



11 > 12

Annual Report



The Voice of Construction Crafts and SMEs in Europe



European Builders Confederation

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EBC is member of UEAPME and founding member of NORMAPME





Foreword by the President

In a period of severe crisis like the one we are going through, the job of the EBC President is more difficult but also more important, than usual. More difficult because enterprises, faced with the strongest economic crisis in decades, tend to entrench in protectionist and anti-European behaviours and feelings. At the same time, and for similar reasons, it is actually even more important to lead and coordinate the activities of a representative organisation such as EBC. Indeed, this is the only tool for craft, small and medium-sized enterprises of the construction sector to be heard in Brussels' law making environment.

This is why, as you will see from this activity report, EBC's work in 2012 – another year of great economic uncertainties – has focussed deeply on economic affairs, such as payment delays, access to finance and access to markets. Indeed, this new year has started with the publication of the long-awaited Commission proposal on a revised public procurement directive. This is a welcome piece of legislation, which introduces SME-relevant measures.

Next to this, a strong attention has been put in improving SMEs' access to finance, mainly after two lending operations, that the European Central Bank has undertaken, by injecting more than 1,000 billion € in European banks. Concerning payment conditions, EBC is working with its national members to monitor the transposition of the revised late payment directive, asking for a true improvement of these conditions, since treasury conditions and productive investments cannot be made if rightful and timely payments do not become the norm!

However, European sectoral social dialogue has also continuously been on our list of priorities. In particular, in July 2011, we launched the Under Construction 3 project on active ageing and young workers in construction. This action testifies of our engagement in the very relevant demographic challenges that our sector – and our countries – will have to face 30 years from now, with an ageing population and an increasing dependency of the population on fewer active people.

This project also continuous to reinforce EBC's call for a direct and real admission to European social dialogue for construction. To that end and after several requests, EBC is ready now to take part in the first truly general representation study of the European relevant social partner organisations in the construction sector, which will outline a new social dialogue structure.

A reassuring and promising step is the enlargement of EBC's representation with the recent affiliation of two more national associations representing construction crafts and SMEs from Latvia and Switzerland. This makes the association stronger and more solid when facing other stakeholders and when conveying our messages to decision-makers. For this same reason, as a long lasting member of the EBC Board, I take great pride and respect in leading this association. Indeed, I would like to thank all the EBC members for entrusting me with the presidency of the "Voice of Construction Crafts and SMEs in Europe".

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Calvo', written over a horizontal line.

José Antonio Calvo Delgado
EBC President

Presentation of EBC





A representation for construction craftsmen and SMEs in Brussels!

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 Crafts and SMEs in Europe.

Through its 21 members and partner organisations EBC represents 2 million craft and SMEs. Via its permanent office in Brussels, EBC works in close collaboration with the European Union of Craftsmen and SMEs (UEAPME) and the Office of Craftsmen and SMEs for Standardisation (Normapme), organisations of which EBC is a member.

THE MISSION

Anticipate, exchange, position and then act.

Our political goal is clear: to represent, defend and promote the interests of construction craftsmen and SMEs, in close co-ordination with our national member organisations. In order to elaborate common policies, EBC's members meet at least four times a year at Board of Directors meetings in Brussels and at the General Assembly. The latter is normally combined with the EBC Annual Congress, which is organised in turns by the EBC members and dedicated each year to a specific topic.

Throughout the year our permanent team has the task of monitoring EU activities and keeping members informed about forthcoming legislation, projects and other issues. With its network of experts originating from our member organisations, EBC establishes its position papers, which are then validated by the national organisations and defended jointly in Brussels and before national governments.

Lobbying activities are conducted at the European Commission, focusing in particular on certain Directorate Generals - Enterprise and Industry; Taxation; Employment and Social Affairs; Environment; Energy - at the European Parliament and at the European Economic and Social Committee.

EBC takes part in the Standing Committee on Construction, which is chaired by the European Commission, comprises representatives from the governments of all Member States, and is in charge of regulating construction work. Furthermore the added representation of EBC is also recognised by the European Commission with regard to the European Social Dialogue in the construction sector and since 2007 FIEC gave EBC two observer seats within its delegation for this committee. EBC is also partner of the Build-up Platform for the energy efficiency of buildings. EBC is partner and coordinator of several European projects: the current ones are Under Construction 3, Shelter and EuroApprenticeship. Since March 2012, EBC is also member of WorldSkills Europe, the regional organisation responsible of organising the largest European trade skills competition.

