

A pact for skills

Earlier this year, the EU sectoral social partners of the construction industry, FIEC and EFBWW (The European Federation of Building and Wood Workers) – in cooperation with EBC (The European Builders Confederation) – published the *Pact for Skills in Construction*, an initiative promoted by the European Commission in the framework of the “EU Skills Agenda”.

Calling for concrete commitments by construction and education stakeholders at all levels, this Pact aims to mobilise private and public partners to put quality investment into vocational education and training, as well as in knowledge, skills and competences to the benefit of the European construction sector workforce.

A CRUCIAL SECTOR

According to the latest figures published by FIEC, the EU construction industry represents 11.1% of EU GDP (€1,602 billion) and 6.6% of EU total employment (13 million workers active in more than 3 million enterprises). Its importance for the European economy and society is well known, even more so given its key role in making the environmental, digital and health ambitions of the *European Green Deal* a reality.

Yet all over the European Union, the sector has been facing labour shortages, and in particular skilled labour shortages, for quite some time.

Construction companies are confronted with difficulties in finding workers with the right skills and the sector remains less attractive than others to



FIEC

Brussels, Belgium.
Tel: +32 2 514 55 35;
e-mail: info@fiec.eu
www.fiec.eu



@FIEC_Brussels



FIEC EU

Recognised “Sectoral Social Partner” (employers)

FIEC on partnering with other European bodies to improve green and digital skills in construction



PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK

young people and women. The recent crises made it even worse. The construction industry has however been constantly evolving and adapting for decades, making room for new green, digital, health and safety skills, which open to a whole new range of career and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Therefore, to better promote current and upcoming career options in construction, FIEC, EFBWW and EBC have jointly developed this Pact for Skills in Construction, which identifies 5 key principles to improve the quality and quantity of skills amongst construction workers:

1. Building strong partnerships, including with Vocational Education and Training institutions;
2. Monitoring occupational supply and demand and anticipating knowledge, skills and competences needs;
3. Working against discrimination;
4. Attracting more young people and women in the sector;
5. Promoting a culture of lifelong learning for all, supported by adapted incentives.

RECOGNISING SKILLS

Based on a flexible system of involvement, the initiative proposes that all construction and educational stakeholders share a concrete commitment to make the key principles of the Pact a reality.

Considering their structure and scope, whether at European, national, regional and/or local level, the signatories can choose

the most appropriate actions to match their own needs in terms of upskilling and reskilling.

To cite just a few examples mentioned in the Charter of the Pact, signatories can commit to strengthen their cooperation with social partners and VET centres at local level; they can reinforce their monitoring and anticipation of new trends and needs, especially in the green and digital fields; they can improve the recognition of skills acquired informally (ie, work experience, non-formal training, micro-credentials, etc.); they can organise awareness raising campaigns towards young people and women; they can work on financial and non-financial incentives to encourage companies to offer quality apprenticeships.

UPSKILLING/RESKILLING

But of course, signatories can make commitments of their own, depending on their situation, needs and ambition. Altogether, it is also a good opportunity to promote what they otherwise intend to do in terms of up- and reskilling the workforce.

FIEC, EBC and EFBWW will monitor their activities on a yearly basis. Although the situation varies significantly from one country to the other, the ambition is to upskill and reskill overall at least 25% of the workforce of the construction industry in the next 5 years. The aim is to reach the target of 3 million workers.

Of course, we also see this initiative of a Pact for Skills

The Pact aims to identify future construction skills needs

in Construction as a natural prolongment of the Construction Blueprint project, an EU funded project, involving 24 partners (i.e. sectoral organisations and VET centres), aimed at anticipating current and future skills needs in the sector, in the fields of energy efficiency, circular economy and digitalisation, and updating the curricula accordingly.

The weakness of the initial flagship initiative promoted by the European Commission however, is that no specific dedicated budget has been foreseen. Consequently, members of the Pact have been left to mobilise their own resources and/or apply for the traditional EU funds (ie, ESF+, Erasmus+, etc.).

But as many other sectors – or “eco-systems” – have jumped on this initiative, the European Commission eventually put in place a specific accompanying structure aimed at helping the sectoral Pacts to grow further and better achieve their goals.

Signatories and members of the Pact, as well as interested stakeholders that would like to join the Pact, can receive support for their up- and reskilling efforts, via a range of dedicated support services: a networking hub, to help setting up partnerships; a guidance hub, with technical expertise and assistance; and a knowledge hub, to share and disseminate good practices, including funding opportunities.

ce