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Multiannual Action Programme

for the
Sectoral European social dialogue
of the construction industry

2020-2023

A. 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. Jointly they will continue to reinforce their collaboration in order to achieve these objectives.

In the framework of their joint initiatives, EFBWW and FIEC will take into account the repartition 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 and terms and conditions of employment by themselves.

This multi-annual working programme serves as a guideline for the activities of the European social partners of the construction industry for the years 2019-2022. EFBWW and FIEC may decide to tackle other issues than those contained in this work programme according to the developments at the national and in the EU agenda, amongst others in the framework of the consultations of the social partners that will be launched by the European Commission during this period according to articles 154 and 155 of the EU Treaty.

During the action programme period the EFBWW and FIEC will in particular strive to give a stronger visibility and follow-up to their joint actions, campaigns and projects.

The European social partners of the construction industry will continue to strive for a strengthening of the system of industrial relations in the construction industry at EU, national and company level. At the same time, EFBWW and FIEC are concerned of the gradual deterioration of the industrial relations in some countries. Due to the specific nature of the construction industry and the challenges to be addressed a proper functioning system of industrial relations at EU, national and regional level in the construction industry is absolutely vital.

The EFBWW and FIEC underline the importance of the construction labour market for the whole EU labour market. The sector provides 14.8 million direct jobs and contributes to about 9 % of the EU's GDP. It also creates new jobs, drives economic growth, and provides solutions for societal, climate and energy challenges.

The implementation and impact of some of the six priorities of the European Commission (set for 2020-2023), will serve as an additional guideline for the work of the European social partners of the construction industry. In particular, the following EU agenda's will have an impact on the work of our European Social Dialogue: "the European Green Deal", "An economy that works for people", "a Europe fit for the digital age" and "Promoting our European way of life".

B. Main priorities for the period 2020-2023

1. Horizontal matters

a) Strengthen, reinforce and promote 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. This has been clearly identified as a key challenge in the representativeness study of the construction industry (2015).

Given the specific characteristics of the construction sector and its fragmented organisation, mainly composed by SMEs, it is absolutely vital that there are structural, stable and properly functioning industrial relations between employers and workers both at the EU, national level. EFBWW and FIEC will therefore pay a particular attention in the strengthening of autonomous industrial relations and the capacity of the social partners within the construction industry.

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

The EFBWW and FIEC, as European social partners of the construction industry, together with AEIP (the European Association of Paritarian Institutions of social protection), agreed on a long-term cooperation agreement. Through the EFBWW-FIEC-AEIP cooperation agreement the three organisations have committed themselves to strengthen, reinforce and promote industrial relations in the construction industry.

The long-term EFBWW-FIEC-AEIP cooperation agreement aims to implement a particular ambition of the European Statement “A New start for Social Dialogue”, namely to “*involve their respective members in joint and separate capacity building action and projects aimed to promote sectoral social dialogue, including their outcomes and actions at all levels*”.

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 (CEEC’s)”. However, as capacity building is a long and continuous process the European Social partners of the construction industry (together with AEIP) committed themselves to a long-term engagement to strengthen the capacity of the social partners of the construction in in the CEEC’s.

The 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 the Member States and in this respect they will examine specific needs or demands raised by national social partners and, where needed, jointly develop specific capacity building initiatives.

Previous experiences in this field have shown that in order to provide tangible results such initiatives need to be based on clearly identified topics/problems and objectives to achieve.

The European social partners of the construction will:

- Continue to emphasize the necessity to maintain a proper functioning system of European sectoral social Dialogue meetings for the construction industry, including the facilities to meet on a regular basis.
- Continue to accompany 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.
- Develop concrete actions to strengthen the capacity building of the national social partners of the Central and east European Countries to engage in industrial relations at European and national level.

b) *Contribute to the implementation and application of the European Green Deal in the European Construction industry.*

On 11-12 December 2019, the European Green Deal (EGD) was presented to the European Parliament and the EU Member States.

EFBWW and FIEC are in general positive as regards the high ambition of the European Commission to create a 'climate neutral EU' by 2050. The social and economic challenges of the European Green Deal agenda will be significant for the European construction industry. We will have to build high-efficient infrastructures, develop and implement a new circular economy action plan, transform our cities into smart cities, trigger substantial investments, build more comfortable and healthier buildings, boost renovation for existing private houses and so on.

