



Joint Work Programme

for the
European Sectoral social dialogue
of the construction industry

2024-2027

CONTENTS

Introduction

1. Horizontal matters

- a) Strengthening, reinforcing and promoting industrial relations in the construction industry at all levels
- b) Strengthening Social Partners' capacity in Central and Eastern European countries
- c) Addressing the issue of labour shortage, with a focus on the attractiveness of the construction sector
- d) Contributing to the green and digital transition and supporting the sector in these transitions.
- e) Supporting the sustainable reconstruction of Ukraine

2. Improving the functioning of the labour market – WG “Employment”

- a) Towards a better application of the European Regulation on the coordination of cross-border social security
- b) Digitalisation and Social ID Cards
- c) The Posting of Workers
- d) Third-country companies and posted workers on the EU construction market
- e) Tackling undeclared work
- f) Fighting against cases of cross-border social fraud, unfair competition and non-compliance with applicable laws, regulations and collective agreements
- g) Addressing the issue of subcontracting
- h) Internal Market of the construction industry
- i) Ensuring good cooperation with the European Labour Authority (ELA)

3. Fostering vocational education and training and youth employment – WG “VET and Youth”

- a) Adapting the training schemes to digitalisation and other technological developments
- b) Addressing the problem of skills gaps/mismatches
- c) Facilitating the mutual recognition of qualifications
- d) Attracting young workers and increasing the number and the quality of apprenticeships
- e) Migration

4. Fostering a culture of Health & Safety – WG “OSH”

- a) Implementing the EU OSH strategy
- b) Focusing on potential new health hazards
- c) Focusing on existing health hazards

Introduction

The European social partners, EFBWW and FIEC confirm the importance of a strong and autonomous European social dialogue for the construction industry in order to develop a sustainable construction industry in Europe and will therefore jointly continue to reinforce their collaboration.

In the framework of their joint initiatives, EFBWW and FIEC will take into account the distribution of responsibilities between the European and national level and will respect the role and autonomy of the national social partners in determining their labour market conditions and terms and conditions of employment by themselves.

This work programme serves as a guideline for the activities of the European social partners of the construction industry for the years 2024-2027. EFBWW and FIEC may decide to tackle other issues beyond those contained in this work programme according to developments at the national and EU level, among others in the framework of the European elections and the renewal of the European Commission in 2024.

During this period, EFBWW and FIEC will strive to give greater visibility and follow-up to their joint actions, campaigns and projects. The European social partners of the construction industry will continue to enhance the system of industrial relations in the construction industry at EU, national and company levels. Given the unique characteristics of the construction industry and the associated challenges, a robust and effective system of industrial relations is essential for the sector's stability and progress.

EFBWW and FIEC underline the importance of the construction labour market for the whole EU labour market. The sector represents 6.4% of total direct employment in the EU and contributes to about 10.1 % of the EU's GDP. It also generates new jobs, drives economic growth, and provides solutions for societal, climate and energy challenges. In this regard, EFBWW and FIEC will continue to monitor economic fluctuations and their impact on the construction sector, as well as the evolution of global trade relations.

Regarding the green and digital 'twin transition', EFBWW and FIEC recognise the new opportunities for growth and development, but also the importance of supporting the sector's workforce to ensure that these transformations are equitable and inclusive.

With this joint work programme, the social partners reaffirm their commitment to robust social dialogue at all levels as the cornerstone for tackling sector-specific challenges and advancing workers' interests alongside economic development. Central to the social dialogue are improving working conditions, ensuring workplace safety and the well-being of every worker in the construction industry.

1. Horizontal matters

In this section, we outline our broad, overarching goals for the construction sector between 2024 and 2027. These priorities cut across various aspects of the industry, addressing key challenges and capitalizing on emerging opportunities. Our focus is on strengthening industrial relations, tackling labour shortages, and preparing for the future of work, while also enhancing our efforts in a reinforced European Social Dialogue and in a reinforced national social dialogue in both Central and Eastern Europe and contributing to significant transitions within the sector. Each initiative under this section is designed to create a more sustainable, inclusive, and forward-looking construction industry across the European Union.

a) Strengthening, reinforcing and promoting industrial relations in the construction industry at all levels

The European social partners of the construction industry remain strongly committed to strengthening the development of the industrial relations in the construction industry.

