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ANNUAL REPORT

European Builders Confederation

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The Voice of Construction Crafts and SMEs in Europe



European Builders Confederation

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EBC is a member of UEAPME



FOREWORD BY THE PRESIDENT



This has been another very challenging period for the construction sector. The economic conditions of small and medium construction enterprises have declined even more in most parts of Europe during the last twelve months. The construction sector, its enterprises, its workers are starkly suffering from a deeply rooted crisis, lasting for 6 years now.

It has always been my firm belief that European decision makers and politicians have to understand that construction is part of the solution, not of the problem. It is now evident that austerity measures adopted in most European countries affected production in 2012 and have postponed economic recovery well beyond 2013. On this, EBC has always called for a clear differentiation between sound public finances and blind austerity policies, knowing that productive public investments are needed to re-launch the sustainable competitiveness of the construction sector.

This is why EBC wholeheartedly contributed to the launch and concrete deployment of the Construction 2020 Strategy proposed by the European Commission's Action Plan. I believe that this can be a great tool to attract well-deserved attention to our sector, which represents local jobs in local enterprises. Consequently, construction SMEs provide a great added value to balance delocalization and unemployment.

Another fundamental piece of European legislation is the Public Procurement Directive, which should tackle the problem of SMEs' access. The introduction of sound and fair rules for administrative simplification will unleash the enormous potential of this market, which accounts for 17% of the EU GDP. Also the adoption of the Energy Efficiency Directive at the end of 2012, if well implemented, will bring very positive effects for the sector, significantly boosting housing renovation. However, it needs proper financial tools and resources.

The recent developments in the European Sectoral Social Dialogue also represent another promising outcome for the European Builders Confederation. The European Commission launched a 'representativeness study' which aims at assessing the real level of construction association representativeness at European level with a view to participating in the EU Social Dialogue.

In addition, during the last year, the European Union adopted important and encouraging measures to fight against late payments from public administration. Our small and medium-sized enterprises need to be protected from the risk of default stemming from the huge debt of public administrations. We will continue to monitor the transposition and the concrete implementation of this European legislation.

These results were achieved together, so I would like to thank all the EBC members for their engagement in actively supporting the activities of the association.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Jose Antonio Calvo Delgado'. The signature is stylized and written over a horizontal line.

Jose Antonio Calvo Delgado
EBC President

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 20 members and partner organisations EBC represents 2 million craftsmen and SMEs. Via its permanent office in Brussels, EBC works in close collaboration with the European Union of Craftsmen and SMEs (UEAPME), organisation 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; Internal Market - 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, comprising 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 a partner of the Build Up Platform for the energy efficiency of buildings. EBC has been a partner of several European projects: the current ones are Shelter and Euro Apprenticeship. Since March 2012, EBC is also a member of WorldSkills Europe, the regional organisation responsible of organising the largest European trade skills competition.