EBC Publications

- > A quarterly information newsletter, translated into 4 languages (French, English, Spanish, Italian)
- > The Construction Voice, a monthly letter for the press and the EU decision-makers in English
- > An annual report, in 4 languages (French, English, Italian and Spanish)
- > Press releases in 2 languages (French, English)
- > Position papers in 2 languages (French, English)
- > Publications on the projects managed by EBC

All these publications are available on the EBC website: www.eubuilders.org



FOCOPE

The Forum in the European Parliament for Construction

EBC Board structure

Bureau

Vice-president

Patrick LIEBUS

(CAPEB, France)



President

José Antonio
CALVO-DELGADO
(CNC, Spain)



Past-president

Andrea MARCONI
(ANAEPA, Italy)



Treasurer

Jean-Pierre WAEYTENS
(BOUWUNIE, Belgium)



Auditor

Patrick KOEHNEN
(FDA, Luxemburg)



Auditor

Richard DIMENT
(FMB, UK)



Secretariat

Sabrina Fischer

Project Officer

Austrian

MA in Corporate
Communications

Languages: German, English,
French, Spanish, Russian

Riccardo Viaggi

Secretary General

Italian

MA in International relations
Languages: Italian, English,
French, Spanish, Russian

Alice Franz

Policy Officer

French

MA in European studies
and Law

Languages: French, English,
Spanish, German

Valeria Mazzagatti

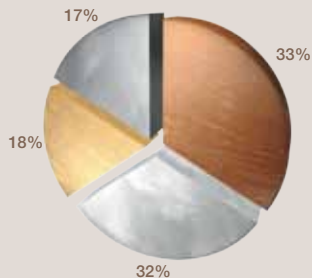
Trainee

Italian

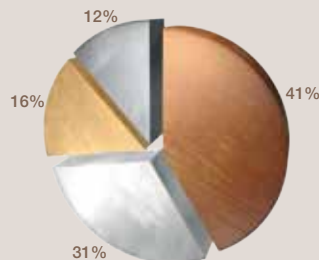
MA in International Relations
Languages: Italian, English,
French, Spanish



■ 250+ employees
■ 50-249 employees
■ 10-49 employees
■ 0-9 employees

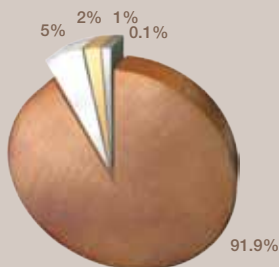


Micro-enterprises create an overall sectoral added value of 33%

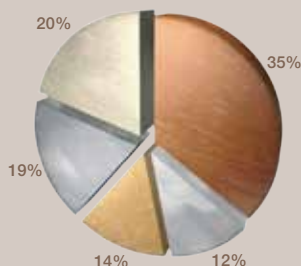


SMEs give work to 88% of the employees in the construction sector.

■ 250+ employees
■ 50-249 employees
■ 20-49 employees
■ 10-19 employees
■ 0-9 employees



99.9% of enterprises in the European construction sector are SMEs



SMEs produce 80% of the sector's turnover

EBC and its SMEs in figures and dates

The place of crafts and SMEs in the EU construction sector

EBC milestones

- 1990 Creation of EBC
- 1995 EBC joins UEAPME
- 1996 EBC co-founds Normapme
- 2007 EBC becomes observer in the Social Dialogue Committee for construction
- 2008 European Project on social dialogue 'Under Construction'
EBC chairs the UEAPME Construction Forum
- 2009 Reduced VAT rates: Measure made permanent
- 2010 EBC turns 20 years old
- 2011 Construction Products Regulation adopted – important simplification measures for craft enterprises
- 2012 EBC joins WorldSkills Europe

| | | |
|------------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| Number of enterprises | 3.1 | million enterprises |
| Turnover | 1,610 | billion Euro |
| Active population | 13.8 | million people |
| Average employees/enterprise | 4.5 | persons |

Source: Eurostat

EBC enlarges representation

In the framework of its General Assembly, held in Brussels on Friday 2nd March 2012, EBC approved and welcomed the **official membership of two new national associations representing construction SMEs in Latvia and Switzerland**. The Latvian Builders Association LBA decided to join the confederation as full member, after long-lasting cooperation in European projects with EBC. At the same time, the umbrella organization of Construction Romandie asked to join EBC as associate member.

Performances and trends - Recovery will wait a year longer!

For the year 2012, forecasts of Euroconstruct – the network of 19 national construction survey institutes – present a downward trend, despite the positive forecast which were given by the institute at the beginning of 2011. Findings from the most relevant construction-related statistical research in Europe show that the financial troubles of summer 2011 and the following austerity measures adopted in most European countries mainly affected the production in 2012 and have postponed economic recovery to well beyond the end of 2012.

Thus, the forecast for 2012 has become negative (-0.3% instead of +1.3%), following closely the severe decrease of the macroeconomic cycle with reductions in GDP growth for 2012 and 2013. Nevertheless, in 2013 there should finally be a recovery of the sector – as soon as the imbalances of the European countries will be adjusted – with a positive prediction of +1.8%. This increase will continue in 2014, featuring a rate of +2%. However, the growth will be rather weak and slow, and will not be able to counterbalance the cumulative decline of about 17% during the 2008-2012 period.