Given the specific nature of the construction sector and its high degree of fragmentation, being mainly composed by small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), it is absolutely vital that there are structural, stable and properly functioning industrial relations between employers and workers both at the EU and national levels. EFBWW and FIEC will therefore pay particular attention to the strengthening of autonomous industrial relations and the capacity of the social partners within the construction industry.

At the EU level, EFBWW and FIEC will follow closely the new organisation of the sectoral social dialogue meetings. The social partners will work to ensure that the external contractors will provide adequate support and that the European Commission will continue to stay involved in the Social Dialogue process. They will carefully assess if the new solution provides an appropriate framework for the social dialogue and make appropriate suggestions to improve the proposed regime.

They will also reaffirm the primary responsibility of the national sectoral social partners, through autonomous industrial relations, for finding a common understanding on the organisation of their national labour markets.

The commitment to strengthen, reinforce and promote industrial relations in the construction industry is also at the core of the EFBWW-FIEC-AEIP's (the European Association of Paritarian Institutions) long-term cooperation. The three organisations will continue to work together, particularly on social dialogue projects.

EFBWW and FIEC will continue to support the establishment of autonomous sectoral industrial relation systems and the capacity of social partners in the construction industry in all Member States and, in this respect, they will examine specific needs and demands raised by national social partners and jointly develop specific capacity building initiatives where required.

The European social partners of the construction industry will:

- Continue to emphasise the necessity to maintain a properly functioning system of European sectoral social dialogue meetings for the construction industry with the active involvement and support of the European Commission.
- Continue to organise social dialogue initiatives through EU-funded project.
- Continue to follow closely the development of national industrial relations in the construction industry and support the national social partners in taking actions to ensure a national autonomous system of industrial relation in the construction industry.

b) Strengthening Social Partners' capacity in Central and Eastern European countries

In 2019-2020, the European social partners of the construction industry took the initiative to launch the European project "Towards A New Start of Industrial Relations in Construction in Central and East European Countries (CEECs)" ([TANSIRC](#)). However, as capacity building is a long and continuous ambition of the European Social partners of the construction industry (together with AEIP), they have committed themselves to engage in strengthening the capacity of the social partners of the construction industry in CEECs. The project DESOCO 2, launched in 2023, serves as an example of this commitment, and the social partners intend to organise several meetings in CEECs to improve the access of this European-level social dialogue.

In close cooperation with their respective affiliates in CEECs, FIEC and EFBWW will continue to propose concrete actions to strengthen the capacity of the national social partners of the CEECs to engage in and further develop industrial relations at European and national level.

c) Addressing the issue of labour shortage, with a focus on the attractiveness of the construction sector

The construction industry is increasingly reporting labour shortages in most of the EU Member States. According to the Employment and Social developments in Europe Report, in 2023, labour shortages in construction are now nearly three times the level observed 10 years ago.

The demographic changes, ageing of the population and workforce, and the twin transition combined with the challenges observed in several Member States to attract and maintain workers, are putting pressure on the construction labour market. The social partners recognise that young and female workers, in the construction industry, make up an increasingly important opportunity for the sector's labour market.

The boost of investments in the construction industry, following EU policies on renovation and national recovery plans, represent both an important opportunity but also pressure on the industry to find workers with adequate skills. Furthermore, new requirements in terms of technology and digitalisation reveal a need to upskill workers to make the industry more robust going forward. This is a growing trend and EFBWW and FIEC will continue to take

action to raise awareness on this issue, identify specific joint initiatives and mobilise national and European policy makers.

According to a 2021 Eurofound report¹ “labour shortages arise when the demand for workers in an occupation exceeds the supply of workers available who possess the required skills and are willing to work at a specific wage rate and in specific working conditions in a particular place and point in time”. Hence, EFBWW and FIEC will continue to address the impact of such developments from various angles (i.e. the attractiveness of the sector, health and safety requirements, employment issues, skills and training, etc.) by gathering and sharing examples of national best practice and identifying potential topics for action at EU level. The European social partners will also support the activities of relevant authorities, such as EURES and the ELA, related to this issue.