In order to achieve these goals and in relation to the areas the European sectoral social dialogue deals with, a particular attention will have to be given to ensuring that workers have the appropriate skills and qualifications, high health and safety standards are safeguarded, industrial relations in the construction industry are strengthened and the attractiveness of the sector is raised, in particular towards youngsters and women.

We will ensure that the European social dimension and the just transition are properly taken into account in all future EU actions, which affect the construction industry.

c) Promote digitalisation in the construction industry

The digitalisation of the EU industry is proceeding at an increasingly high speed, including in the construction industry, which is still considered as being mainly labour intensive. BIM (Building Information Modelling), 3D printers, robots and cobots (=collaborative robots), drones,... are nowadays already used on construction worksites (large and also small ones). Such developments are sometimes seen with some concerns both by companies, in particular SMEs, and workers, but it is clear that they can also provide an extremely useful added value for example in the field of vocational and professional training or health and safety. The EU study on digitalisation in construction¹, which analyses the state-of-play and propose actions to overcome the current challenges will serve as point of departure for further discussions

FIEC and EFBWW will discuss how industrial relations can ensure a sustainable implementation of such developments, such as on working conditions in general, safety, other hazards chemicals, radiation ...), work organisation.

d) Promoting a positive image of the construction industry

Despite many positive actions, the construction industry does not seem to enjoy a positive image. This persistent negative image needs to be improved, while at the same time continuing to tackle cases of fraud and health and safety hazards. The European social partners of the construction industry agreed that there is a need to dispel the existing misconceptions. For this the EFBWW and FIEC will discuss a mixed approach solution to tackle the negative image of the construction industry.

¹ 2019, Supporting digitalisation of the construction sector and SMEs Including Building Information Modelling

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

The European social partners of the construction industry will continue to foster for a fair level playing field for companies, equal treatment for workers² and fight against (cross-border) cases of social fraud/ none-compliance with legislation.

a) Posting of workers

The new “Posting” Directive (2019/957), the “Enforcement” Directive (2014/67/EC) and the Social security Regulations (883/2004 and 987/2009) are key EU legislations for the construction industry. In this respect the EFBWW and FIEC will continue to envisage a joint approach and take joint specific actions, in particular as regards the proper implementation, monitoring and application of the European legislation.

In particular the EFBWW and FIEC will monitor the implementation and application of the new Posting of Workers Directive and address arising problems, which are relevant at the EU-level.

b) Tackling undeclared work

The EFBWW and FIEC continue to promote and apply a policy of zero tolerance against unfair and illegal practices in the construction industry and will address the issue of the appropriate measures for combating "undeclared work", amongst others through an active involvement in the EU Platform.

In addition, where appropriate the necessary initiatives will be taken to this end at national and European level, in a broad partnership with the various actors concerned, i.e. labour inspectorates, national authorities or social funds.

EFBWW and FIEC will also evaluate the TUVIC project and discuss the possible extension of the project to other interested countries.

EFBWW and FIEC will envisage to update the existing European study on existing social ID cards in the construction industry.

c) Fighting against cases of cross border social fraud, none-compliance of applicable laws, regulations and collective agreements) and unfair competition

The EFBWW and FIEC reconfirm their mutual ambition to deliver a responsible contribution to prevent, better monitor and combat cases of cross-border social fraud, none compliance with legislation and unfair competition, with the aim of ensuring non-discrimination and an equal transparent level playing field within the construction industry for workers and companies.

² <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/industrial-relations-dictionary/equal-treatment>

The EFBWW and FIEC will continue address the challenges associated with cross-border work, such as posting (i.e. implementation of the legislation, fake posting, information exchange, prior notification, better control, 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 partners networks and cooperation, facilitating bilateral cooperation between social partners in posting and host countries, and creating information tools for cross-border work. For this, the European social partners of the construction industry are committed to contribute to the effective functioning of the European Labour Authority (ELA).

At the same time, the 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 “fake labour supply intermediaries”.

d) Assessing the impact of (digital) platform work in the construction industry

Platform work is an employment form in which organisations or individuals use an online platform to access other organisations or individuals to solve specific problems or to provide specific services in exchange for payment. Within the construction industry an increasing number of platform workers are hired for occasional repairing or installation. In some occasions, platform workers are contracted for complete renovations or building works. As such, the phenomenon has evolved and now encompasses many more types of tasks.