PRESENTATION OF EBC



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

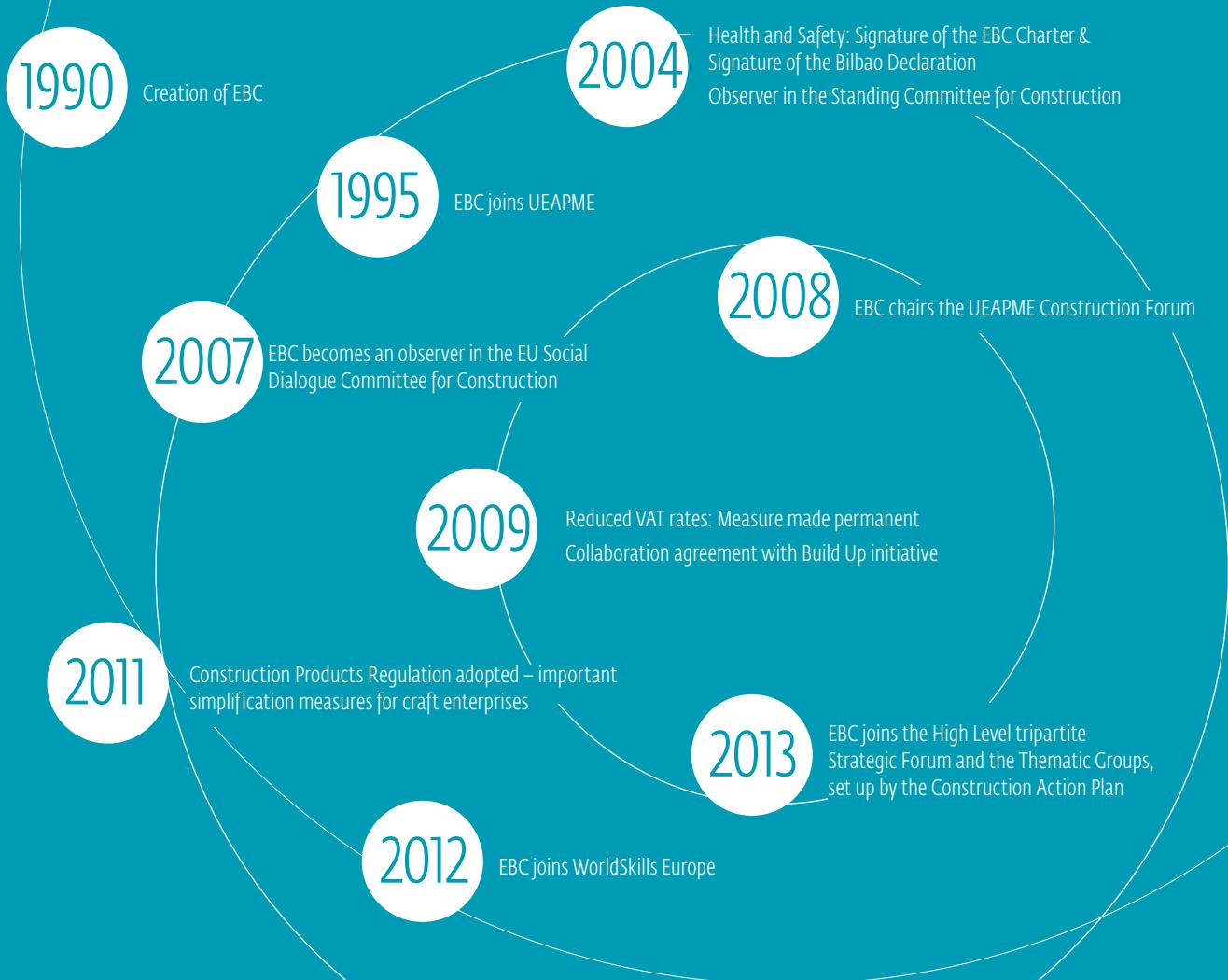
All these publications are available on the EBC website:
www.eubuilders.org



EBC is also active on social media.
Find out more about EBC activities on
Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube!



EBC MILESTONES



EBC BOARD STRUCTURE

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SECRETARIAT

Performances and trends of the CONSTRUCTION sector

A SEEMINGLY NEVER-ENDING CRISIS-MODERATE RECOVERY UNTIL 2015

After the stabilisation of the sector in 2011 (+0.2%), Euroconstruct – the network of 19 national construction survey institutes – has analysed and registered a downward trend for 2012: -4.7% in the volume of activity.

The public budgetary discipline in the Euro zone and the great difficulties for private consumers (stagnation of income, unemployment, increasing tax burden, difficulties with access to credit) strongly affected the construction output in 2012. The Western European countries that are the most heavily affected by this fall are Spain, Portugal and Ireland, but Italy, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Finland are not far.

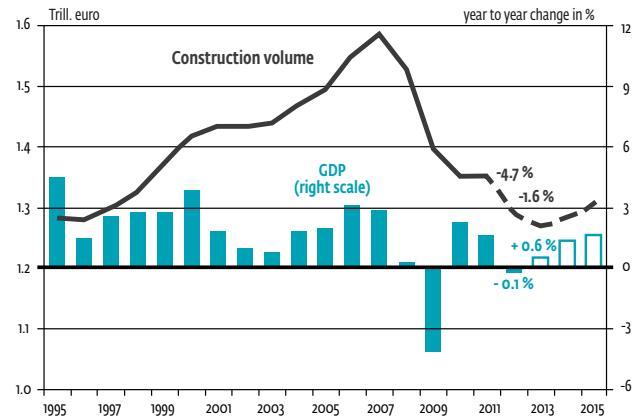
Unemployment, economic stagnation or slowdown, and the very tight financial situation of the public sector slowed all three segments of the construction sector. In 2012, civil engineering suffered a loss of 7.5% mostly because of the cautiousness of contracting authorities. The residential construction sector decreased by 3.5% whereas the non residential sector by 4%. The forecast for these three segments of the sector remain negative for 2013.