Residential sector's growth will be gradual but clearly positive (+1.4% in 2011, 1.3% in 2012 and 2.4% in 2013), while refurbishment keeps playing a role of market regulator with a stable but small increase. Decreasing investments and more pessimistic growth forecasts are creating a slightly critical situation for the non-residential business. Nonetheless, the most affected sector is civil engineering which will decrease again in 2012 and which will have a de-facto stagnation in 2013.

In Europe, the «Big 5» (FR, DE, IT, UK, ES) are experiencing the worst decline, mostly due to the weak performance of Spain. On the other hand, the group of the «Small 6» countries (AT, BE, IE, PT, CH), representing 16% of the EU construction turnover, are pushed downwards by Ireland and Portugal. In 2011, the Nordic countries show a virtuous performance, which will continue during the next years. Finally, Poland drives the group of countries of Eastern Europe upwards, despite a declining growth foreseen for the next years.

| Countries | Production 2011 (Bln€ 2010) | 2011/10 (estim.) %vol | 2012/2011 (forecast) %vol | 2013/2012 (forecast) % vol |
|----------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Germany | 268.6 | 3.7 | 1.8 | 1.6 |
| France | 197.6 | 3.8 | 1.7 | 2.5 |
| Italy | 168 | -3.1 | -1.5 | 0.8 |
| United Kingdom | 161.8 | -2 | -2.8 | 3.7 |
| Spain | 103.2 | -19.4 | -9 | 0 |
| Netherlands | 66.8 | 3.7 | 0.4 | 3.5 |
| Poland | 48.4 | 12.9 | 4.1 | 0.3 |
| Swiss | 43.1 | 2.6 | 3.2 | 1.6 |
| Norway | 37.6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 4.1 |
| Belgium | 36.1 | 3.9 | 2.7 | 2 |
| Sweden | 29.5 | 3.5 | 2.4 | 1.8 |
| Austria | 29.2 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 1.1 |
| Finland | 27.9 | 2.6 | -2.2 | 1.4 |
| Denmark | 24.3 | 3.3 | 3.7 | 5.3 |
| Portugal | 20.2 | -10 | -12.9 | -5 |
| Ireland | 9.4 | -17.5 | -8.5 | -2.8 |
| Czech Rep. | 18.6 | -6.2 | -4 | -0.3 |
| Hungary | 8.1 | -10.8 | -2.3 | 1.8 |
| Slovakia | 5.1 | -5.5 | 2.6 | 4.8 |
| Total | 1303.3 | -0.6 | -0.3 | 1.8 |

Source: Euroconstruct, November 2011

European policies and EBC actions

EBC ANNUAL CONGRESS
9-10 June 2011 - Warsaw

EBC speaks at the European Parliament on public procurement

A very relevant moment before the publication of the new public procurement directive was the Parliament's public hearing organised in May 2011. EBC past-president Andrea Marconi spoke at the hearing, conveying a strong message about the necessary measures to be included in the revision of the directive in order to actually pursue the goal of improving SMEs' access to public procurement.

First European SME Assembly – EBC invited by the Commission to take part in the Sounding Board

With the official launch and first meeting of the European SME Assembly foreseen for November 2012, the European Commission has worked with SME associations to prepare this event. The SME Assembly is an official part of the governance structure of the SBA Review and EBC has always closely followed these activities. For this reason, the European Commission also invited EBC to take part in the SME Assembly Sounding Board, the steering committee tasked with advising the EC concerning the planning of the event.

UEAPME creates SBA ad-hoc working group

Following the request of some members – including EBC – UEAPME recently created the Small Business Act SBA ad-hoc working group. This specific working group allows fruitful and constant exchange of information and is a useful way to prepare in advance all the meetings of the SME Envoys network, where UEAPME takes place as the most prominent stakeholder.

The SME envoy network is part of the SBA. It includes national SME Envoys, the European Commission's SME Envoy and representatives of EU-level SME business organisations.

Economy and Markets

Revision of the Public procurement directive

In spring 2012 the European Parliament discussed the proposal for a revised directive on public procurement. With the adoption of the proposal in December 2011 revising the 2004 directive, the Commission concluded a very long lasting consultation process, during which EBC has been very active.

First of all, the division of contracts into lots has become a reality, since the sheer size of the tenders can automatically exclude the smaller enterprises from the bidding process entirely. Connected to the size of contracts, EBC also praises the limitation of disproportionate financial requirements to access public procurement tenders. From the point of view of the administrative burden, EBC obtained a true application of the “only once” principle outlined in the Small Business Act, with public administration requesting documents only once from companies, allowing self-certification and requesting additional original documents to bidding companies only in advanced stages of the tender negotiation process.

