

Agenda

High Level Roundtable - Skills for the Construction Sector

28 October 2020 16:00 – 17:30

(Webex)

All participants will have the opportunity to express an opinion, addressing one or more of the discussion questions/topics listed below, relevant to the organisation they are representing. Participants are advised to make very short introductions and focus on their related interventions, to a total duration of 3 minutes.

WELCOME & OPENING

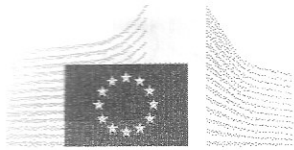
- **Nicolas Schmit**, Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights
- **Thierry Breton**, Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs

DISCUSSION (based on discussion questions)

- Challenges facing the construction sector in terms of upskilling and reskilling of the workforce, support to the increase in training opportunities for young workers.
- Identification of the support needed for skills development at the European level and, in particular, how the new European Skills Agenda including the Pact for Skills can support the construction sector.
- Presentation of commitments from the participants regarding their contribution to the Pact for Skills.

CONCLUSIONS

- Concluding remarks by **Commissioners Schmit and Breton**



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs

Director-General

Brussels,
GROW/C1/RH/

**Subject: High Level Roundtable on Skills for the Construction Sector,
27 November 2020 from 10:00 to 11:30**

Dear Mr Soeiro,

On behalf of Commissioner Thierry Breton and Commissioner Nicolas Schmit, I am pleased to invite you to speak at a virtual High Level Roundtable on skills for the construction sector, following the launch of the Pact for Skills initiative during the European Vocational Skills Week on 10 November 2020.

The objective of the Pact for Skills is to mobilise all relevant stakeholders to reflect and decide on the measures to be undertaken in order to adequately skill people of working age in their industrial ecosystem.

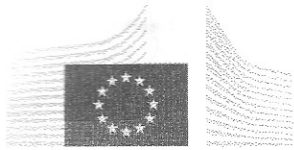
The construction sector has been identified as a priority partnership to be launched under the Pact, given its long tradition of sustained investments in skills. Upskilling and reskilling is also an important driver for the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

The primary objective of the meeting is to:

- Discuss challenges facing the construction sector in terms of upskilling and reskilling of the workforce and support to increase training opportunities for young workers;
- Identify the support needed for skills development at the European level and, in particular, how the new European Skills Agenda including the Pact for Skills can support this strategic sector, and
- Obtain commitments from the participants of the discussion regarding their contribution to the Pact for Skills.

In the course of the discussion, we expect to agree on the commitments that parties to the Roundtable can envisage in order to build and implement a future Construction Pact for Skills.

An agenda, confirmed participants list and a joint document of the construction sector are attached. You can connect to the meeting with the following link: [Join WebEx meeting](#). A test connection can also be arranged upon request.



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BACKGROUND:

- ⇒ The EU construction industry represents 9.5% of EU GDP (€1,324 billion) and 6.1% of EU total employment (12.7 million workers in about 3.2 million enterprises)¹.

1. The challenges that we see in the field of skills

The construction sector is characterised by a number of challenges which make the question of education and training both crucial and complex to solve.

In general:

- Fragmentation of the sector / a vast majority of SMEs / labour-intensive / mobile workers
- Lack of (skilled) workers in almost all Member States (e.g. ageing workforce in some countries, skills' drain in Eastern European countries, etc.)
- Skills' mismatches
- Need for life-long learning
- Importance of apprenticeship (in quantity and quality)
- Lack of attractiveness for youngsters, both males and females
- Negative image of the profession (seen as painful, low-qualified, precarious, macho...)
- Access to training is not yet a right in all Member States
- Deterioration of the national industrial relations in certain countries
- High rate of occupational hazards

On the financial side:

- Concrete examples from our national affiliates demonstrate that any upskilling and/or reskilling initiative, with specific targets, requires a clear public funding (with sectoral earmarking).
- Currently, there are no EU funds available for training as such, but only for assessing the situation and designing training.
- We expect that the EU funds which will be available in the framework of the Recovery Plan and the next MFF should help alleviate the sectoral skills challenges. However, as education and training is a national/regional competence, a strong commitment (both politically and financially) is required from national Governments.
- Sectoral social partners should be involved in defining the financial needs and allocation of additional EU funding to upgrade the skills and qualifications of the workers, (re)training workers
- EU funds for skills should be streamlined and made more result-oriented (e.g. Erasmus+ focuses too much on burdensome formalities with no clear added value)
- More guidance is needed on available funds for upskilling and/or reskilling initiatives in the construction sector (one-stop shop)