EFBWW and FIEC will integrate this issue in regular meetings and projects, with a focus on the attractiveness of the sector. The social partners will therefore look into reasons for the lack of attractiveness and discuss a mixed approach solution to improve the attractiveness of the construction industry, which could cover supporting campaigns, dispelling existing misconceptions or promoting best practices of progressive working conditions.

Activities will have a focus in particular, but not only, on young workers, women and workers from so-called ‘phase-out’ industries, as well as on the challenges associated with the integration of migrant workers already present on the EU labour market.

EFBWW and FIEC will also discuss how to address the challenges of an ageing workforce.

d) Contributing to the green and digital transition and supporting the sector in these transitions.

The social partners welcome the high ambition of the European Commission to create a ‘climate neutral EU’ by 2050 (European Green Deal). However, EFBWW and FIEC recognise that the social and economic challenges of the European Green Deal agenda are significant for the European construction industry. Because of the need to build highly efficient infrastructures, develop and implement a new circular economy action plan, transform our cities into so-called ‘smart cities’, unlock substantial investments, build more comfortable and sanitary buildings and generally boost renovation for existing private houses, the demand for construction activities has invariably risen. With new and sustainable construction materials and the need for recycling and upcycling, the industry will have to update their practices and adapt the skills needed therein.

The activities of the European sectoral dialogue must reflect these ambitious targets and react to the requisite higher levels of investment in the construction industry. The EU Recovery and Resilience Facility and cohesion funding combined will provide over €66bn for energy renovation across the EU until 2029². Greater attention must be given to social partners’ involvement in National Recovery and Resilience Plans and National Building Renovation Plans. The social partners will ensure that workers have the appropriate skills

¹ Eurofound (2021), Tackling labour shortages in EU Member States, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

² [2021-2027 Cohesion Policy Support for Energy Efficiency and Building Renovation](#)

and qualifications and safeguard high health and safety standards, strengthen industrial relations in the construction industry and raise the attractiveness of the sector

The digitalisation of the construction industry is progressing rapidly, yet the sector continues to be regarded as largely labour intensive. Tools like BIM (Building Information Modelling), 3D printers, robots, 'cobots' (collaborative robots) and drones are now common place on construction sites, both large and small. While these developments sometimes raise concerns (i.e. cybersecurity and data protection) among companies, especially SMEs, and workers, their potential to provide an extremely useful added value is evident (for example in the field of vocational and professional training or health and safety). These tools can also help increase productivity and enhance the competitiveness of the sector. FIEC and EFBWW will explore how industrial relations can support the sustainable implementation of these advancements, including on general working conditions, safety and work organisation.

The social partners aim to explore how evolving working relations, digitalisation and the green transition will transform the construction industry, focusing on opportunities for improving working conditions and attracting new talent. The legislation adopted in the framework of the European Green Deal, coupled with the increasing use of digital tools, will have a major impact on the future skills and qualifications of construction workers. EFBWW and FIEC recognise the importance of addressing these changes at every level, from initial training to the upskilling of the workforce. Utilising insights from their Blueprint project, they will continue, in cooperation with the European Builders Confederation (EBC), to evaluate future skill requirements and collaborate with relevant stakeholders to provide appropriate training opportunities.

EFBWW and FIEC are dedicated to assess the benefits and challenges of such developments and discuss them in sectoral social dialogue meetings and in their joint activities, ensuring that the perspectives of both workers and companies are well-represented in ongoing discussions. A key focus will be on advocating for continuous sustainable financial investments and the strengthening of lifelong learning.

e) Supporting the sustainable reconstruction of Ukraine

FIEC and EFBWW recognise the important role of the European Union and its member states in the sustainable reconstruction of Ukraine. On this basis, the two social partners have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the sustainable reconstruction of Ukraine in 2023, calling on the necessity to put in place an adequate framework aiming at, *inter alia*, combatting corruption, promoting quality jobs and promoting collective bargaining agreements. This Memorandum will be widely disseminated and both parties will discuss further possible joint actions and practical implementation strategies in close cooperation with their respective Ukrainian affiliates.