However more remains to be done to further improve the proposal by the Commission, mainly concerning abnormally low tenders, deadlines for submission of offers and choice of procedures, since too much flexibility for public administration may induce lack of transparency and choice of global contracts, which are exclusive for big enterprises, using SMEs as mere subcontractors.

EBC has presented a position paper with several amendment proposals for the consideration of Members of the Internal Market committee. Among them, Mr. Tarabella, the Rapporteur (S&D – Belgium), has been very keen in listening to our requests and has submitted his draft report to the Committee in May 2012.



Sustainable competitiveness in construction EBC contributes to the Commission's communication

At the beginning of his mandate, Antonio Tajani, vice-president of the European Commission, had announced his decision to publish a Communication on the construction sector. This exercise is expected to be accomplished in by June 2012 with the official adoption of a "Commission communication on the sustainable competitiveness of the construction sector and its enterprises".

In the Commission's plans, the communication will highlight recent market, regulatory and policy developments having an impact on the competitiveness of construction enterprises. Building

on them, it will show the position of the sector with regards to sustainable development objectives and propose a series of initiatives grouped under 5 main areas of intervention and strategic priorities. The governance structure of the strategy will be composed of European stakeholders and will help the sector achieving the sustainable competitiveness objectives and ensure better coordination of the many initiatives put in place at European, national and sectoral levels.

In view of the publication of this communication, the European Commission launched during summer 2011 a

general consultation – to which EBC replied – in order to gain an understanding of the stakeholders' views on the challenges and ways forward of the construction sector. In its reply, EBC insisted on small and medium enterprises as the main strength of the sector to deliver the energy efficiency goals. EBC called on the Commission to create an SME-friendly environment in terms of economic conditions and regulatory framework building on the keywords of the Small Business Act: access to markets, access to finance and cutting red-tape.

Late Payments Directive SMEs need a quick and true transposition

The revised version of the Late Payments Directive has been published in the Official Journal of the EU on 23rd February 2011. The Member States will have until 2013 to implement it, but EBC now calls on a full and quick transposition for the well-being of crafts and SMEs. This piece of legislation is deemed to improve the financial conditions and the cash flows of SMEs, since it is expected to limit payment delays and most of all the power of derogations by public authorities.

At the end of 2011, the vice-president of the European Commission and Commissioner for enterprise/industry, Antonio TAJANI, has written a letter to the governments of the Member States, requesting to speed up efforts and procedures for a swift adoption and transposition of the revised late payments directive into national law.

This step is a clearly political one, since it is taken in the light of the severe economic conditions SMEs are facing, most of all due to payment delays and liquidity problems. It is also very meaningful since the negotiated deadline for the adoption and transposition of the revised late payments directive gives Member States (MS) 24 months. EBC strongly welcomed this gesture!

Vice President and Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry, Antonio Tajani
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Access to insurance ELIOS 2: a European study on construction insurance schemes

On 20th March 2012 the European Commission launched ELIOS 2, the continuation of a pilot project started in 2008 and aiming at facilitating access to insurance for small building firms and self-employed contractors in order to stimulate innovation and the promotion of eco-technologies.

The goal of ELIOS 1 was to make a review of the national liability and insurance regimes within the EU-27 and to propose concrete recommendations. However, after the conclusion of ELIOS 1 in 2010, EBC deplored the lack of concrete and timely results to be presented by the consortium tasked by the Commission.

After this conclusion and thanks to the influential intervention of French MEP Estelle GRELLIER, ELIOS 2 has been launched. EBC welcomes the new initiative and hopes that the results and outcomes will be concrete and impactful for construction craft enterprises.

Access to finance

European construction SMEs are severely hit by the financial crisis and the subsequent tightening of credits. Indeed, banks' financing policies and terms have become harder and small companies find it very difficult to finance simple and productive corporate decisions, such as hiring or starting a new construction site.

EBC insists on the importance to facilitate access to traditional credit and calls on the Commission to pursue the improvement of simple bank lending

and credit lines, instead of focussing on high-growth venture capital, mid-cap financing and other innovative investment policies, which are adequate only for the very few innovative and high-tech start-ups and not for 95% of European construction enterprises, which have less than 10 employees.

For this reason, EBC calls on the future European financial perspective for 2014-2020 to allocate important resources to traditional guarantee and counter-guarantee operations, which

facilitate lending and make it less costly in terms of fees and minimum collateral requirements. On the same note, in a press release published in February 2012, EBC called on the European banking system to finance the real economy and SMEs, after the decision by the European Central Bank to lend over 1,000 billion € to over one hundred European banks.