EFBWW and FIEC will assess (1) how this paid work is organised through online platforms, (2) which parties are involved, (3) how the work is contracted out and whether (4) a fair level playing field is guaranteed. Building on the results of the assessment, the EFBWW and FIEC will consider the need for further actions.

e) 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 the cross-border exchanges of social security data (an in particular the data linked to the PD A1) in case of posting still remains underdeveloped. In order to resolve this “challenge”, EFBWW and FIEC will discuss the promotion of electronic tools and a better cross-border exchange of data. This implies also that effectiveness of the current system, set in the current Regulation, should be open for discussion and, to the greatest possible extent, aligned with the digital reality.

f) Ensuring the added-value of the European Labour Authority (ELA)

The EFBWW and FIEC consider that the ELA can effectively provide an added-value in the fight against cross-border social fraud, abuse and evasion. EFBWW and FIEC will constructively contribute to the work of the ELA, ensuring that it will be able to support

national competent authorities in effectively resolving cross-border social fraud/abuse/evasion cases. An equally crucial element for the EFBWW and FIEC is a structural, strong cooperation between the ELA and the national social partners of the construction industry.

The EFBWW and FIEC will also play an active role in ensuring that the ELA will not interfere in the autonomy of the national social partners' exclusive labour market competences.

g) Third countries companies on the EU construction market

Today within the European construction industry market we observe a stronger presence of construction companies from third countries, visible either via the takeover of European companies or through biddings in European tender procedures.

EFBWW and FIEC will assess the impact and consequences of the increased presence of construction companies from third countries, in particular state-owned companies, on the European construction market. A particular emphasis should be on creating a level playing field between the EU and non-EU companies. The analysis will include an assessment and possible joint recommendations.

h) Third country posted workers on the EU construction labour market

We observe about an increasing number of posted workers from third-countries entering into the EU and in particular in the construction industry. This could possibly pose concerns and challenges in terms of creating a fair level playing field as regards to equal treatment, the enforcement of labour law, social protection and social rights (OSH, working conditions, etc.), etc.

FIEC and EFBWW will examine the current situation and developments and assess their impact on the construction industry and on industrial relations in the countries concerned. Where need the EFBWW and FIEC will also discuss and propose needed solutions.

i) 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.

The European social partners of the construction industry reconfirm that the internal market of the construction industry require efficient and effective prevention and monitoring mechanisms.

j) Promoting sustainable employment and tackling the challenges of ageing workforce

The demographic changes and in particular the ageing of the population and of the workforce, combined with the difficulties observed in several Member States to attract and

maintain young and female workers in the construction industry, are becoming important challenges both for companies and for workers.

The EFBWW and FIEC will address the impact of such demographic developments from the various angles of its components (image of the sector, health and safety, employment issues, etc.) by gathering examples of national best practice and identifying potential topics for action at EU level.

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

Beside the high levels of unemployment observed in the EU, figures indicate at the same time that within the EU there are approximately 2 million vacant jobs.

In other words, in some countries, companies cannot find workers with the skills needed on the market. Various factors can explain this “skills gap”, such as, for example, on-going technical developments, inadequate training schemes, difficulties over the recognition of qualifications, barriers to mobility, etc. In order to overcome this there is a significant need to foster investment in training, to facilitate access to training, in particular for SMEs, to better anticipate the skills needed and to adapt the training schemes accordingly, with a particular focus on young people.

In some countries, the integration of migrant workers is seen as a possible solution to address the problem of lack of skilled workforce. Adequate policies focusing on training and education can facilitate this process. FIEC and EFBWW will take this aspect into consideration.

In contrast to other industrial sectors, in construction it is not the “final product” that moves within the single market, but rather the enterprises and their workforces that have to move to where the “product” is to be constructed. Such mobility plays a crucial role in the competitiveness of the sector and should therefore not be hindered by training and education policies, which are national competences, and which - due to the specificities of each country – sometimes differ significantly.

a) Initiatives for attracting and retaining young and female workers in the construction industry

In almost all the Member States the construction industry is facing difficulties in attracting and retaining young people and at the same time demographic changes are leading to an ageing workforce. One of the main reasons is the overall negative image of the construction industry and its unattractiveness for young people and women. There is therefore an urgent need to change this perception and to improve the attractiveness. The greening and digitalisation of the construction industry will be crucial.