2. Improving the functioning of the labour market – WG “Employment”

The European social partners of the construction industry will continue to promote a fair and level playing field for companies, equal treatment for workers³ and to fight against (cross-border) cases of social fraud and non-compliance with legislation. The focus will be to enhance cross-border social security coordination, to address the growing influence of third-country companies and workers and harness the opportunities of the digital transition. This section outlines the strategic approach and initiatives of EFBWW and FIEC aimed at improving the functioning of the construction labour market.

a) Towards a better application of the European Regulation on the coordination of cross-border social security

The European social partners of the construction industry regret that cross-border exchanges of social security data (in particular, the data linked to the PD A1) in the context of posting still remains underdeveloped. In order to address this issue, EFBWW and FIEC will continue to discuss the promotion of electronic tools and a better cross-border exchange of data.

FIEC and EFBWW will also continue to closely monitor the ongoing revision of the regulation and undertake, if necessary, joint actions to defend this joint position.

b) Digitalisation and Social ID Cards

FIEC and EFBWW are convinced that digitalisation tools should continue to be promoted to improve greater transparency on worksites, to combat fraudulent practices, to ensure a level playing field, to accredit training in health and safety or other training received by the worker. These tools can also help ensuring proper controls and enforcement of social security provisions in particular for posted workers, who represent a more vulnerable group in this regard. EFBWW and FIEC will continue to monitor and assess the use of these tools at the national level, in particular Social ID Cards, and their benefits for workers and employers.

The [SIDE-CIC project](#), started in 2023, will provide a mapping of the social ID cards in the EU, identify the feasibility of interconnection of some of the existing national schemes and contribute to defining the needs and regulatory gaps within the EU framework as well as technical specifications with regard to the possibility of interconnection. The social partners are willing to work with the European Commission and ELA and to disseminate the results of their work.

Given the high interest for this topic among FIEC and EFBWW affiliates, digitalisation tools and Social ID Cards will also continue to be discussed during the social dialogue meetings on a regular basis.

³ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/industrial-relations-dictionary/equal-treatment>

c) The Posting of Workers

From the total number of posted workers, the EU construction sector has one of the highest shares. The “Posting” Directive (96/71/EC), the “Enforcement” Directive (2014/67/EC) and the social security coordination Regulations (883/2004 and 987/2009) are key pieces of legislation for Europe’s construction industry. EFBWW and FIEC will continue to take joint specific action where the two agree, such as the proper implementation, monitoring and application of the rules. This will form part of dedicated social dialogue meetings, and will seek to involve representatives of the Commission (i.e. DG EMPL) and of ELA as guests.

The social partners will monitor the implementation and application of the revised Posting of Workers Directive and address arising problems, which are relevant at the EU-level. This includes examining the Commission’s review of the application of the rules on posting. The social partners will adapt their activities in response to the findings of this report, in consultation with their respective affiliates.

EFBWW and FIEC will continue to monitor the development of concerted and joint cross-border inspection exercises conducted by ELA, ensuring that they can effectively help the enforcement of the concerned provisions. This includes a continuous dialogue with ELA’s Enforcement and Analysis Unit. The affiliates of the two organisations, in their function as national social partners, have a crucial role to play in this regard, and the social partners will therefore encourage the exchange of information and identify joint activities to this end.

d) Third-country companies and posted workers on the EU construction market

Within the European construction industry, there is a growing presence of construction companies from third countries, evident through takeovers of European firms or participation in European tender procedures. Simultaneously, the presence of posted workers from third countries entering into the EU is steadily rising.

EFBWW and FIEC have analysed the impact of third-country national companies and workers in the European construction sector through their EU-funded project ‘Better Functioning of the European Construction Labour Market’ ([FELM](#)). Following this project, the social partners will continue to disseminate the results and the recommendations. They will promote a fair and sustainable labour market in construction while ensuring compliance with existing regulations and enhancing social cohesion.

FIEC and EFBWW plan to consider a follow-up project and will continue to address this issue, in particular through their social dialogue meetings.

The social partners will continue to monitor the evolving patterns and trends related to third-country nationals (TCNs). Evaluating further policy initiatives and joint reactions to emerging migration legislation such as the initiatives presented in the Skills and Talent Mobility package, including the EU Talent Pool, aimed at facilitating international recruitment. Currently, TCNs are not always covered by the principle of equal treatment, rendering this class of workers exceptionally vulnerable. This vulnerability is further

compounded when TCN workers are posted to work abroad, due to the higher risk of labour abuses observed where posted workers operate in the construction sector.

e) Tackling undeclared work

EFBWW and FIEC will continue to promote and apply a policy of zero tolerance for unfair and illegal practices in the construction industry and will work together on combating “undeclared work”, including the under-declaration of worked hours. The social partners will continue their active involvement in the Platform on Undeclared Work set up by ELA. The social partners believe that the interconnection of social security data using various digitalisation tools such as social ID cards in construction may also serve as a tool to address this phenomenon.