Italian Delegation



“Why at European level, as well as at national level, are SMEs under represented and almost always subordinated to industrial representations in social dialogue even if they represent the almost totality of enterprises and give work to 88% of the workforce?” asked then EBC past-President Andrea Marconi – pictured here.



The president of LBA Mr. Nikolajevs and EBC president Mr. Calvo Delgado (from left to right)

Intra-corporate transfers

European directive continues to be discussed

The Commission proposal presented in 2010 for regulating the movement of skilled workers within multinational companies who are normally resident outside of the EU continues to be discussed. The general request from the construction stakeholders to exclude the sector in general from the field of application of the directive has not been accepted by the European Parliament. The internal affairs committee of the Parliament also rejected an amendment giving the possibility to national social partners' organisations to exclude a specific sector. National delegations in the Council started discussing their position in summer 2012 with trilogue negotiations starting with a severe delay on the timetable. EBC follows the developments of this dossier mainly through the sectoral social dialogue committee.

Social affairs

Musculoskeletal disorders

Employers' organisations get together against new red tape

EBC has always been very vigilant on the reduction of red tape and against the introduction of new unnecessary administrative burden by the European level. Indeed, since many years, strong attention has been given to the Commission's intention to propose a new binding legislative initiative on all ergonomic conditions at work.

For that reason an open letter has been sent in March 2012 to Vice-President, Commissioner Tajani and Commissioner Andor, regarding the impact assessment on a new legislative initiative on work-related musculoskeletal disorders/ergonomics which was discussed at the European Commission's Impact Assessment Board on 28 March 2012.

Such action was suggested by EBC, coordinated by UEAPME and gathered cosignatories from nine European employers organizations: BUSINESS EUROPE, CEEP, EBC, EFCI, EUROCHAMBRES, EUROCOMMERCE, FIEC,

PEARLE and UEAPME. The objective of this letter was to express our profound concerns on this legislative initiative, which we consider unnecessary and is feared to cause costly and disproportionate burdens on SMEs.

For the moment and until May 2012, the Commission has heard this call from SMEs and has once more warned about the increase of administrative and financial burden and postponed once again the publication of this initiative.



Social dialogue

The European Commission's social dialogue unit agreed to carry out a general representation study to evaluate the different levels of representativeness of the European sectoral social partners in construction. The study will be launched in autumn 2012.

EBC is very satisfied about this decision, since it comes after long requests to perform this study. EBC further believes that this will be the first time that a study will show the fundamental importance of EBC in relative terms for the European sectoral social dialogue and thus would stop FIEC's claim to be the only representative European social partner for construction.

Practically, EUROFOUND – an independent foundation for social affairs – will be carrying out the study independently in all the Member States, but the European associations will be required to contribute with data, information and contact

EBC also organises projects in the framework of the European sectoral social dialogue. “Under Construction 3”, the most recent one, tackles Active Ageing and young construction workers. Please have a look at the project section of this report for more information.

Under Construction

Supporting Active Ageing & Attracting Young Workers in Construction SMEs



EBC joins WorldSkills Europe

At its 2012 General assembly, which was held in Spa, Belgium, WorldSkills Europe approved the membership of EBC. As the organizer of the largest European skills competition, this organization is a natural relevant partner for EBC’s involvement in the up-skilling of the construction working population, also by improving the image of the sector. Indeed, the main mission of WorldSkills Europe is to spread and raise awareness about the importance of trade and manual works with a clear strive for excellence of young people.

details. The study will most likely be carried out during the last trimester of 2012, with a possible conclusion and result at the beginning of 2013.

At the launch event of the Under Construction 3 project, the past-president of the EBC, Andrea Marconi, has strongly put forward the points of view of construction crafts and micro-enterprises, arguing that these companies are not represented in the sectoral social dialogue, because although the members of the EBC are recognised social partners at national level, they still do not have an official seat in the social dialogue committee for construction at European level. Marconi, reminding the participants that EBC now takes part in FIEC’s delegation as an observer, criticised the level of representativeness, ‘both numerical and geographical’ of the committee, and pointed out that, while the SME member associations of the EBC cannot actively participate in the Committee and ‘cannot sign joint positions or agreements’, their enterprises must nevertheless comply with the European legislation that results in part from discussions within the construction Committee.

Marconi went on to conclude that the working relations between the EBC and the other social partners should be based on cooperation and trust at European level.



“With over 500 competitors and several thousands visitors, the EuroSkills 2012 competition which will take place in Spa in October 2012 is the best place to convey our message and EBC is among the most relevant partners”.

EBC Secretary General Riccardo Viaggi and Mr. De Goey, President of WorldSkills Europe



Environment and energy

Energy efficiency Directive

In June 2011, the European Commission unveiled its legislative proposal on energy efficiency. The main purpose of this new Directive is to help the EU reach its nominal target of 20% increase in energy efficiency by 2020. The document addresses both energy providers and end-use sectors.