Some national examples show a very gloomy picture. In France, the construction sector was held back by a decrease of 28% in the retail sales of new properties in 2012 (in addition to a decrease of 10% in 2011) and of 55% in the private investment in rental property since 2011. In Spain, only 1 million jobs remain in the construction sector (forecast by late 2013: 600,000), equivalent to 6.3% of jobs at national level (13% in 2008). Furthermore, the total output of the construction sector in Italy has decreased by 29.9% between 2008 and 2013, notably because of late payments by the public sector (the Italian average for payments by the public sector being 180 days, while the EU average is 115 days).

Experts now postpone economic recovery beyond 2013. Indeed, they expect a loss of activity of 1.6% in 2013, a moderate recovery in 2014 (+1%) and in 2015 (+1.9%). Comparing to 2013, the housing

market will recover of 2.3% in 2014 (+2.8% in 2015); the non-residential market will start to recover in 2015 (+0.3 in 2014, then +1.4% in 2015), while the market for infrastructures will struggle to recover (-0.7% in 2014, +0.8% in 2015) mainly because of the lack of public funding.

Only moderate recovery is to be expected until 2015. However, Ireland is showing that the financial and economic crisis of the sector may be overcome: indeed, the general recovery of the country in a short term future should have a positive effect on its heavily hit construction sector.



Source: EUROCONSTRUCT (December 2012)

Economy and Markets

REVISION OF THE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT DIRECTIVE

The proposal for a Directive on Public Procurement, released in December 2011, continues on its legislative path. After a first delay in autumn 2012, due to more than 1,500 amendments, the proposal was voted in the Internal Market Committee of the European Parliament on 18th December 2012 in first reading.

At the moment of printing this report in June 2013, the trilogue negotiations between the European Institutions, which started at the beginning of March, have taken a very worrying turn.

Obligations for direct payments of subcontractors could be watered down to a mere possibility and the introduction of a European Passport for public procurement could be rejected. The minimum turnover of a bidding company, already reduced by the European Parliament to the double of the contract value, is once again under negotiation. Even the introduction of possible enterprises aggregations to participate in tenders is jeopardised.

In addition, the European Parliament deleted the “apply or explain” principle for the division into lots of a contract from article 44. EBC believes that it is still possible to reintroduce this provision as the Council seems to be in favour of this principle. EBC firmly criticises the deletion of the quantitative criteria to identify abnormally low tenders in article 69 and worries that the direct payment of subcontractors could be deleted from the proposal. The position of the Parliament and the Council on article 11 is also very worrying as it would create a clear distortion of competition originating from the wide possibility of public-public cooperation.

EBC is closely following the developments, supporting fair competition, simpler administrative procedures and timely payments as the key principles for SMEs.

EUROPEAN POLICIES AND EBC ACTIONS

Business breakfast on "Ensuring SMEs' access to public procurement"
organised by EBC in the European Parliament, 10th January 2013



From the left: Klaus Wiedner (Head of Unit in the EC), Marc Tarabella MEP (Rapporteur for the directive), Thomas Hanney (Deputy Permanent Representative of Ireland) and Riccardo Viaggi (EBC Secretary General).

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONSTRUCTION ACTION PLAN

The European Commission has established a High-level tripartite Strategic Forum as the governance structure to implement the Strategy for the sustainable competitiveness of the construction sector, released in July 2012. This High-level Forum aims at convening representatives from European stakeholder organisations, the Member States departments in charge of construction and the European Commission.