EFBWW and FIEC will also discuss the extension of the “Tackling undeclared work in the construction sector” ([TUWIC](#)) project to other interested countries. This project aimed at raising awareness of undeclared work in the construction industry and fostering national prevention initiatives. In particular, the social partners will look at strategies for identifying and curbing ‘bogus’ self-employment and other abusive contractual relationships which contribute to the non-declaration of work in construction and undermine the rights and protection of workers, as well as the competitiveness of “genuine” companies.

f) Fighting against cases of cross-border social fraud, unfair competition and non-compliance with applicable laws, regulations and collective agreements

EFBWW and FIEC reaffirm their shared ambition to combat cases of unfair competition, cross-border social fraud and non-compliance with legislation, with the aim of ensuring non-discrimination and an equal, transparent level playing field within the construction industry for workers and companies.

EFBWW and FIEC will continue to address the challenges associated with cross-border work, such as posting (i.e. the implementation of legislation, non-genuine posting, information exchange, the necessity for prior notification, better inspections, disruptive behaviours of intermediaries, etc.), cross-border social fraud as well as the posting of bogus self-employed workers. The instruments we will use to do this include building cross-border social partner networks and cooperation, facilitating bilateral cooperation between social partners in posting and host countries, and creating information tools for cross-border work. To this end, the European social partners of the construction industry will actively contribute to the work of ELA.

Furthermore, EFBWW and FIEC will address the problem of illegal business engineering models that are being developed to offer cheap labour across borders. Particular points of attention are ‘letterbox companies’ and ‘bogus labour supply intermediaries’. Through the FELM project, the social partners recognised that this was an issue that particularly affects TCN workers. The social partners will discuss possible solutions to combat such abuses on the basis of the joint recommendations of the FELM project.

g) Addressing the issue of subcontracting

EFBWW and FIEC will closely monitor the European Commission's study on the situation of temporary cross-border mobile workers and workers in subcontracting chains in the context of the evaluation of the application of the Posting of Workers Directive, as per the mandate in the revised Directive.

The social partners will explore the possibility for joint actions and recommendations regarding the issue of subcontracting, as well as an analysis aiming at understanding its nature, from both a legal and material sense. This could include a mapping exercise of the existing legislation and practices on subcontracting at both European and national levels and research on trends, intermediaries and legislative frameworks.

h) Internal Market of the construction industry

The European social partners of the construction industry will continue to monitor closely EU policy initiatives related to the internal market, which impact the social and labour market of the construction industry. Likewise, EFBWW and FIEC will monitor new technologies and innovations in the sector and how they improve efficiency and safety within the context of the internal market.

The European social partners of the construction industry reconfirm that the internal market in respect of the construction industry requires efficient and effective prevention and monitoring mechanisms against labour abuses.

FIEC and EFBWW intend also to promote collective bargaining across Europe.

i) Ensuring good cooperation with the European Labour Authority (ELA)

The social partners consider that ELA provides an added-value in the fight against cross-border social fraud, abuse and evasion. EFBWW and FIEC welcome that ELA has focused its activities on the construction sector. They have been involved in activities linked to a communication campaign on construction for the years 2023 and 2024 and will continue to disseminate results, involve their national affiliates and evaluate its impact.

The social partners will constructively contribute to the work of the ELA, in particular through the European Platform on Undeclared Work, to enhance cooperation in tackling undeclared work, as well as the Forum on the Posting of Workers. EFBWW and FIEC will continue to actively participate in the stakeholder groups. They will also evaluate the opportunities and impact of the creation of a unit dedicated to construction within ELA. The unit would coordinate ELA's activities related to the construction sector and ensure a continuous coordination with the sectoral social partners.

