



POSITION PAPER

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European Construction Industry Federation

Building Solutions together: our mission, your future

Shortage of labour in the construction industry 2025 edition

Labour shortages in the construction industry: a persistent issue

In October 2023, FIEC published the [first edition](#) of its position paper on shortage of labour in the construction industry. Two years later, while the context has changed, **the issue remains a top priority** in most of the EU Member States. According to EURES 2024 report on labour and skills shortages and surpluses, the construction sector is still one of the sectors in the EU with severe and widespread labour shortages¹.

Two years ago, the impact of the EU Green Deal and National Recovery and Resilience Plans was setting new constraints and demands on the construction industry. The **green and digital transitions** still mean that companies need to have access to a qualified workforce. In addition, the European Union is facing a **housing crisis** which is creating new challenges for the construction industry. And to handle this crisis, among other, companies need (skilled) workers.

But in a context of historically low unemployment in the EU, it is not just about the need for workers, but rather a workforce mismatch and a skills shortage issue leading to difficulties for companies that are seeking to recruit skilled workers. FIEC and its partners in the Pact for Skills in Construction (EFBWW and EBC) commit to support the participation in upskilling or reskilling activities of 30% of the workers annually by 2030, although the situation varies significantly from one country to the other.

Finally, for a sector which represents 7,9% of the EU GDP and 6,4% of total employment in the EU, it is also its **long-term competitiveness and productivity growth** which are at stake².

Thus, the EU and the national authorities have to get to grips with the issue of labour and skills shortage and to provide clear and strong support to the industry.

FIEC suggests therefore to:

- **Support the upskilling and reskilling of workers;**
- **Engage with the stakeholders to improve the image of the sector and its attractiveness;**
- **Improve career guidance to showcase professional opportunities in construction industry;**
- **Facilitate intra-EU mobility;**
- **Open the labour market to skilled workers from third-countries**
- **Continue to support social dialogue and involve social partners.**

¹ European Labour Authority (2025), [EURES Report on labour shortages and surpluses 2024](#)

² [FIEC statistical report 2025](#)

FIEC is the European Construction Industry Federation, which through its 32 national member associations in 27 countries (24 EU countries, Norway, Switzerland, and Ukraine) represents construction companies of all sizes, i.e., small, and medium-sized enterprises and "global players", carrying out all forms of building and civil engineering activities.

Labour shortages in the construction industry in figures

At the EU level, this is difficult to provide an exact figure for the number of how many workers are needed in the construction industry. Data are not easily comparable as the methodology used to estimate the number of missing workers vary from one country to another. Nevertheless, **there is a clear consensus to say that the construction industry is facing a strong and persistent labour shortage**. FIEC estimates that around 2 million additional construction workers will be needed by 2030 in the EU.

Across Europe, FIEC's member federations reported the following:

- **Bulgaria:** for 2025, the construction sector accounts for 20% of all qualified workers and specialists sought by employers.
- **Belgium:** around 20 000 blue collar workers are missing on an annual basis.
- **Denmark:** about 7 000 recruitment attempts were unsuccessful in the construction sector in 2024. In the beginning of 2025, about 25% of the construction firms experience production limitations due to labour shortage.
- **Finland:** the construction sector lost about 30 000 jobs in the last three years. To get these jobs back and replace retiring workers, between 30 000 and 40 000 workers are needed.
- **France:** around 100 000 workers are needed in France every year. It is estimated that around 60 000 of these are needed for building and 40 000 for public works.
- **Italy:** ANCE data underline that, against a total volume of investments of 64,4 billion euros to be made by 2026, there is an employment need of about 64 400 units.
- **Spain:** the Confederación Nacional de la Construcción estimates that around 500 000 workers are needed in the sector in the short and medium term to optimise the European funds (NextGenerationEU) and our efforts so that construction sector may deploy its potential.
- **Sweden:** 75% of companies in the construction sector state that it is difficult to recruit, compared to an average of approximately 68%.

According to Eurofound, *"estimates of labour demand in a net zero scenario show that the European construction sector would require increase of 7,8% in employment to meet the 2050 targets"*.

