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FIEC Winter Conference “The Housing Equation: Affordable + Sustainable”

Europe’s construction sector, political decision makers, and financial institutions gathered for the FIEC *Conference on Housing*. One key message is that Europe’s housing crisis can only be solved through coordinated, long-term policies that bring affordability and sustainability together rather than treating them as competing priorities.

On 4th December, the European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC) hosted its 2025 edition *Winter Conference* under the theme “*The Housing Equation: Affordable + Sustainable*”. Housing prices have risen by more than 58% since 2015, while building permits have dropped by over 20% in the last five years. This trend was recently underscored by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in her *State of the Union* address. Coupled with high construction costs, elevated interest rates and lengthy permitting procedures, the pressure on households, contractors and authorities continues to mount.

With the *Energy Performance of Buildings Directive* (EPBD) entering a decisive implementation phase, the timing of the conference could not have been more relevant. Member States face a May 2026 transposition deadline and draft National Building Renovation Plans are due to the European Commission later this month.

The conference opened with a keynote speech by Dirk Gotink, Member of the European Parliament (Nieuw Sociaal Contract, EPP). In his address, MEP Gotink called for a simplification agenda at a moment when households, contractors and public authorities are all struggling with rising costs and growing regulatory demands.

“Europe must build again and it must build faster. Our task is to deliver clearer rules and simpler procedures, so that regulation enables construction instead of slowing it down.”

MEP Dirk Gotink, Vice-Chair of the Special Committee on the Housing Crisis in the European Union

Through its 32 national member associations in 27 countries (24 EU countries, Norway, Switzerland and Ukraine), the European Construction Industry Federation 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. FIEC is the officially recognised sectoral social partner in the European *Social Dialogue for Construction*.

The intervention set the tone for the central question: How can Europe accelerate renovation and expand housing supply while keeping homes financially accessible?

Experts attending the roundtable discussion explored the drivers of rising costs from materials and labour to financing conditions, as well as how existing legislation can be implemented in a way that balances ambition with feasibility. Speakers highlighted the need for streamlined national frameworks, reduced administrative burden and intelligent sequencing of measures so that renovation boosts energy savings without making housing unaffordable in the short term.

Representing the construction industry, Joël Schons, Chair of FIEC “Housing” Working Group, reaffirmed FIEC’s commitment to sustainability objectives while cautioning against policies that could make the transition economically inaccessible.

“Construction companies stand ready to build the sustainable housing Europe needs, but to succeed, we must ensure that permitting procedures are accelerated and fully digitalised, regulations are housing-friendly and that financing is accessible.”

Joël Schons, FIEC Vice-President and Chair of the Working Group Housing

On financing, both the European Investment Bank (EIB) and (European Associations of Public Banks (EAPB) brought forward concrete insights. Panellists addressed the role of public and private investment in risk-sharing and finance blending. They also touched on regional disparities, the importance of cohesion funds post-2027 and the pan-European platform to support innovative housing and renovation projects.

Discussions throughout the conference underscored the importance of predictable long-term policies, tailored financing schemes and collaborative approaches bridging political ambition with feasibility. Participants agreed that, while housing is not an EU competency, only a coordinated effort between EU institutions, national governments, industry and the financial sector will enable meeting Europe’s housing demand and delivering on sustainability objectives. FIEC will continue to work closely with political decision makers and stakeholders to ensure that the construction sector can play its full role in delivering high-quality, energy-efficient and affordable housing across Europe.

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