An equally crucial element for EFBWW and FIEC is the structural, strong cooperation between the ELA and the national social partners of the construction industry. As such, EFBWW and FIEC will also play an active role in ensuring that ELA limits its interference in the autonomy of the national social partners and their exclusive labour market competences.

The social partners are also committed to evaluating the use of EURES in the construction sector and to reinforce the visibility of this tool among their affiliated members and, ultimately, prospective workers. Representatives of EURES should therefore be invited during events or social dialogue meetings to present their work.

3. Fostering vocational education and training and youth employment – WG “VET and Youth”

The EU labour market has been resilient in the last years, with a record employment rate of 74.6% in 2022 and an increase in the number of permanent and full-time workers. However, this number is hiding another reality, where employers struggle to find skilled workers and face significant labour shortages. In this regard, the construction industry is not spared and companies consistently report growing and persistent difficulties in finding workers with the skills needed on the market.

In some countries, the integration of migrant workers is seen as a possible solution to address the problem of lack of skilled workers. Adequate policies focusing on training and education can facilitate this process. FIEC and EFBWW will take this view into consideration. However, proper integration of migrant workers into the labour market is vital to address the industry’s attractiveness challenges. Quality jobs should be available to migrant workers as well as quality vocational education and training involving all workers. In this respect it is of highest importance that migrant workers are well trained in all OSH related aspects of the work and are integrated in the OSH structures and measures.

a) Adapting the training schemes to digitalisation and other technological developments

The construction industry is facing big changes with the development of new techniques and innovations and, more broadly, the green and digital transition.

These changes require training of new skills for workers, both in terms of utilising these tools but also for their maintenance. Curricula and training have to be adapted to be better aligned with the reality on the worksite, where the use of digital tools will continue to grow. EFBWW and FIEC will evaluate the needs of workers and employers, in terms of new training schemes. They will continue to work to better anticipate changes in technology, equipment, material and work processes, as well as the skills needed and support adaptation of training schemes and work organisation.

In this respect, we consider a broad initial vocational education as a precondition to allow the workforce to cope with new skills needed.

The social partners consider to organise dedicated discussions in the framework of social dialogue meetings and of social dialogue projects (TANSIRC 2, DESOCO 2, ...), with a focus on data collection.

EFBWW and FIEC will pay special attention to the incipient use and impact of co-bots, robots and artificial intelligence in various construction processes and discuss possible actions, especially with focus on VET and OSH.

b) Addressing the problem of skills gaps/mismatches

In addition to a persistent labour shortage, in almost all Member States construction companies are facing difficulties in finding workers with the right skills. The “skills gap”, being the situation where a worker doesn’t have the skills required to perform adequately the tasks associated with a job, represents a serious obstacle to economic growth, the

creation of jobs and competitiveness and must therefore be reduced. The social partners recognise several factors that can explain this “skills gaps” such as:

- An ever growing differentiation of specific skills needed.
- Limited or no structures for continuous training on company level.
- Changes in technology impacting construction products but also machinery and tools.
- Digitalisation.
- Time gap between changes in work processes and needed changes in curricula for vocational education and consequently the training and the availability of the trained workers on the market etc.
- Insufficient synergy between the education system and the world of work.

EFBWW and FIEC are committed to address these issues in the framework of their joint activities and to reflect the voice of workers and companies more closely in the debate on a strengthened capacity of the sector in managing the skills gap and improving by this the competitiveness of the construction sector at national, European and international level. Attention will be paid to the need for an industry-wide dialogue between employers and workers at every level, as well as to the need for continuous sustainable financial investments and strengthening of lifelong learning.

The social partners will act therefore to:

- promote their Pact for Skills in construction, together with the European Builders Confederation (EBC). This Pact for Skills fixes a target to upskill and reskill 30% of the overall workforce of the construction industry each year by 2030. The social partners will monitor the implementation of the Pact for Skills and encourage the exchange of good practices. They will support the organisation of workshops, seminars and meetings to exchange on this.
- encourage the upskilling of all workers, particularly older workers by supporting the collaboration between companies and training centres and encouraging the paritarian organisations of our sector to pay more attention to the topic. Furthermore, we will encourage companies to expand their efforts and capacities to arrange at the job training and other forms of CVET.
- evaluate the benefits of new forms of training, such as virtual reality and augmented reality training.
- work on the analysis of skills needs in a European project or through dedicated meetings and workshops, with other interested parties. Addressing the issue of the anticipation of skills needs is of significant importance both for the competitiveness of construction companies and for employment in the sector.
- discuss the opportunity to submit a follow-up project to the Construction Blueprint for Skills, in cooperation with EBC.

c) Facilitating the mutual recognition of qualifications

Despite the instruments put in place at the EU level (e.g. EQF, ECVET, Europass, etc.), the recognition of professional qualifications of construction workers remains a challenge. In a context of labour shortages, where intra-EU mobility should be facilitated, the lack of recognition of professional qualification in construction is a major obstacle.