The kick-off meeting of the Forum was held in January 2013. Its main objective was to discuss and coordinate the actions which will be undertaken in order to work on the 5 key priority areas listed in the Action Plan. These key areas are:

- Stimulating investment conditions for renovation
- Improving human capital
- Improving resource efficiency
- Strengthening the Internal Market for Construction
- Fostering the global competitive position of European construction enterprises

Next to the High-level Strategic Forum, the Construction Sector Action Plan establishes the creation of five thematic groups, one for each of the five key objectives identified in the plan. EBC has decided to regularly participate in their meetings. The first High-level Forum meeting was very successful. EBC President José Calvo Delgado, invited to the meeting, brought forward arguments to exit from the current crisis. He insisted on the construction sector being part of the solution to the crisis, most of all reminding the European Commission and the Member States' representatives that each new job created in construction is able to create 2.5 additional jobs in connected activities. He also added that the vital priorities for construction crafts and SMEs are: stimulate investments, develop human capital and improve resource efficiency.

EBC expressly asked for the Forum to become a platform for information exchange and actions for the stakeholders of the sector. Meanwhile, the European Commission hopes that the High-level Strategic Forum will be replicated at national level. Member States will thus be more involved in the concrete implementation of the actions.





CONSULTATION ON REDUCED RATES OF VAT

EBC responded to the consultation on the review of existing legislation on VAT reduced rates, launched in October 2012 by the European Commission.

In its reply, EBC acknowledges that reduced VAT rates for labour intensive services have encouraged households to undertake energy efficiency works. However, EBC recalls that this fiscal measure must not be limited to this policy objective.

A reduced VAT rate is a complementary measure to pursue the goals set out in the Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe. There is today a global trend in the market towards renovation works and within these there is an increasing share of renovation works aimed at energy efficiency. Thus, the application of reduced VAT rates is naturally integrated in a general policy of sustainable development.

The application of a reduced VAT rate on the renovation and repair of private dwellings also has a direct link with job creation, as it increases the demand for these services. Reduced VAT rates also have a positive impact on law-abiding businesses, because they reduce the competitive advantage of firms operating in the informal economy.

In its reply EBC also added that in the construction sector, as the study of Copenhagen Economics of 2007 and the consultation itself demonstrate, there are no situations where the application of a reduced VAT rate is resulting in material distortion of competition within the Single Market. Furthermore, it does not result from EBC members' experience that reduced VAT rates create compliance costs for businesses. Conversely, in a time of crisis this is a measure that should be looked at and implemented by the governments, whereas the tendency is exactly the contrary.

ACCESS TO FINANCE

THE EU SME FINANCE FORUM

The survey on SMEs access to finance in the Euro area, released at the end of April 2013 by the European Central Bank, shows the difficult financial situation and unfair lending conditions for SMEs in the Euro zone. Indeed, this situation stems from insufficient internal funds due to the lack in consumption and the deterioration of the overall economic conditions. All euro area countries, except Germany, report a decline in availability of external financing such as bank overdrafts and trade credit. Moreover, SMEs are oppressed by collateral requirements and pay higher interests rates than larger companies.

Even if certain countries are showing gradual signs of improvement or slower decline, the survey demonstrates that SMEs' needs for bank overdrafts and loans depend on the insufficient availability of internal funds and on the economic crisis. These needs cannot be satisfied by the financial system due to the deterioration in the accessibility of bank loans.

The instruments deployed at European level are very useful but not sufficient to face the situation. Even more, within the next European multi-annual budget, the programme for the competitiveness of SMEs 'COSME' is likely to be cut from the initial € 2.5 billion proposal to a more modest € 2 billion over 7 years.

It is of primary importance that banks come back to finance the real economy and even more small and medium enterprises activities, which are severely stricken by this bottleneck. The European Institutions and the Member States should pursue the improvement of traditional credit lines and simple bank lending because 92% of European construction enterprises, which have less than 10 employees, employ this only way to invest in their productivity. The SMEs Finance Forum, held in Dublin on 2nd May 2013, was the occasion for EBC to raise these concerns in front of the European Institutions, the Irish presidency of the European Council, representatives of Member States and SMEs representatives.





First European SME Assembly in Cyprus, November 2012

ACCESS TO INSURANCE SMALL CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES USING INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS

In 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.

