



*Adopted in Brussels on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2025.*

## Joint declaration of the European social partners in construction on labour and skills shortages

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The construction sector has been struggling with strong and persistent labour shortages and skills gaps for many years. The labour force and the skills needed for the sector are impacted by demographic changes, economic crisis, difficult working conditions, the lack of attractiveness of the sector, the green and digital transitions.

The European sectoral Social Partners for the construction industry, the European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC) and the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW), are already working together to identify the needs and challenges faced by the industry and are committed to propose and implement solutions through their **social dialogue meetings and joint projects** (e.g. [Pact for Skills in Construction](#), [Blueprint in Construction](#), [VET4LEC](#)).

On 14 November 2024, FIEC and EFBWW organised a workshop on labour and skills shortages in construction in the framework of the EU-funded project *Follow up of Decentralized Thematic Social Dialogue for the Construction Industry* ([DESOCO 2](#)).

With this joint declaration, FIEC and EFBWW would like to share the following messages with European and national stakeholders:

- FIEC and EFBWW stress the importance of a **strong sectoral social dialogue** to identify suitable solutions to tackle labour shortages and skills gaps. They would therefore like to recall the importance to adopt a **bottom-up approach**, taking into consideration national and regional practices and needs. Where they exist, paritarian institutions should be involved and strengthened.
- FIEC and EFBWW recognise that one of the main reasons for labour shortages is the **lack of attractiveness** of the sector due to negative stereotypes and also difficult working conditions. FIEC and EFBWW will continue to discuss a mixed approach solution to improve the image of the sector, which could cover awareness-raising campaigns, dispelling the existing misconceptions. FIEC and EFBWW will also continue to promote quality and good working conditions, such as fair wages, equal treatment, training opportunities, and sustainable business models, creating more direct jobs and avoiding long chains of subcontracting. These will also be key elements to retain workers in the sector.

- The European Social Partners in the construction industry recognise the need to **strengthen further the cooperation with Vocational Education and Training (VET) Centres** and to support the development of **high quality VET**. FIEC and EFBWW would like to insist on the necessary modernisation of trainings to address the digitalisation and greening of the sector.
- FIEC and EFBWW will continue to encourage the **training and upskilling of all workers**, particularly older workers by supporting the collaboration between companies, training centres and paritarian institutions where present. FIEC and EFBWW will encourage companies to expand their efforts and capacities to arrange at the workplace job training and other forms of continuous VET.
- FIEC and EFBWW recognise that quality apprenticeship should be further developed to attract young workers to the sector. Strategies to keep young workers in the sector should be based on high quality of training and career opportunities. In particular, **Erasmus + for apprenticeships** is a tool to raise the attractiveness for apprenticeship schemes. EU funds should be easily accessible to companies, especially SMEs.
- The **twin transition** can be a challenge for the construction sector, but it is also an opportunity to attract more young people, improve working conditions and increase productivity. **Innovation** will be key for the future of the sector and should be further supported. In this regard, the sectoral social dialogue is essential for developing innovative solutions which are just, fair and inclusive.
- FIEC and EFBWW will continue to work on facilitating the **recognition of formal and informal qualifications**, including migrant workers and third-country nationals. Our guiding principle in this process is to ensure that the recognition does not undermine existing quality levels of the trainings and professions, and especially not challenge OSH competences.