FIEC and EFBWW have already developed a joint website (www.construction-for-youth.eu) aiming at presenting national initiatives. Both organisations will actively continue to keep the website alive and to continue identifying and promoting best practices.

b) Addressing the problem of skills gaps/mismatches and corresponding adaptations of the training schemes due to the digitalisation of the construction industry

In almost all the Member States construction companies are facing difficulties in finding workers with the right (digital) skills

Several elements can explain this situation:

- demographic changes, with an ageing workforce and difficulties in attracting young people into the sector;
- changing policy drivers, with a greater focus on “greening” and on energy efficiency for example;
- changes in technology impacting construction products but also machineries and tools;
- training schemes tailored for national practices;
- time gap between changes in work processes and needed changes in curricular for vocational education and consequently the training and the availability of the trained workers on the market etc.

The “skills gap”, i.e. the difference between the skills available and the ones that are effectively needed by the work process is a serious obstacle to economic growth, creation of jobs and competitiveness and must therefore be reduced.

In order to reduce this “skills gap” there needs to be on the one hand a better “market intelligence” aiming at better anticipating the changes in technology, tools, material and work processes and the skills needs and, on the other hand, a constant adaptation of the training schemes and the respective work organisation.

Addressing the issue of anticipation of skills needs is of significant importance both for the competitiveness of construction companies, as well as for employment in the sector.

EFBWW and FIEC would therefore like, on the one hand, to gather the experiences of some Member States and see how added value can be created by a better coordination at the EU level, in particular as regards mutual learning, creation of synergies and exchange of best practices between national stakeholders.

In a second step, they will also try to set the basis for a longer term and more structured cooperation/coordination between national stakeholders and to extend the involvement of further national stakeholders (companies and workers, national observatories, sectoral paritarian funds, public and private bodies involved in training, private and public research centres, academics, etc.).

As a way to implement this strategy, FIEC and EFBWW are amongst the partners of the “Blueprint” project that started in 2019 and which focuses on the construction industry and in particular on skills related to digitalisation, energy efficiency and circular economy.

c) “Greening” of the economy and of jobs

Buildings are responsible for 40% of EU final energy consumption and produce about 35% of all greenhouse gas emissions and therefore the construction industry plays a key role in the achievement of the EU agenda for cutting greenhouse gas emissions to combat climate change is a powerful instrument to create jobs in the construction industry.

The propose European Green Deal will have a major impact on the future skills and qualifications of construction workers

The changes in the demand due to the “greening” of the economy and of jobs represent, on the one hand, a significant opportunity for the construction industry in terms of activity and creation of new jobs, but, on the other hand, they will also have an impact in the organisation of companies (new market opportunities, new skills needed, etc.) and in the working conditions (additional/new training, adapted Health and Safety conditions, etc.).

The 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 competitiveness of the construction sector at national, European and international level. Attention will be paid here in particular 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.

d) 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 mean 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 Netherlands, show better results than other countries and 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:

- Assess the current state-of-play in the up-take of apprenticeship schemes in the EU;
- Closely assess the social indicators of the EU semester in this regard;
- Enable collaborative thinking and explore good practices in order to ensure more opportunities for young people’s transition to work through apprenticeships;
- Come up with policy recommendations on how to improve the up-take and the quality of the apprenticeship schemes in the EU under current frameworks, such as the New Skills Agenda and the European Pillar of Social Rights, as well as future initiatives.

e) Facilitating the mutual recognition of qualifications

Despite the instruments put in place at the EU level (EQF, ECVET, Europass, etc.), the recognition of professional qualifications of construction workers remains a challenge.

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.

Without putting into question the fact that training and the related qualifications are and should remain under the responsibility of each Member State, in order to facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications the EFBWW and FIEC will discuss the feasibility of a

possible “EU licence” for operating specific types of large machines used on worksites, such as pile rigging machines for example, and possibly initiate a joint project on this topic, taking into account the a high level of training to secure the health and safety of the workers/operators.

f) Validation of informal and non-formal training

Non-formal and informal learning activities constitute an important aspect of education and training because they complement formal learning and are of importance for the labour market, particularly in the construction sector, by helping to acquire complementary knowledge, qualifications and other key skills.

In order to facilitate mobility within the Internal Market a greater recognition should be given to non-formal and informal learning and this can be achieved through better comparability and transparency, whilst at the same time preserving and continuing to strengthen the existing formal learning schemes.

Non-formal and informal learning are important elements in the learning process and are effective instruments for making learning attractive, developing lifelong learning and promoting the social integration of young people. They encourage the participation, active citizenship and social inclusion of young people.