After the conclusion of ELIOS 1 in 2010, EBC deplored the lack of concrete and timely results presented by the consortium tasked by the Commission, hence the launch of ELIOS 2. This new pilot project has the same objective as ELIOS 1 but proposes new actions. The ELIOS 2 project has indeed defined four missions:

- Create a European quality/compliance brand directory (labels, certificates, technical assessments, etc.) for the building trade products, techniques, works, technical equipments and professional qualifications;
- Set a European defect & quality index watchdog allowing insurers to effectively evaluate risks;
- Support a convergence and a reciprocal recognition of the different insurance schemes;
- Build a "forum" gathering regularly all the institutions and professions involved.

In January 2013 the third meeting of the project ELIOS 2 took place to present an overview on the work done until then. So far, EBC has doubts about the methodology used by the consortium and is particularly worried that the specific problems of construction crafts and SMEs' access to insurance are not suitably taken into account.

EBC speaks at the 1st EU SME Assembly in Cyprus on public procurement

As part of the governance structure of the Small Business Act review, the European Commission and the Cyprus Presidency of the European Union organised the first European SME Assembly in November 2012. The event gathered over 500 participants from all EU Member States and international delegations.

EBC representatives have been invited as delegates to the SME Assembly and have cooperated with the European Commission in the sounding board to organise the event. In addition, EBC has taken the floor in the panel debate on how to improve SMEs' access to public procurement. During the debate, EBC reiterated the necessary concrete measures and provisions that need to be included in the final version of the Public Procurement Directive.

Social Affairs

POSTING OF WORKERS

On 21st March 2012, the European Commission adopted, as part of the Single Market Act, an "enforcement" directive of the Posting of Workers Directive 96/71/EC. The proposed enforcement directive aims to improve the way the 1996 directive is applied in practice, without changing its provisions. It notably tackles problems and conditions of posted workers within the EU Member States.

Negotiations on compromise amendments to this proposal in the Employment Committee of the European Parliament have been very slow and difficult due to internal conflicts in both the political groups and the Member States.

EBC has been asking for a closed list regarding the criteria defining a posting situation in article 3. Member States should be able to transparently apply at least some common criteria across Europe to determine abusive situations. By way of contrast, article 9 should avoid imposing a restricted list, which Member States can apply as controlling measures. Member States should maintain the possibility to go further and carry out additional checks if they wish to do so.

However, the most controversial provision concerns the joint and several liability, addressed in article 12. In Europe, eight Member States have already introduced this system into their national legislation. EBC follows this point very closely trying to ensure that enterprises will not be required to take on further burdens and tasks that should be undertaken by public authorities, particularly in the case of inspection responsibilities.

To this end, EBC supports the idea of having a system allowing a quick check of potential subcontractors at the disposal of all companies in the 27 Member States. This system should be neither burdensome nor costly for the main contractor. An example of this tool might be a clearly understandable database of companies assessing the full compliance with some commonly-agreed conditions to deliver the compliance status. If well implemented, EBC believes that liability could be a good opportunity to protect loyal SMEs and create a level playing field.



MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS

On 23rd October 2012 the European Commission adopted its own work programme 2013. This work programme was the last chance for the Commission to drive forward new legislation on Musculoskeletal Disorders before the 2014 European elections. For the first time since 2008 the new work programme has not included the proposal for a Directive on Musculoskeletal Disorders.

An inter-service steering group (comprising representatives of different Commission DGs) discussed this dossier on 4th September 2012. During this meeting, DG Enterprise and the Secretariat-General of the Commission expressed dissatisfaction with the Impact Assessment. In particular the Secretariat-General highlighted that it did not provide enough evidence to support the choice made by DG Employment to come forward with a new directive in this area.

This corroborates EBC's longstanding claim that such a legislation was not necessary and that it would have been an unbearable burden on micro-enterprises in Europe. EBC is satisfied with this application of the "Think Small First" principle and continues to support health and safety in construction SMEs by the proper means in implementing existing regulation, namely training, information, awareness raising and the accompanying role of bilateral institutions and funds.



EBC receives OSHA Partnership certificate from Commissioner Andor

SOCIAL DIALOGUE

The Representativeness study conducted by Eurofound for the European Social Dialogue in the Construction sector officially entered its operational phase in January 2013. This kind of studies is designed to provide basic information needed for the setting up and functioning of sectoral social dialogue committees at European level.

As a result of several years of request, EBC very much welcomes this initiative. Indeed, it aims at properly assessing the representation levels of the different organisations that have the right to be consulted as European social partners and take part in the European Social Dialogue.