Factors explaining labour shortage in construction

This persistent labour shortage is a **multifactorial issue** which includes economic, social and demographic factors. The European Commission, in its Action Plan for Labour and Skills shortages in the EU, identifies as the key drivers for the shortages demographic changes, the job growth from the green and digital transitions and poor working conditions in certain occupation and sectors.³

Demographic factor

In the construction industry, the **ageing of the workforce**, which can be explained by an overall ageing of the population in the EU⁴ and the difficulty in attracting young people in the sector, is a challenge as the current inflow can hardly offset the outflow. In the years to come, this factor will exacerbate as the number of workers who are going to retire will increase. Already, in most of the Member States, the number of employees in the construction industry is showing a significant decline.

Companies will face a **twofold challenge**, filling the vacancy that open and replacing the workers that retire. It could put at stake the sector's capacity to meet demand and cope with the objectives hanging over the sector (renovation of buildings and infrastructure, housing crisis, ...).

³ European Commission (2024), [COM\(2024\) 131 final](#).

⁴ According to the Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2025: Unlocking the potential of people: promoting higher employment in the EU report from the European Commission, "the shrinking of the working age population by one million persons every year up to 2050 will lead to significant reductions in labour supply".

In Finland, about 35% of labour will be retired by 2038.

In Sweden, approximately 25 000 people will leave the industry for age reasons in the next 5 years. In Germany, it is about 80 000 workers.

In Denmark, 1/8 of the employed people in the construction sector is above 60 years old.

In Spain, in the last 10 years, the range of workers under 30 years old has decreased its share by 0.9 percentage points, in contrast, the range of those over 55 years has increased by almost 10 percentage points.

Attractiveness of the sector and working conditions

The construction sector still must work to improve its **image in the society**. Despite technical innovation and many measures put in place, the sector's representation in the public mind didn't improve much and it remains less attractive than other occupations. The working conditions have been improving significantly but, in spite of higher wages than in other sectors, innovation that eased the tasks of the workers and better health and safety policies and practices, they remain an obstacle in attracting workers, especially towards young people.

Construction is also a male dominated industry, with a low share of women workers. This **gender imbalance** contributes to the shortage of workers.

Demand and supply side factors

The construction industry is facing three main challenges that have the capacity to boost investments, namely the green and digital transition and the housing crisis.

First, the **green transition** which has been at the core of European policies since 2019 and the adoption of the Green Deal. With the new target of reducing net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compare to 1990 levels, the engagement of the construction sector in the transition toward carbon neutrality is key. Furthermore, the development of energy efficiency is **boosting investments in construction**. As an illustration, the Renovation Wave only would require between 486 600 and 1 549 000 additional construction workers up to 2030⁵.

The green, but also the **digital, transition**, are creating new needs in terms of skills as well as of new professions. The construction sector will have to invest massively **to expand the use of digital tools** in construction sites and for maintenance. **It requires for workers to be reskilled or to get new skills** to be able to implement new technologies (AI, solar panels, heat pumps, ...). All the concerned stakeholders, from VET schools to companies, will have to anticipate and adapt to make sure that the workforce available has the adequate skill and competences.

Finally, the **housing crisis** is severe in most of the EU countries. Tackling this crisis is a priority for national governments and this is at the top of the EU agenda. The European Commission is preparing a **European Affordable Housing Plan** (expected at the end of 2025) to boost the housing renovation and the construction of new buildings. This will lead to an increase of activities for the construction industry. With this crisis, comes the question of using more **industrialised construction methods** to increase the productivity of the sector. Again, this means for workers to be equipped with the right skills. Companies might therefore struggle to find skilled workers and to cope with the raise of activity if no actions are taken.

⁵ Skills and quality jobs in construction in the framework of the European green deal and the post-covid recovery, JTC & EFBWW, (May 2023).

Recommendations and good practices

Union of skills

With the Union of Skills⁶, published in March 2025, the European Commission proposes several initiatives to develop Vocational Education and Training, upskilling and reskilling, improve the mobility of workers in facilitating the recognition of qualifications and skills and improve the collection of data. FIEC supports these different initiatives which should always be developed in coordination with social partners and according to the needs and specificities of sectors.

This Communication must now be translated into actions and **FIEC calls on the European Commission to deliver and propose concrete follow-up in the coming years.**

Support the upskilling and reskilling of workers

With the twin transition and the housing crisis, the upskilling and reskilling of workers will be key for those who will lose their job or will see their job change. Companies will have to anticipate the future needs and reskill and upskill their workforce to comply with the new techniques (e.g. sustainable materials, circularity, renovation, digitalisation ...). This is also key to ensure that workers have the basic skills as well as **management** and **entrepreneurial** skills.