EFBWW and FIEC will gather and examine existing methodologies for the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning and, whilst recognising the possible diversity linked to different national practices or situations, will envisage defining and promoting possible EU principles, without interfering or affecting the existing formal learning schemes.

4. Fostering a culture of H&S – WG “OSH”

a) An ambitious new OSH strategy for the EU

According to the European Pillar of Social Rights, ‘workers have the right to a high level of protection of their health and safety at work’. Even though the European construction sector is making continuous efforts to reduce the number of accidents, it still struggles with a great number of accidents³. According to data provided by Eurostat, the number of accidents at work in the EU-28 in construction sector was 377,342 in 2014 and 376,821 in 2017. Again, according to data provided by Eurostat, the number of fatal accidents at work in EU-28 in construction sector was 791 in 2014 and 733 in⁴. Also, according to data from the European Commission, even more alarming is the fact that the number of occupational diseases concern much more people than accidents.

Against this background and in light of the assessment done in 2015 by the European Commission on the existing EU OSH legislation, the European Social Partners of the construction sector consider a new and ambitious Community Strategy for health and safety at work as an urgent priority for the new European Commission and other European partners related to the health and safety at work. It is crucial to keep OSH in the forefront of discussions within the European Parliament, Commission and Council; and to make sure that action is taken to improve OSH all over the EU.

We are willing to contribute to the preparation of a new Community OSH strategy and EFBWW and FIEC will see it as one of our main priorities to apply this strategy into an operationalized programme for our sector. This includes our active participation in ensuring the proper enforcement of the existing legislation, as well as its practical implementation in our sectors, which is very much depending on good cooperation between involved levels of responsibility and areas of knowledge.

b) Implementation, participation and a stronger prevention culture

One current main challenge for the European OSH policy is the better implementation and enforcement of the existing EU legislative framework, special attention will be given to the micro and small enterprises in the construction industry. This is especially important in ensuring the same quality OSH standards for all workers, irrespective of the size of firm they work for. Self-employed workers should also fall under the scope of protection of OSH legislation and policies. Our European Sectoral Social Dialogue is traditionally focusing on construction SMEs. EFBWW and FIEC are committed to provide guidance to foster the knowledge base on specific elements of a companies’ OSH policy, to support fostering a good OSH culture in companies – and getting workers involved by increased participation.

Previous European social partner actions in our sector, like the publication of a guide for the implementation of OSH management systems or the guide for the evaluation and reduction of psychosocial risks at work are focusing on an effective participation of

³<http://www.icohweb.org/site/images/news/pdf/Report%20Global%20Estimates%20of%20Occupational%20Accidents%20and%20Work-related%20Illnesses%202017%20rev1.pdf>

⁴https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hsw_n2_02&lang=en

workers. EFBWW and FIEC intend to further investigate in the forms and practices of participation in the various OSH activities on company level. This will also contribute to a general fostering of prevention cultures in companies. The European social partners of the construction industry are aware of the fact that specific models and established over long periods are not necessarily exportable to other countries with other traditions, but we support with our activities the mutual learning and benchmarking.

EFBWW and FIEC also consider, amongst others, that the EU Directive on public procurement may improve health and safety. The role of the public authorities as clients is of utmost importance. The EFBWW and FIEC underline that nowadays health and safety aspects should be considered during the whole life cycle of buildings. EFBWW and FIEC will envisage possible joint initiatives in this regard.

EFBWW and FIEC acknowledge the importance and need to support and assist micro and small companies with face to face OSH concrete advice. For this labour inspectorates and trained workers representatives can play an important role to support the micro and small enterprises in their OSH activities.

c) Assessment of the EU H&S legislative framework

The EFBWW and FIEC 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. In this respect, the EFBWW and FIEC are also aiming at joint evaluation of existing EU OSH Directives regarding their up-to-datedness as well as a better mainstreaming of European OSH policies in other policy areas of the EU and in its own policies.

An overall evaluation of the practical implementation of all the EU OSH directives undertaken on behalf of the European Commission has been finalised in June 2015 with a view to assessing the relevance, effectiveness and coherence of such Directives and identifying possible improvements to the regulatory framework. The EFBWW and FIEC will discuss the topicality of, for example the construction site Directive, the workplace Directive, the work equipment Directive or the Screen Directive. All these Directives need to proof whether they still fit for purpose, especially in the light of technological change.