ADOPTION OF THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY DIRECTIVE

On 25th October 2012 the European Union officially adopted the Directive 2012/27/EU on energy efficiency. Member States have until 5th June 2014 to transpose it into their national laws.

EBC is satisfied with the text as it includes a strategy for the renovation of the national stock of residential and commercial buildings both public and private.

The main provisions of the directive are:

- Energy companies are requested to reduce their energy sale to industrial and household clients by at least 1.5% each year;
- A 3% compulsory renovation rate for public buildings which are owned and occupied by central government;
- An obligation for each EU Member State MS to draw up a roadmap to make the entire buildings sector more energy efficient by 2050 (commercial, public and private households included);
- An obligation for MS to ensure that certification schemes or equivalent qualification schemes 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.

EBC recalls that very big attention should be brought to article 6.5 of the directive. This article leaves unclear the relationship relating to buildings renovation between energy distributors and local energy service providers, such as construction SMEs. Clear partnerships must be encouraged and implemented between energy distributors and energy services providers, as demanded by EBC since the beginning. These partnerships would optimise the energy saving obligations towards the end-customers.

EBC calls now on Member States to be very careful when transposing this directive into their national legislation and to establish clear strategies and roadmaps to kick-start energy efficiency as a truly anti-crisis and growth generating market opportunity.

The Concerted Action for the Energy Efficiency Directive (CA EED) was launched in spring 2013 in order to support the effective implementation of the Directive on Energy Efficiency (2012/27/EU) in all EU Member States as well as Norway and Croatia.

Energy and Environment

ON THE RADAR

From 30th April 2013 onwards, Member States will have to report each year on the progress achieved towards national energy efficiency targets. If EU Member States energy saving plans are not ambitious enough and the Commission analysis shows that the EU is not on track to meet the 20% energy savings target, the Commission will add to the directive more binding measures to fill the gap. The savings will be calculated as of 2014 and there will be a review of the directive in 2016.

EBC has joined forces with other EU associations to promote energy efficiency in housing

In June 2012, EBC co-wrote with several other EU associations a joint press release to boost energy efficiency refurbishment of the EU housing stock. The idea was to take the opportunity of a Heads of States and Government's meeting on the EU growth agenda to speak with a common voice and send a clear message: "Refurbish at least 10 million housing units will boost the building sector activity, create hundreds of thousands of local, non-exportable and stable jobs and significantly contribute to reducing Europe's costs for energy imports whilst improving quality of life and reducing fuel poverty."

WINDOW PRODUCTS INCLUDED IN THE ECODESIGN WORKING PLAN 2012-2014

The European Union's Ecodesign Directive (Directive 2009/125/EC) establishes a framework to set mandatory ecological requirements for energy-using and energy-related products sold in all 27 Member States.

In December 2012, the European Commission published its working plan for 2012-2014 for ecodesign products. In this new working plan window products for buildings have been included in the priority product list. This means that a preparatory study will investigate possible ecodesign requirements for window products on the basis of technical, economic and environmental analyses. A subsequent Impact Assessment will consider the best policy option for this product: ecodesign and/or energy labelling and/or self regulation measures.

If not deemed necessary, the Commission could also decide not to adopt implementing measures for window products.

EBC has long alerted the Commission that construction products manufactured on a small-scale should be exempted from ecodesign procedures as they do not represent a high volume of sales, do not have a significant impact on the environment and it would entail excessive economic and administrative burdens.

It is also important to note that articles 6 and 7 of the Construction Products Regulation – entered into force in April 2011 – foresee requirements on the environmental and energy performance of the products.

SMART CITIES AND COMMUNITIES EUROPEAN INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP

The European Commission launched in July 2012 the Smart Cities and Communities European Innovation Partnership. By launching this partnership the Commission aims to boost the development of smart technologies in cities – by pooling research resources from energy, transport and ICT and concentrating them on a small number of demonstration projects which will be implemented in partnership with cities.

The energy area includes an "Energy Efficiency in Buildings" Working Group (WG). Specific focus of the Energy Efficiency and Buildings WG will be on:

- Deep savings in existing dwellings and buildings;
- Renewables-behind-the-meter technologies;
- Holistic approach for energy using activities and energy use for the dwelling or building.