The EU and the Member States should support the companies, and especially SMEs, to make sure they can invest in training and education and offer training opportunities to their employees.

Pact for Skills in Construction

In 2022, the EU sectoral Social Partners for the construction industry, FIEC and EFBWW, in cooperation with EBC, adopted a Pact for Skills in Construction, which sets the ambition to have overall 30% workers participating in upskilling or reskilling actions annually by 2030. This is estimated to mean approximately 3,810,000 workers each year by 2030.⁷

Construction Blueprint – establishing a new strategy on construction skills in Europe

FIEC is a partner in the two Construction Blueprint projects. From 2019 to 2023, FIEC participated in the “Skills Blueprint for the Construction Industry” EU-funded project, and from 2025, FIEC participates in the follow-up project, the “Construction Blueprint 2” which promotes training and innovation in the construction sector towards a more sustainable, digital, and competitive model⁸.

*FNTP, the French Federation for Public Works, developed the **Tp.demain platform**. This is a free platform dedicated to training in public works professions. With more than 2,500 contents, this initiative supports the skills development of learners and professionals.*

*Furthermore, the FNTP has also created a continuing education school (“**TP Demain l'Ecole**”) to accelerate the upskilling of employees in public works companies on topics related to the ecological transition. It offers innovative training programs, focused on Public Works and on the ecological transition, practical and based on public works professions. It is open to all profiles: site managers, works supervisors, design engineers, executives, and management committees.*

*In Italy, the “**New Skills Fund**” is a public fund co-financed by the European Social Fund that aims to offer workers the opportunity to acquire new or increased skills and to equip themselves with the necessary tools to adapt to the new conditions of the labour market, supporting companies in the process of adapting to new organisational and production models.*

⁶ European Commission (2025), Communication on the Union of Skills, [COM\(2025\) 90 final](#)

⁷ <https://www.fiec.eu/priorities/pact-skills-construction>

⁸ <https://constructionblueprint2.eu/>

Attracting new workers by improving the image of the sector

With the ageing of the workforce in the construction industry, it is essential to attract young workers and women, but also workers from phased out sectors which will be seeking for a job (e.g. mining industry).

As the relation to work is changing (e.g. work/life balance is becoming more important), employers must convince young people that a career in construction is meaningful, essential for the green transition, and offers perspective to grow and an attractive career path.

The Member States and the EU can play a key role in this by :

- **Promoting jobs in the construction industry early in the school curricula and providing good career guidance;**
- **Supporting awareness raising campaigns for improving the image of the sector;**
- **Encouraging companies to hire young workers and apprentices through incentives ;**
- **Providing a framework that can guarantee good working conditions, including provisions to protect the health and safety of workers.**

*In Belgium, already in 2016, the social partners created a **sectoral training and support scheme** specifically dedicated to young people under the age of 27 and with less than 12 months' seniority in the sector to encourage the recruitment of new workers. This is the "Emploi Tremplin Construction" scheme, which guarantees the young worker a lasting job in the sector as well as a personalised training programme according to his or her needs. The company that undertakes to hire the young worker then appoints a tutor in its company to follow the young person in his or her integration process over a period of 18 months and receives a bonus of €1,000 when the integration is successful.*

*In the **Pact4Youth** EU-funded project, four training providers and the four main employers' organisations in the construction sector in Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Spain have come together to develop a long-term strategy (in the form of a Roadmap and Action Plan) to improve the attractiveness of the construction industry for the young people, thus, encouraging them to enter the sector. During the project, the partners have among other, organised info-days, carried out social media campaign and developed tools for guidance counsellors and trainers.*

*In the Netherlands, several employers organisations and trade unions have launched an Action Plan "**Aanvalsplan**" between the construction, energy and technology sector to tackle the shortage of skilled workers. Financed by the sectors involved and the Dutch government, the aim is to fill 60 000 vacancies in the next 10 years. With this plan, employers offer everyone who chooses a career in construction, energy or technology a **10-year work and development perspective**.*

*In Germany, the employers' organisation, Bauindustrie, created the **Frauen Netzwerk Bau**. This network offers a platform for exchange and mutual support for women of all construction related activities. Mentoring activities take place to support the entry and advancement of female junior staff.*

Investing in Vocational Education and Training (VET) and adult apprenticeships

Training is crucial for the future of the sector. To attract new workers but also to train qualified workforce, VET construction schools must be attractive. This means that trainers have to be qualified and schools properly funded to be appealing. More flexibility could be introduced to allow VET schools to be accessible at different level of studies and to create more collaboration with other education paths.