The European Commission proposal includes the following provisions:

- Each Member State (MS) establishes an energy efficiency obligation scheme. Energy companies will be obliged to save every year 1.5 % of their energy sales, by volume. This target can be achieved through the implementation of energy efficiency measures such as improving the efficiency of the heating system, installing double glazed windows or insulating roofs, among final energy customers.
- The public sector renovates 3% of its building stock by floor area annually to cost optimal levels. Buildings need to have a useful area larger than 250 sq. m. in order to be covered by this requirement.
- MS shall ensure that by 1 Janu-

ary 2014, certification schemes or equivalent qualification schemes become or are available for providers of energy services, energy audits and energy efficiency improvement measures, including for installers of building elements.

- Incentives for SMEs to undergo energy audits and disseminate best practices must be available.

When the dossier went to the European Parliament, EBC managed to include the following crucial amendments to the text in order to improve it and respond to the needs of the craftsmen and SMEs of the construction sector:

- The promotion of local jobs by encouraging clear partnerships between energy distributors and local energy service providers
- The possibility for independent SMEs to constitute clusters/consortia in order to be able to provide more complex contract structures such as energy performance contracting
- The respect of existing training and qualifications schemes
- The implementation of an adequate financial framework and long-lasting incentives

- The introduction of binding rules so that no distortion of competition arises to the detriment of small enterprises in emerging markets for energy services.

Further negotiation between the European Commission, the Parliament and the Council were initiated in May 2012, but the lack of ambition shown by the Member States will very probably water down the content of the Directive.

During a lunch debate, hosted by MEP Vlado Panayotov and organised by the Coalition for Energy Savings, EBC Secretary General Riccardo Viaggi gave real-life examples of how local jobs are created in construction SMEs with a good energy efficiency policy. He also highlighted the need for highly skilled workers in the sector as well as ambitious and stable financial support schemes.

EU consultation on financial support for energy efficiency in buildings

In May 2012 EBC replied to the European Commission consultation on financial support for energy efficiency in buildings. In its reply, EBC commented on the main market failures coming from the demand side – lack of knowledge and information by clients and financial institutions, and lack of upfront capital to finance the works – and the supply side – lack of confidence in the market and lack of available and capable enterprises or group of enterprises.

EBC recalled that the challenge of boosting the energy efficiency of existing buildings can only be met if suf-

ficient and stable incentives are made available and easily accessible. Energy efficiency in housing is often slowed down by the fact that upfront costs are often high with a long return on investment. Therefore it is essential that private owners/tenants are put in position where they can afford starting construction work to improve the energy efficiency of their building. At the same time, local SMEs must also be financially helped – the workforce need to update its skills to the new innovative techniques, therefore training programmes should be developed for professionals in the construction sector on new eco-construction techniques, eco

materials and new ways of evaluating the energy performance of buildings. Insurance costs could be reduced by introducing a funding or other type of instrument at EU level that would reduce the cost of the risk for insurance companies.

Finally EBC highlighted the need for crafts and SMEs to aggregate into clusters/consortia in order to be able to offer more holistic contracts such as Energy Performance Contracting, a type of contract that offers a good guarantee to the client.



Standardisation

Construction products regulation

The Construction Products Regulation CPR has entered into force at the end of April 2011, with some of the most important and new articles becoming applicable only in July 2013.

All public and private stakeholders at European and national level have been working to evaluate and anticipate the concrete impacts of the new regulation on the product declaration, on the production of the harmonised standards and on the work of the CEN (European Committee for Standardisation) Technical Committees. EBC has also followed this work, which is not yet accomplished.

In addition, EBC has participated in some information campaigns, which were necessary to inform and train

craftsmen all over Europe about the new legal reference. In addition, EBC has been invited to speak at the European Commission conference on the CPR which took place in Brussels on 25th June 2012. Taking the floor at the occasion, EBC defended the need to improve the acceptance and relevance of CE Marking to create a level-playing field. Specifically, crafts-made non-series products need to be CE marked with equivalent simplified procedures, which must be adequate from an economic point of view. In this respect the role of Normapme in the relevant CEN Technical Committees is fundamental to make sure that certain economic interests do not impose over-testing on products.

To this end, EBC requested Normapme to establish a specific working group on the definition of the Specific Technical Documentation (STD). This is the main tool that the CPR introduces in order to reduce the impact of third-party testing and is outlined in the articles 37 and 38 of the regulation.

The launch meeting of this group, held on 4th May 2012, was successful in producing initial guidelines to be further discussed and, when convenient, presented for consideration to decision-makers and standardisers.