On the organisational side:

¹ According to FIEC statistical report 2020

- Due to the typical characteristics of the construction industry, the skills' needs of the industry are different from other sectors.
- The social partners of the construction industry at company, local, regional and national levels are best placed to identify the needs design and implement the sectoral skills programs, which are needed in the industry.
- In many Members States the social partners of the construction industry play a very active role in the design and implementation of sectoral skills programs in their sector. This systems functions as part of the national industrial relations system, in which paritarian social funds play a very important role.

2. We also observe new challenges...

- The « green » policies (Green Deal / Renovation Wave / A New Circular Economy Action Plan for a cleaner and more competitive Europe) and digitalisation, which require to provide construction workers with the necessary skills so that the sector can effectively meet the challenges generated by the twin transition, as well as contribute to it.
- Rapid evolution of skills' demand in future, which will require tools to anticipate the new needs and a more flexible education and training system which can adapt more quickly
- Growing digitalisation and robotization
- Growing needs in green and digital skills
- Attracting young workers to prepare the next generation (current workers are ageing)
- Attracting more women in the sector, by changing stereotypes that traditionally persist.
- Strengthening the industrial relations in the field of skills and VET in the construction industry
- Better integrate "health and safety" in all professional training and education programs
- Facilitate the access to training for all workers

... and new opportunities:

- There are many job vacancies and therefore many career opportunities in the Construction sector, provided that we tackle the current skills mismatches
New skills and careers are appearing with the green and digital transition, offering careers that are more diverse and fulfilling missions to mitigate climate change and accelerate digitalisation (e.g. #Skills4Climate campaign)
- In a world where competition is high and crises are accelerating, the construction industry offers mostly local jobs, with long-term perspective and numerous future opportunities.
- Also, digitalisation and automation can help improving health and safety in the construction industry.

3. What we already do in the field of skills

Considering the above-mentioned importance of the question of skills in our sector, we, EU, national, regional and local organisations from the construction sector (and in particular social partners), are already very much involved in this field. At EU level, we support our respective national affiliates in exchanging information and good practices amongst them.

We are also active towards the EU institutions in the **policy field** when it comes to vocational training, youth and skills. We strongly promote a collaborative approach between the social partners and the national training and educational bodies.

Some examples:

- Joint statement on the EU Skills Agenda (January 2020, social dialogue)
- Employers' statement on improving skills' matching (September 2019, with BUSINESSEUROPE)
- "A European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships – A European Trade Union Proposal"
- #Skills4Climate campaign

We also take part in various **EU-funded projects**, be it in the framework of the social dialogue or not. In the past few years, we have concentrated our efforts in working on the green and digital transitions, which require developing new skills.

Some examples:

- Build Up Skills project at national level (www.buildup.eu/en/skills)
- Construction Blueprint - Sectorial Skills Strategy project (Erasmus+): strategic approach on professional skills in construction (2019-2022)
- VET4LEC project (social dialogue)
- Initiatives for youth employment in the construction industry (www.construction-for-youth.eu)

4. Our commitments

Here are the commitments that the Construction sector is willing to make as part of the Pact for Skills, provided that more discussions will be organised with the Commission to see how the EU can partner and contribute to achieve these commitments:

- Ensure the long-term implementation of the outcomes of the Blueprint project
- Further promote quality apprenticeship towards our national affiliates with the aim of opening access to jobs in the construction industry
- Further promote the highest possible quality of training in the framework of the social dialogue
- Further develop sectoral paritarian bodies, promote their action in the field of training and support those countries where such schemes are not yet in place
- Further work on attracting young people and especially women in the sector thanks to a modernised image of the sector
- Promote the integration of digital and green skills as a holistic and interdisciplinary approach in VET curricula and in up-skilling/ re-skilling
- Develop new training curricula and materials to quickly respond to labour market needs
- Ensure that digital and green skills integrated in the curricula are developed and updated jointly by the key stakeholders: employers, trade unions, local authorities and VET providers
- Work closely with the EU to set up an online platform providing more guidance on available funds and schemes for upskilling and/or reskilling initiatives in the construction sector (one-stop shop)
- Promote and strengthen industrial relations in the construction industry, as well as a solid cooperation with the national training and educational bodies

