the Platform**. Indeed, this will significantly strengthen the work of the Platform, following the Commission's proposal of a strong role for social partners for the good functioning of the initiative.





and provisions such as **reduced VAT rates, advantageous loans, long term incentive schemes, tax deductions and the proper involvement of the financial sector**, energy efficiency will not be delivered.

Climate & Energy package: it's time to turn the political ambition into action

On 24th October 2014 the European Council adopted the European Climate and Energy Package for 2030, proposed by the European Commission in January 2014.

This package contains 3 targets:

- A binding EU target of an at least **40%** domestic reduction in **greenhouse gas emissions** by 2030 compared to 1990
- An EU target of at least **27%** for the share of **renewable energy** consumed in the EU
- An indicative EU target of at least **27%** for improving **energy efficiency** in 2030

This target of 27% towards energy efficiency is less ambitious than what was initially proposed by the European Commission. Indeed, the European Commission had asked for a 30% target. In its conclusions, the European Council indicates that the Commission will propose priority sectors in which significant energy efficiency gains can be reaped and the ways to address them.

EBC believes that this target is not really ambitious. However, since a political agreement has been found, EBC insists on the need to set up proper measures to achieve the objective. Without the right policy framework

The danger of ecodesign for windows averted - caution with energy labelling

The draft final reports of the "Ecodesign Preparatory Study on Window Products", ordered by the European Commission, were published in February 2015. The results show that **eco-design requirements for windows are not recommended**. EBC is satisfied with this exclusion. However for several reasons, construction SMEs are sceptical about the **use of energy labelling for window products**, recommended by the study.

First of all, EBC believes that assigning rating criteria to the energy label could be a complex task, potentially misleading the client in his decision when buying a window. Indeed, the client might think that a higher rated product is a better product. Nevertheless, **construction products do not stand alone** and are defined by their interaction with other products. Therefore, the energy rating of one element becomes irrelevant if it does not take into account the whole system.

Moreover, the study suggests a **division of Europe into three climatic zones** for the assignment of the window-labelling. EBC questions this division. Therefore, should an energy labelling for windows be put in place, EBC believes that it should be done at national level as it cannot be correctly done at EU level.



Communication on resource efficiency opportunities in the building sector

On 1st July 2014 the European Commission published a Communication on sustainable buildings. The Communication, entitled “**Resource efficiency opportunities in the building sector**”, comes as part of a broader package of documents in the area of resource efficiency, including an overarching Communication called “Towards a Circular Economy”.

20 The objectives of the communication

The main objectives of this initiative are to promote a **more efficient use of resources consumed in new and existing buildings** and to reduce their overall environmental impact throughout the full life-cycle.

According to the text, the lack of reliable, comparable and affordable data, methods and tools to assess the environmental impacts of buildings is a barrier to increasing their sustainability. Therefore, the tangible outcome of this initiative should be the **definition of a set of measurable and reliable indicators** for the assessment of the environmental performance of buildings. The framework with core indicators should be flexible so that it can be integrated in existing and new assessment schemes, or be used on its own.

The Communication gives also special attention to the **use of recycled materials** as well as the **reduction of construction and demolition waste**. The Communication foresees a timespan of two years for the development of the framework and of additional initiatives focused on construction and demolition waste.

EBC hopes for the relevance of this initiative

The industry has already started to tackle these issues with the **work of the CEN Technical Committee 350 on the “sustainability of construction works”**, but also with the **Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs)**. These initiatives aim at developing methods for the assessment of the sustainability aspects of new and existing works. They also intend to provide relevant, verified and comparable information about the environmental impact of goods and services. EBC hopes that the European Commission will build on these initiatives in its future complementary actions.

Regarding the proposal of having an **assessment framework with core indicators**, EBC appreciates that the Communication plans to select flexible indicators. The industry needs coherent, flexible and cost-effective measures that allow for national and local specificities. The European Union must act as a market facilitator, thus being flexible enough to respond to the local market characteristics.



EBC co-organised a dinner-debate on sustainability in the renovation of buildings, along with the European Parliament Gypsum Forum and Glass for Europe on 18th November 2014.



GLASS FOR EUROPE
Building. Renovation. Sustainability. Glass.



Construction SMEs well represented in the standard-making system

Small Business Standards (SBS) is a European non-profit association established in October 2013 with the support of the European Commission to represent and defend SME interests in the standardisation process at European and international level. EBC, together with UEAPME, is a founding member and project partner of Small Business Standards (SBS).



In addition to EBC and UEAPME staff members, the SBS team is made up of an SBS project manager and a standardisation officer, who coordinate the association's work. SBS has 21 members that are national and European sectoral and inter-professional associations representing SMEs all over Europe. The membership is thus open to all associations matching these criteria.

The SBS 2015 Work Programme has started in January 2015 with the support of the European Commission and it is evident that the role of EBC within SBS has evolved from 2014. Working less on the general coordination, **EBC now focuses on the construction sectoral dimension** to improve the input of construction SMEs in the standardisation system. For this purpose, EBC has welcomed a new staff member who is in charge of SBS technical affairs related to standardisation.