Member States have to **invest more in VET schools and should support an update and modernisation of the curricula**. The digitalisation, the use of new techniques and the green transition have made current curricula obsolete. **VET programmes must be revised to train workers and to provide them with the skills needed in the labour market.**

Furthermore, those efforts should not stop at initial training. **Adult learning has to be encouraged.** Awareness around adult apprenticeships must be raised and companies should be encouraged to support adult apprentices.

The EU and the Member States should **increase investment in initial and lifelong learning, as well as apprenticeship schemes. Quality apprenticeships must be promoted** in the construction industry.

*An amendment to the **Swedish Education Act** entered into force on 1 January 2025 stipulates that the needs of the labour market must also be considered when assessing the appropriate number of training places in vocational education. There is a requirement that municipalities collaborate on the education supply to improve the matching between education and companies needs in a region.*

*In **Belgium**, Constructiv, the paritarian organisation for blue collar construction workers, has a **Technical Competence Centre** which is responsible for continuously adapting and/or developing the training content for (future) workers and companies. This continuous updating makes it possible to take into account the latest developments in the training given to the different audiences.*

*The Ministry of Education and Science in **Bulgaria** is implementing a large-scale project related to the **modernisation of vocational education and training**, which aims to improve its quality, inclusiveness and effectiveness. The activities are implemented with a sectoral approach to work to allow a faster adaptation of VET to the dynamics of the labour market.*

Open the labour market to skilled workers from third-countries and facilitate intra-EU mobility

To tackle labour shortage in the construction sector, companies can rely on intra-EU mobility and third-country nationals. The EU legislative framework has to facilitate these processes.

Regarding the intra-EU mobility, shortages in some Member States could be filled by surpluses in some others. **The EU should therefore promote and support tools and initiatives for strengthening the mutual recognition of qualifications, without lowering national standards, in order to facilitate the cross-border mobility of services, students and workers within the Internal Market.**

Legal migration can help companies to mitigate the labour shortages. It is necessary to **create the good condition to make sure that the workers that are coming in the EU are qualified** and that the process of hiring third-country nationals complies with the rules while remaining straightforward for companies. In this regards, FIEC supports the establishment of an **EU Talent Pool** and calls on its swift implementation.

In addition to the recognition of qualifications, workers from another country should benefit from language courses to facilitate its integration in a company and in the society.

*In **Italy**, the employers' organisation for the construction sector, ANCE, is a partner of the **THAMM+ project** (Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in Italy and North Africa). Coordinated by the Organisation for Migration and the Italian Government, the project provides for the **training of 2 000 young Tunisians** in their country of origin. They will acquire specific skills, including in the field of safety at work and civic-linguistic education, with a view to their subsequent employment in the private construction and public works sectors.*

*In **Belgium**, Constructiv has a partnership with Fedasil to **help asylum seekers to find a work** on construction sites on a large scale following an information and training programme. This collaboration allows construction companies in particular to cushion the labour shortage and for asylum seekers to have access to work and training.*

In Slovenia, almost half of the construction workforce (36 581) are third-country nationals, mostly from Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo.

Engaging with Social Partners

The sectoral Social Partners have to be associated to every policy linked to the issue of shortage of workers.

Member States should **support social dialogue and consult with social partners regarding policies which could be implemented to tackle labour shortages.**

At the EU level, **the European Commission should continue to support sectoral social dialogue**, including in the framework **of EU-funded projects**. In this regard, FIEC and EFBWW organised in November 2024 a meeting of the EU-funded project DESOCO 2 on the topic of labour and skills shortages. Following this meeting, the European social partners signed a joint declaration⁹ to highlight the need to improve the attractiveness of the sector, to strengthen further the cooperation with VET centres or to develop further Erasmus + for apprenticeships.



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⁹ FIEC and EFBWW (2025), [Joint declaration](#) of the European social partners in construction on labour and skills shortages