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

High Level Roundtable - Skills for the Construction Sector

27 November 2020

European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC):

(Transparency Register ID: 92221016212-42)

- Mr Joël Schons, CEO of Stugalux (SME) and Vice-President Social Affairs of FIEC (Luxembourg) joel@stugalux.lu
- Mr Piero Petrucco, CEO of I.CO.P SpA of Basiliano (SME), Vice-President of Associazione Nazionale Costruttori Edili (ANCE) and Vice-President Sustainability of FIEC (Italy) piero.petrucco@icop.it

European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW):

(Transparency Register ID: 57745478360-42)

- Mr Martin Mortensen, Technical consultant at the Education Secretariat of the Danish Electrical Union (Denmark) mmmo@def.dk
- Ms Ramona Veleanu, Vice-President of Federațiile sindicale din sectorul construcțiilor din România (FGS) (Romania) ramona@fgs.ro

European Builders Confederation (EBC):

(Transparency Register ID: 09256701147-51)

- Mr Philip van Nieuwenhuizen, President of Aannemersfederatie Bouw & Infra Nederland (AFNL - Dutch confederation of building and infrastructure contractors) and EBC Vice-President (The Netherlands) pvn@mkb-infra.nl

EuropeON (European association of Electrical Contractors):

(Transparency Register ID: 9089874181-55)

- Mr Henrik Fugmann, CEO of Fugmann (SME) (Denmark) hif@fugmann.dk
- Ms Claudia Reiner, CEO of Carls&Reiner (SME), Vice-President of Techniek NL, Member of EuropeON (Netherlands) c.reiner@TechniekNederland.nl

Knauf Energy Solutions:

(Transparency Register ID: 619792037234-03)

- Mr Barry Lynham, Managing Director of Knauf Energy Solutions (Belgium) Barry.Lynham@knaufenergy.com

The University of Porto, Association of European Civil Engineering Faculties (AECEF):

(Transparency Register ID: 870039427179-40)

- Mr Alfredo Soeiro, professor at the Faculty of Engineering and Secretary General of the Association of European Civil Engineering Faculties (AECEF) (Portugal) avsoeiro@fe.up.pt

The Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT), higher education and research

(Transparency Register ID: 8156981516-21 (EU REC))

- Ms Elisabeth O'Brien, Development Unit, LIT, (Ireland) Elisabeth.O'Brien@lit.ie

Polish Building Construction Chamber, Polish Construction Cluster

(Transparency Register ID: 877335140342-59)

- Mr Jakub Wójcik, a board member, expert at the National Centre for Climate Change (Poland) jakub.wojcik@cos.edu.pl

AGENDA & PROPOSED CHOREOGRAPHY

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WELCOME & OPENING

- **Nicolas Schmit**, Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights
- **Thierry Breton**, Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs

DISCUSSION

- **Commissioner Breton** will address the sector representatives
 - Question - *Can you give us an overview of the main challenges, which the construction sector is facing in the area of skills?*
 - Intervention by Mr **Martin Mortensen**, EFBWW
 - Question - *According to you, what kind of challenges, but also opportunities, will the construction sector face in the future, taking also into account the recent initiatives of the Commission?*
 - intervention by Ms **Claudia Reiner**, EuropeOn

- **Commissioner Breton** will address the sector representatives
 - *Question - Another challenge of the skilled workforce shortage in construction is the barrier to the mobility of skilled workers within the EU. Can you tell us a bit more about this challenge and what the European Union could do to improve the mutual recognition of qualifications?*
 - intervention by Mr **Piero Petrucco**, FIEC

- **Commissioner Schmit** will address the sector representatives
 - *Question - Is there specific research needed to ensure the Pact for Skills can be delivered effectively and achieve its targets?*
 - intervention by Ms **Elisabeth O'Brien**, LIT
 - *Question - What kind of challenges you are facing in Poland and would like to address them via the Pact for Skills?*
 - intervention by Mr **Jakub Wójcik**, Polish Construction Chamber

- **Commissioner Breton** will address the sector representatives
 - *Question - How is the industry willing to engage and contribute to developing comprehensive commitments under the Pact for Skills?*
 - intervention by Mr **Joël Schons**, FIEC

CONCLUSIONS

Concluding remarks by **Commissioners Schmit** and **Breton**