Review of the European Standardisation System

In the framework of the reform of the European Standardisation system, the European Commission has presented its proposal in summer 2011. The so called “standardisation package” consists of 2 main elements:

1. A Communication with a strategy on European standardisation for 2020
2. A proposal for a regulation on European Standardisation

The “Standardisation Package” is meant to take into account the strengths and weaknesses of the current European system – based on the national delegation principle – and shall allow facing forthcoming European and International challenges in the field of standardisation.

Whilst SMEs form the backbone of the European economy, evidence shows that their involvement and representation in standardisation does not correlate to their economic importance. SMEs usually lack specific knowledge on the benefits of using standards, they are not fully aware of how and where to obtain such knowledge and have not enough capacity to follow any new initiatives being developed. Moreover, they do not have sufficient resources to participate in the standardisation work.

The main tool through which EBC and other SME associations have managed to be involved is Normapme. This fundamental organisation was created 15

years ago by EBC and other SME associations and has now become the reference point to assist SMEs in standardisation and make standards better for SMEs.

All these elements have been taken into account in the Commission proposal, even though not all have been properly addressed. Indeed, some points have been advocated by Normapme and EBC during the legislative process which has taken several months in the Internal Market committee of the European Parliament. These points include:

- Increased participation of SMEs in standardisation;
- Openness and transparency of the standardisation process and a balanced representation of stakeholders' categories;
- Market relevance of all new standardisation projects both on products and services;
- Measures to make standards more SME friendly including a review of the price policy for SMEs

Normapme has obtained partial satisfaction and continues to make sure that proper political and financial support is given by the European Union to SMEs in standardisation through Normapme. Several negotiation meetings have taken place during spring and summer 2012 between the Parliament and the Council in order to find an agreement and adopt the text in first reading.



New President of NORMAPME

The General Assembly of Normapme met on 1st December 2011 in Brussels and elected the new president, Mr. Gerard Bobier. Mr. Bobier is a construction entrepreneur, already member of the Board of Normapme, and President of the French association of crafts in public works CNATP, an association closely working together with EBC's member, CAPEB.

CEN Technical Committee 33 on Doors and windows

EBC is the mandated expert of Normapme in the CEN TC 33-WG1 on doors and windows. Considering the vast majority of SMEs producing windows in Europe, the work of EBC mainly consists in defending SMEs interests in the drafting process of the technical standards. The most important points and concerns in this committee are the introduction of shared ITT (Initial Type Testing) in the standard, since this will strongly reduce the costs of testing to obtain the CE Marking.

Partnerships - Committees

Working groups

EBC - partner of the OSHA Bilbao campaigns

As in the past, EBC signed up to the new biennial campaign run by the EU-OSHA, the Bilbao based European Agency for Safety and Health at Work in 2012 and 2013. Living up to the commitment to improve Health and safety, EBC has decided to devote time and actions to the partnership of the campaign on workers' participation and management leadership in risk assessment.

FOCOPE – Forum for Construction in the European Parliament

EBC is also a member of FOCOPE, a stakeholders' forum within the European Parliament concerning the construction industry. The goal of FOCOPE is to facilitate the contact between Members of the European Parliament and the construction sector's representatives, with the objective of delivering a more competitive and sustainable construction sector.

Standing Committee on Construction

Since 2004 EBC has the status of an observer in the Standing Committee on Construction. This Committee has been created by the Construction Products Directive (89/106/CEE) with the

task of examining any issues related to the implementation of the directive. The Committee is chaired by the Head of the Construction Unit (DG Enterprise and Industry) 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 observer within the employers' delegation for this committee. The EBC Board of Directors mandated Robert Hoedemakers (BOUWUNIE, Belgium) and Riccardo Viaggi (Secretary General) to represent EBC at the committee meetings.

CEN Technical Committees

EBC, as an expert, represents Normapme at the Working Group 1 of CEN TC 33 for Doors and Windows in charge of drafting standards hEN 14351-1 / 14351-2 / 14351-3.

Build-UP Initiative

Build-UP is a European Commission initiative with the objective of providing

information to all actors involved with the implementation of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD). In 2009, replacing the EPBD Buildings Platform, EBC signed a collaboration agreement with the consortium appointed by the European Commission.

EBC chairs the UEAPME Construction Forum

As of 2008, EBC – in the person of David Croft – chairs the UEAPME Construction Forum, the most active sectoral committee within UEAPME. The Forum meets twice a year with a full agenda decided by the members of UEAPME in order to inform, present and discuss on the most important policy developments regarding construction crafts and SMEs. Several European sectoral associations and national horizontal associations take part in the Forum which adopts joint positions, replies to consultations and carries out joint activities.