The main political goal of the Commission through this Partnership is to influence and lead the way in which Structural Funds (mainly the ERDF) will be used in cities and communities in the next multiannual financial framework. Many cities and Member States are already getting involved in this at the local level.

Standardisation

CONSTRUCTION PRODUCTS REGULATION IMPLEMENTATION IS **FUNDAMENTAL**

On 25th June 2012 EBC Secretary General Riccardo Viaggi spoke at the Construction Products Regulation CPR Conference, hosted by the European Commission and with more than 500 people attending.

During the simplification panel, he conveyed the point of view of microenterprises manufacturing construction products. He mainly pointed out their concerns about applying the simplification measures included in the CPR. Indeed, articles 37 and 38 of the

regulation remain unclear and raise questions about their implementation. EBC is committed to provide answers to these questions and asks interested stakeholders and public authorities to take part in this work when implementing the regulation.

In addition, EBC is working with the European Commission and other European stakeholders in order to ensure a smooth transition towards the 1st July 2013 date for the entry into force of the CPR. What is most important in this field is the possibility for manufacturers to make available on a website the Declaration of Performance in a necessary attempt to minimise administrative burden and paper use in providing necessary information to contractors. EBC believes that during this process, a set of minimum rules on transparency, privacy, free access and full accessibility must be ensured.



SME SAFETY

A NEW ORGANISATION

On 15th November 2012, small and medium-sized manufacturers of personal protective equipment constituted the SME Safety organisation, to which EBC adhered as a partner representing the users of these devices. Its mission is to safeguard such European small and medium manufacturers in the area of international standardisation.

The specific reason of the creation of this organisation comes from the proposal to adopt at the European level ISO standards on Respiratory Protective Devices (RPD) that would have a potentially negative impact on manufacturers and – indirectly – users. The current system of production and testing of these devices does not present particular problems: occupational accidents have been decreasing since 2003 and accidents regarding the respiratory system represent only 2% of total accidents classified

by Personal Protective Equipment category. EBC and other users groups' concerns arise from this potential change in standardisation, since it is very likely to reduce the interoperability of RPD, increase the labelling complexity and raise the costs due to more expensive tests.

At the end of November 2012, the efforts of SME Safety paid off. CEN Technical Committee 79 decided to adopt a roadmap which postpones the potential adoption of ISO standards regarding Respiratory Protective Devices by up to 6 years. At the end of this period, if the vote in CEN TC 79 on the transfer of the new ISO standard will be positive, SMEs will benefit from a three-year period of transition. Therefore, with the new roadmap SMEs can expect a long period of adaptation and improvement of the standardisation environment for this product.



EBC is not against new better standards if these really improve the products. However, in accordance with CEN Guide 17, EBC considers that unnecessary excessive tests should be avoided.

SME AND STANDARDISATION

On 28th May 2013 CEN-CENELEC organised a European Conference on SMEs' involvement in standardisation, in Brussels. The objective of the Conference was to open a debate on how to raise awareness and provide SMEs with information on standards and on making use of them. This European Conference also marked the conclusion of the second

SME Standardisation Toolkit Project supported by the European Commission and the European Free Trade Association. The toolkit was developed for business associations to facilitate the involvement of SMEs in standardisation activities. This is very important to EBC considering that SMEs represent about 95% of companies in the EU and standardisation is an

increasingly important field where they have a role to play. This is also proven by EBC's continuous involvement in CEN Technical Committee 33 on doors and windows where improvements have been occurring in favour of micro-enterprises producing small series of these types of products.

Projects

SHELTER



Over three years, the SHELTER consortium has worked to develop and facilitate new models of cooperation between professionals and relevant stakeholders, inspired by integrated design. The project's consortium, composed of a university, six social housing providers from five countries and three European associations representing SMEs, social housing providers and architects have established that improving cooperation between professionals involved in renovation of social housing will be a major step towards meeting the aims of the European Union regarding the energy performance of buildings. Such an improvement will also deliver significant benefits in terms of higher comfort and lower fuel-bills for social housing tenants.