Role of SBS experts

SBS has appointed 19 new experts for 2015, in addition to the 31 previously active from 2014. As a result, SBS will be present in 50 Technical Committees (TC) and Working Groups (WG) in 2015 to take part in the work of CEN-CENELEC, ETSI and ISO TCs. 19 of these Technical Committees relate to the construction sector. The experts, coordinated by SBS, can directly contribute to the creation of standards, monitor that standards are SME-friendly and therefore stimulate a better adaptation to fit SME needs. In this field, major activities are related to the **promotion of CEN-CENELEC Guide 17**, the guidance document for writing standards that take into account SME needs and improves their quality and usability.

EBC represents SBS in the main construction-related advisory groups and technical committees organised by the European Commission, the European Organisation of Technical Approvals (EOTA) and the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN). In this way, EBC aims at facilitating the implementation of the Construction Product Regulation and monitors the connection between standardisation and energy efficiency in buildings, as well as the eco-design policy.

STANDARDISATION

Simplified procedures of the Construction Product Regulation under the radar

The Construction Products Regulation repealed the Construction Products Directive and has been in force since July 2013.

The Construction Products Regulation (CPR) defines, by means of a “common technical language”, **reliable information on construction products** in relation to their performances, offering uniform assessment methods of the performance of construction products.

For products within the scope of harmonised European Standards (hENs) which are to be placed on the Internal Market, it is required to affix a CE mark to the products. For products not covered, or not fully covered, by a hEN, CE marking may be applied on voluntary basis through a **European Technical Assessment** (ETA) issued by a Technical Assessment Body (TAB). In both cases, it is required to draft a Declaration of Performance (DoP), an essential document to deliver information about the essential characteristics of the product.

Being the **major piece of legislation concerning the European single market for construction products**, EBC constantly monitors the implementation of the CPR with regard to the provisions which directly affect SMEs. EBC also interacts with Authorities and Organisations involved in the standardisation processes to ensure that small companies are properly taken into consideration.



Simplified procedures for SMEs

In addition to the provisions that clarify the concept and the use of CE marking, the CPR introduced simplified procedures and derogations, which aim at reducing costs incurred by enterprises, in particular small and medium enterprises (SMEs), for the treatment of construction products.

Through its commitment within SBS, EBC has worked hard to define clear information and pathways for ensuring the **full implementation of the simplified procedures** introduced by the CPR. What is most important in this field is the possibility for manufacturers to easily have access to the information which defines **the assessment methods for the performance of their products**. This is important because it has an impact on their daily activities.

Given the relevance for SMEs in the construction sector, EBC contributed to the publication of these standpoints in the SBS position paper on **the future of harmonised standards under the CPR**.



PARTNERSHIPS - COMMITTEES - WORKING GROUPS

EBC - partner of the EU-OSHA Bilbao campaigns



For several years EBC has been a partner of the biennial campaigns run by the EU-OSHA, the Bilbao based European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. Living up to the commitment to improve Health and Safety, EBC has decided to devote time and actions to the partnership of these campaigns, also involving its members and always keeping them up-to-date with regards to Health & Safety issues.



Considering the fundamental interest in standardisation for construction SMEs, EBC contributed to the preparation of the project proposal, which was won, to create SBS. In addition to being a founding member, EBC sits on the SBS Board of Directors, where Secretary General Riccardo Viaggi is the SBS Treasurer. EBC also represents SBS within the governing bodies of CEN, sitting on the CEN Technical Board and the CEN General Assembly.

CEN Technical Committee on Doors and Windows



EBC is the mandated expert of Small Business Standards (SBS) in the CEN Technical Committee 33 on doors and windows. Considering the vast majority of SMEs producing windows in Europe, the work of EBC mainly consists in defending SME interests in the drafting process of technical standards.

Standing Committee on Construction

Since 2004 EBC has held the status of observer in the Standing Committee on Construction. This Committee has been created by the Construction Products Regulation with the task of examining any issue related to the implementation of the directive. The Committee is chaired by the Head of the Construction Unit (DG GROW) and is formed by representatives of the Member States.

European Social Dialogue Committee for Construction

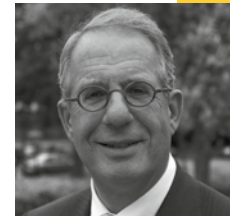
The European Social Dialogue Committee for construction was created in 1999 by FIEC (European Construction Industry Federation) and EFBWW (European Federation of Building and Wood Workers). In 2007 EBC was integrated as an observer within the employers' delegation for this committee. The EBC Board of Directors mandated Andrea Marconi (ANAEPA, Italy) and Riccardo Viaggi (EBC Secretary General) to represent EBC at the committee meetings.



In November 2012, European small and medium-sized manufacturers of personal protective equipment constituted the SME Safety organisation. Its mission is to safeguard such manufacturers in the area of international standardisation. The specific reason of the creation of this organisation comes from the proposal to adopt ISO standards on Respiratory Protective Devices (RPD) at the European level, which would have a potentially negative impact on manufacturers and – indirectly – users. Therefore, EBC became an associate member of SME Safety to represent the users of these devices.

EBC chairs the UEAPME Construction Forum

As of 2008, EBC – represented by Daan Stuit (from AFNL, the Netherlands) – has been chairing the UEAPME Construction Forum, a sectoral committee within UEAPME. The Forum meets twice a year (usually in April and October) with a full agenda to discuss the most important policy developments regarding construction craftsmen and SMEs. Several European sectoral associations and national horizontal associations from UEAPME members take part in the Forum. With the creation of SBS, the UEAPME Construction Forum has also become a platform to debate the latest developments in the standard making system and to inform the members of SBS activities.





The Voice of Construction SMEs in Europe



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