European Projects



EuroApprenticeship

EBC also continues to work within the EuroApprenticeship project on transnational mobility of apprentices, which was officially launched in November 2010. Information and dissemination of the project are the most relevant tasks of EBC, which is organising a EuroApprenticeship event to be held in the framework of the EuroSkills 2012 competition in October 2012 in Spa, Belgium.



Prometheus final conference

On 20th April 2012, EBC has been invited to speak at the closing event of the Prometheus project. The conference was held in Italy and organised by the Italian coordinator of the European project. Financed by the IEE programme, Prometheus developed a model for the creation and management of clusters of small and medium enterprises to improve energy efficiency services and works in construction.

EBC has been invited to speak about the current legislative debates in Brussels and to give an overview about the future political developments in energy efficiency of buildings.

From this event, a good cooperation was established with CRACA, the Italian coordinator of Prometheus, which allowed the submission of REHAB, a very ambitious project proposal under the IEE call 2012.

European Social dialogue - Under Construction 3

In the framework of the European Year 2012 for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity EBC launched “Under Construction 3 – Supporting Active Ageing & Attracting Young Workers in Construction SMEs” - the third project in the field of European Sectoral Social Dialogue which is coordinated by EBC.

Running from July 2011 until June 2012 the project focused on Active Ageing and Young Workers in Construction SMEs and involved 11 national partner organisations from 8 European Member States. Under Construction 3 had been conducted similar to the “Under Construction I and II” projects which were run by EBC as well.

The reason for carrying out this project lied in the current change of Europe’s population structure which especially impacts small and medium-sized enterprises in the construction sector. Due to decreasing birth rates and an increasing life expectancy, the European workforce shrinks and more and more

people are entering retirement. This fact is of particular importance in the construction sector and causes significant impacts on employees, craftsmen and young workers.

Under Construction 3 was also part of the continuous engagement of EBC as the representative of construction crafts and small & medium-sized enterprises to be fully recognised within the European sectoral social dialogue for construction. Therefore we were very pleased that various representatives of the European Commission participated to our meetings and expressed their support and trust in EBC’s work and projects.

During the course of Under Construction 3 several Best Practices could be identified which show that solutions to the project’s issue have to focus on both older and young people since they are linked and dependent on each other. E.g.:

- Trade and skills competitions for a better image of the sector as well as for the development and enhancement of skills
- Tutorship as a way to transfer knowledge from experienced workers to young workers
- Improvement of working conditions and workplace management to allow workers to shift their tasks as they get older
- Paritarian institutions to support Active Ageing and to ensure a strong national social dialogue
- Financial benefits for companies who employ older workers
- Support of business creations and transfers to ensure the continuity of craftsmanship

A wide range of information material is available on the EBC website: www.eubuilders.org





QualiCert a successful project comes to an end

The QualiCert project has celebrated its conclusion on 8th December 2011 with a closing conference, where its results had been presented to a wide EU audience in Brussels. The partners of the project provided guidelines for EU Member States on how to draft their national certification or equivalent qualification schemes. These recommendations are provided as a number

EBC's participation in the project

QualiCert was the first IEE project in which EBC participated and the outcome is very positive. It was a good opportunity to approach, interact and establish a long-lasting relationship with other European associations. EBC played a fundamental role in providing the point of view of SMEs and successfully managed to promote "equivalent qualification schemes" as a way to deliver as good results as certification schemes which is more suitable for micro enterprises and SMEs.

For more information on the project: www.qualicert-project.eu

Shelter

EBC continues to be involved in Shelter, an EU-funded project launched in June 2010 and running until June 2013. The goal of the project is to promote and facilitate the use of new models of cooperation inspired by integrated design, for the energy renovation of social housing.

EBC has co-organised a dissemination seminar of the Shelter project during the 2012 European Sustainable Energy week, which gathers several hundreds people in Brussels every year. The seminar was well attended and delivered very interesting examples of how local jobs are created and local SMEs can be active in aggregating forces for energy renovation in social housing.

For more information on the project: www.shelterproject-iee.eu

of key "success criteria" in a practical manual. They have been defined via the analysis of existing schemes and a widespread consultation in order to identify which criteria are applicable (or not) in a national context. The feedback was incorporated in the QualiCert Manual, which was presented to the major European stakeholders in High Level Steering Group meetings, national roundtables (Poland, Italy, Greece, Austria and France) and implementation workshops. The implementation of certification schemes, however, will still face some challenges. The project results showed that the existing sche-

mes vary greatly. Furthermore, concern was raised regarding both the cost and the administrative burden of a certification/equivalent qualification scheme.

The QualiCert project, supported by the Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) programme, aimed to help to implement article 14 of the Renewable Energy Sources directive (2009/28/EC), requiring Member States to develop and mutually recognize certification or equivalent qualification schemes for installers of small-scale renewable energy systems by December 2012.