Therefore, SHELTER has tried to pinpoint which exact procedures will significantly improve the energy renovation processes in the social housing sector. With two other European associations, CECODHAS Housing Europe (the Federation of

Public, Cooperative & Social Housing) and ACE (Architects' Council of Europe), EBC has developed recommendations for public authorities. With these recommendations, public authorities are encouraged to draft calls for tenders in a way that will promote the effective coordination of professionals and hence the energy saving strategy of any social housing organisation.

The recommendations also recall that crafts and SMEs are often excluded from tender design. By ensuring that the legislative framework facilitates the establishment of consortia of SMEs, Social Housing Organisations will be able to contract small local enterprises to undertake the works. SHELTER's recommendations also highlight the importance of adequate long-term financing schemes as planning of works is determined by available finance.

The full document of the recommendations can be downloaded on the Shelter Website in the "Project results" section.



Future of Intelligent Energy Europe IEE

IEE projects are very important for EBC. Indeed they give the opportunity to turn EU policies into action. Especially in the construction sector, which is mainly composed of crafts, small and medium-sized enterprises, IEE projects are means to help our members with the national implementation of EU directives which are often very challenging. They are also an opportunity to prove to decision-makers what can be done. This is why we encourage the uncompromised continuation of the IEE programme under the new "Horizon 2020" programme, with an earmarking of the budget for these actions in the future.



SHELTER's final conference – Dublin

On 22nd May 2013, SHELTER held its final conference in Dublin (Ireland). The conference was well attended and delivered interesting information on the renovation market trends and their implications for Social Housing Providers. The recommendations to public authorities developed by the project were presented. Finally financial schemes and access to capital were discussed.

EURO APPRENTICESHIP



On the occasion of EuroSkills 2012 – the biggest European skills competition – held in SPA at the beginning of October 2012, EBC hosted the EuroApprenticeship seminar on mobility of apprentices. This seminar stressed that mobility of apprentices is key to the competitiveness and growth of the construction sector. The different speakers all agreed that it is crucial to involve representatives of SMEs at local and national levels to encourage entrepreneurs to undertake mobility programmes by presenting them the advantages of the concept. Mr. Martyn Price, from the Cross-industry Construction Apprenticeship Task Force (CCATF) in the UK, also explained the great benefits of mobility for both businesses and apprentices, since they develop their adaptability, autonomy and team spirit. These represent new practical knowledge as well as new working aptitudes which are extremely useful in order to expand the market from the very local to a European or even a global level.

This seminar was a great opportunity to open a debate on the sectoral approach towards mobility of apprentices. The discussion tried to identify the benefits and the impediments preventing SMEs making the most of it. EuroApprenticeship provides an answer to this challenge, enabling all the subjects involved to work together and facilitating their access to information.

EuroApprenticeship, which runs until June 2013, explored the possibility of evolving from an EU-funded project to an independent network during its last phase. This network would gather competent bodies and intermediary organisations with the aim of providing support and sharing information to any learning mobility project promoted by Vocational Education and Training providers for the benefit of SMEs, Skilled Crafts companies and apprentices. Every interested organisation will be welcomed in the new network.



Partnerships Committee Working groups

Standing Committee on Construction

Since 2004 EBC has obtained the status of 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 issue 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.

Build up Initiative



Build Up is a European Commission initiative with the objective of providing information to all actors involved in 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.

WorldSkills Europe



At its 2011 General Assembly, which was held in Spa, Belgium, WorldSkills Europe approved the membership of EBC. As the organiser of the largest European skills competition, this organisation 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.

EBC - partner of the EU-OSHA Bilbao campaigns

As in the past, EBC signed up to the 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. On 5th June 2013, during the event organised by the EU-OSHA "Benchmarking & exchange of good practices in OSH", EBC received the certificate of the Campaign Official Partner.



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 (ANAEP, Italy) and Riccardo Viaggi (Secretary General) to represent EBC at the committee meetings.



CEN Technical Committees

EBC, as an expert, represents small and medium construction enterprises 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.

EBC chairs the UEAPME Construction Forum

As of 2008 EBC has been chairing 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 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. At its last meeting, held in April 2013, Mr. Daan Stuit (from AFNL, the Netherlands) took over from Mr. David Croft (FMB, the UK) who had been chairing the Forum since 2008. EBC would very much like to thank Mr. Croft for his valuable and consistent activity as the chair of the Forum and it is looking forward to the new cooperation with Mr. Stuit.