FIEC and EFBWW will continue working on facilitating the mutual recognition of qualifications, with the aim of making it an opportunity rather than a challenge. Our guiding principle in this process is to ensure that the recognition will not undermine existing quality levels of the professions and especially not challenge OSH competences.

In addition, FIEC and EFBWW will continue to work on the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal qualifications. Indeed, non-formal and informal learning activities are traditionally an important part of the work reality in the construction sector and are of great importance for the labour market, particularly in the construction sector. Achieving greater transparency within the professional qualification requirements which are in place but are not strictly regulated professions per national law and are not in the European database of regulated professions, can also help to improve intra-EU mobility. In addition, a greater recognition should be given to non-formal learning to facilitate mobility within the Internal Market.

d) Attracting young workers and increasing the number and the quality of apprenticeships

The development of high quality vocational education and training (VET), in particular so-called "dual forms", combining elements of training at the workplace, in training centres and in schools, has been high on the EU agenda for quite a while and is considered an important means for facilitating the transition from education and training to work. Taking into consideration the statistics for youth employment, countries practicing "dual forms" of VET, such as Austria, Germany or the Netherlands, show better results than other countries. Probably the most important aspect of these types of IVET is to aim that the apprentice gains a comprehensive understanding of the occupation and the capacity to work independently. It seems to be the generally accepted view that such high quality VET is key, in order to ensure the necessary basis for many other EU policies, as well as for growth, jobs and competitiveness.

EFBWW and FIEC will continue to monitor the current uptake of apprenticeship schemes in the EU. They will continue their involvement with the European Alliance for Apprenticeship to help improve the accessibility, availability and quality of apprenticeships in the construction industry. They will also promote the mobility of apprentices and ensure that Erasmus + funds are adapted, accessible and available to companies. They will discuss how to further encourage companies and workers to participate in exchanges.

e) Migration

Following from the FELM project, the social partners will promote the recommendations related to third-country nationals and their access to training. EFBWW and FIEC reiterate their support for regularising workers without valid documentation in order to ensure their

access to labour rights and social protection. Likewise, TCN workers should be entitled to receive full equal treatment related to collective bargaining agreements and access to education and quality apprenticeships.⁴

The social partners will discuss how to possibly address this issue through social dialogue forums and other joint activities.

⁴ FELM Recommendations 2023

4. Fostering a culture of Health & Safety – WG “OSH”

a) Implementing the EU OSH strategy

Though the European construction sector is making continuous positive efforts to reduce the number of accidents, the sector remains beset with a great number of accidents. Occupational diseases are also still an issue of concern.

Against this backdrop, the European Social Partners of the construction industry consider that health and safety at work must remain a priority for the coming European Commission and European Parliament. It is crucial to keep OSH at the forefront of discussions within other concerned bodies, such as the EU-OSHA, Eurofound, and not only in the context of social dialogue.

In order to be able to compare the various situations in the different Member States and to be able to benchmark them at the EU level and to take adequate actions, EFBWW and FIEC will jointly examine how statistics on OSH can be improved and better harmonised across the EU. They intend to collaborate with EU-OSHA, Eurostat and national statistical institutes to raise the profile of this aspect of the joint work programme. Special attention will be paid to the further development of the European Occupational Diseases Statistics (EODS) project. The results of the EODS pilot project will be presented in 2025. EFBWW and FIEC may work together to elaborate a joint position to influence the discussion about the future of the EODS concept.

One current main challenge for the European OSH policy is the better implementation and enforcement of the existing EU legislative framework. EFBWW and FIEC will jointly monitor the EU-policies in the area of working conditions and aim at influencing these policies by presenting common positions whenever they can act on common ground. Furthermore, we will continue to support the implementation processes by providing practical guidance, as we did for example regarding RCS prevention or the minimization of psychosocial risks at work.