Our general policy is guided by the intention to improve the quality of the EU-legislation and its implementation and application at national level. Difficulties encountered with national implementation should be reported so that FIEC and EFBWW can try and work on joint solutions. Better regulation shall improve the consistency of EU law without compromising the level of protection and shall not question the principle of equality, meaning the same level of protection for all workers, no matter on what type of contract the work is carried out or in what type (size) of company the work is executed. FIEC and EFBWW however recognise that, in order to be effectively enforced and applied, the overall H&S framework should consist on instruments that adequately take into account the needs and capacities of each company according to their size.

d) Our focus on specific hazards

The world of work is constantly evolving. Drivers of this change are aspects such as technological innovation in principle, product and process innovation, new materials and new combinations of materials, new forms of employment or new work patterns. All these aspects can have direct influence on the working conditions and can end up in new work-related hazards. It is therefore important that any initiative at the EU level in the field of H&S adequately takes into account such new developments.

The Social Partners of the construction industry did previous research in the use of nanotechnologies and its possible health effects. Acknowledging the broad effects of digitalisation and other innovations, we will now thoroughly evaluate those developments in terms of new health hazards as well as its potential positive health effects.

However, we are also confronted with 'old' hazards, still endangering the health of workers. For the period ahead the Social Dialogue will especially deal with the following topics:

- Reducing the exposure to Respirable Crystalline Silica. The Social Partners commit to support the sound and successful implementation of the new European exposure limit value. We run, as a first step a joint project to map construction activities and to describe the organisational and technical measures to keep the limit value for each of these activities.
- Exposure to Diesel engine exhaust (emissions) in the workplace and protect the health of workers in relation to machine manufacturers.
- The ergonomics of construction materials, tools and machines are still often not appropriate to the specific needs of the construction process. FIEC and EFBWW welcome the new (2020) campaign of the OSH Agency, focusing on the prevention of work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and have the intention to actively contribute to this campaign.
- Work-related diseases are the biggest cause of work-related deaths and a major cause of sick leave and turnover. Consequently, they diminish the companies' operational result. FIEC and EFBWW will work on gaining information and knowledge on this issue and follow the EU discussions on these matters.
- In the framework of the previous European Social Dialogue work programme FIEC and EFBWW jointly addressed the issue of Asbestos. We elaborated and disseminated 'Information modules' which were positively assessed by the stakeholders concerned. We were additionally involved in the preparation of two opinions of the European Economic and Social Committee and related events. New joint activities on asbestos could include learning from good national examples regarding registration of asbestos, programmes for safe removal of asbestos, minimum standards for training, mandatory registration and links with the sustainable construction and energy efficiency policies.

Fighting occupational diseases and new emerging risks as well as the forecasted challenges arising from demographic change remain of highest importance for the coming period too. 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.

e) Co-operation with all stakeholders and institutions

In general, the EFBWW and FIEC will aim at the better involvement of clients, safety coordinators, designers, contractors and workers in the overall process of the health and safety planning for construction work, encompassing the construction phase as well as the planning phase and the maintenance or other type of activity.

In connection with an EU funded project, FIEC and EFBWW built up collaboration with the manufacturers (CECE) of construction machines. Because of the importance of the topic, and its influence on many aspects of safety health or training but also aspects like standardisation, market surveillance or technological innovations, we see a continuously collaboration as fruitful and important. In this respect, FIEC and EFBWW intend to follow very closely the forthcoming revision of the Machinery Directive (2006/42/EC).

We especially will push for the meaningful involvement of sectorial and cross sectorial social partner structures in the design, implementation and evaluation of the EU OSH actions. Strong social dialogue has been the hallmark of EU OSH policy development in recent years and this should be built upon by strengthening the effective dialogue mechanisms at both European and national level.

Equally the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) should continue to play an important role providing expertise, research and in supporting national OSH strategies. FIEC and EFBWW regularly use and support the campaigns of the Agency and will do so with coming campaigns.

f) Harmonisation of statistics on H&S

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 the EFBWW and FIEC consider that further improvements in the availability, the quality and the comparability of statistical data on occupational health and safety are needed. In collaboration with the various concerned bodies (EUROSTAT, the Bilbao Agency, the national statistical institutes, etc.) they will therefore examine how to achieve these goals, in the framework of the application of Regulation 1338/2008 establishing a common framework for the systematic production of Community statistics on public health and health and safety at work.