The general policy is guided by the willingness to improve the quality of EU-legislation, its implementation and application at national level. In order to be effectively enforced and applied, the overall OSH framework should be accompanied by information, guidance, instruments and specific programs that adequately take into account the needs and capacities of the various types of undertakings, according to their size, without compromising the level of protection for all workers.

EFBWW and FIEC will continue to support fostering a good OSH culture in companies and getting worker representatives and workers involved through increased participation. Additionally, the social partners will contribute to the general fostering of a prevention culture in companies.

b) Focusing on potential new health hazards

The world of work is constantly evolving. Drivers of this change are aspects such as the greening of the economy (circular economy, electrification, decarbonisation, etc.) and technological innovation, product and process innovation, new materials and new combinations of materials as well as new forms of employment and work patterns. All these aspects have a direct influence on working conditions and could end up forming new work-related hazards. It is therefore important that any initiatives at the EU level in the field of OSH adequately take into account such developments.

Acknowledging the broad effects of digitalisation and the greening of the economy, EFBWW and FIEC will jointly evaluate potential new health hazards. They will, for example, assess health concerns related to the EU's transition to a circular economy. The circular flow and efficient (re)use of resources, materials and products, keeping resources in use, and recycling or recovering any unavoidable waste or residues might lead to new health and safety issues in the sector. Digitalisation and automation on the other hand changes job quality, for example work intensity increases which could have an impact on psychosocial risks. The social partners will also look into the prolonged usage of wearable and virtual reality equipment in training or on site and of nano-materials. The social partners welcome the new campaign of EU-OSHA on healthy workplaces that will focus on the impact of innovation and digital technologies. They will actively participate in this activity.

With climate change and the rise of temperatures in most of the European countries, new practices must be promoted to protect the health of workers exposed to high temperatures. The European social partners in the construction industry will consider possible joint initiatives and recommendations on this. Special attention needs to be paid to the growing problem of UV-Radiation, also in order to reduce the possible occurrence of occupational diseases.

Finally, and in line with the Commission's communication on mental health, including bullying and harassment, EFBWW and FIEC will discuss on how to better address this issue and promote best practices and prevention measures among employers and workers.

c) Focusing on existing health hazards

We are also confronted with existing hazards, still endangering the health of workers. The Sectoral Social Dialogue will especially deal with the following topics:

- Reducing the exposure to Respirable Crystalline Silica, with a dedicated working group as a follow up of the EFBWW and FIEC joint project. Besides further dissemination of the Guide, we will also continue to discuss the so-called red areas, for which we see difficulties or the impossibility to reach the limit value, with the aim to find technical or organisational solutions.
- EFBWW and FIEC continue to pay special attention to the further revision of the CMR-Directive. Besides mutual information, we will thoroughly examine whether joint

positions can be presented for specific substances. In addition, we will consider to work jointly on information or guidance for substances of high concern for our sector.

- The ergonomics of construction materials, tools and machines are still often not appropriate. They are often not user friendly, emit sometimes a high level of noise or vibration, and they are in addition sometimes not tailor-made to the specific needs of the construction process. A punctual or a more stable exchange with manufacturing organisations on European level may help to progress in all the aspects mentioned above. EFBWW and FIEC will continue to foster the concept 'Manufacturer meets User'.
- Work-related diseases are the biggest cause of work-related deaths and a major cause of sick leave and loss in turnover. Consequently, work-related diseases diminish the companies' operational capacities. FIEC and EFBWW will work on gaining information and knowledge on this issue and follow the EU discussions on these matters, feeding into policy discussions at both the EU and national levels.
- In the framework of the previous European Social Dialogue work programme, FIEC and EFBWW jointly addressed the issue of asbestos. New joint activities on asbestos could include workshops on the implementation of the revised directive on asbestos at work, programmes for safe removal of asbestos, the revision of the waste management protocol or minimum standards for training.

Other aspects such as the gender and equality dimension of OSH or a healthy ageing of workers are equally of high relevance for our sector.

The social partners will explore ways to make the European level activities more dynamic for participants in social dialogue.