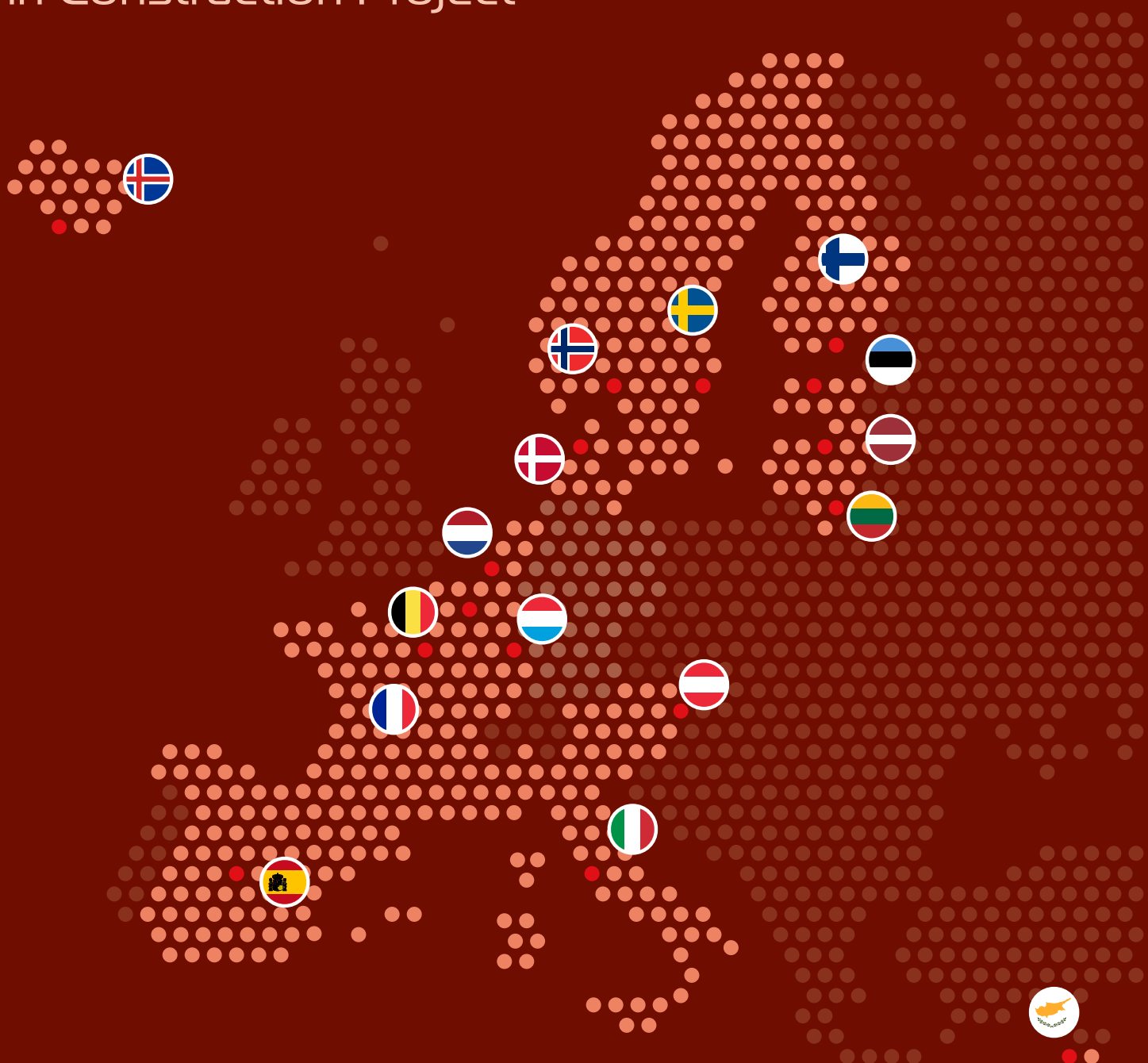


# Executive Summary

## of the Social Identity Cards in Construction Project



Social identity cards in construction (SIDE-CIC) project

A Joint-Project of the European Social Partners for the Construction Sector on Social Identity Cards in Construction



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# Introduction

by Piero Petrucco and Bruno Bothua



In 2023, FIEC and EFBWW, the European Social Partners for the construction industry, started a project on social ID cards, SIDE-CIC. SIDE-CIC aimed to update a mapping of existing social ID cards in the construction sector, originally carried out in a first project in 2015, and go beyond in examining the interoperability of the schemes. Two years later, we are proud to conclude the project with strong results and clear messages.

Through this project, we have seen that social ID cards are already in use in several Member States and have proven to offer many benefits for both workers and employers. This is why, FIEC and EFBWW call on Member states and national social partners to further develop social ID cards for construction and to better align existing schemes.

This project has demonstrated the strong added value that interoperability could bring to labour mobility, in reducing fraud and administrative burdens. However, many challenges remain to interconnect the existing social ID cards and this will be possible only with strong support from the European Commission and from Member states.

Based on a bottom-up approach, social ID cards in the construction sector have become a good practice and source of inspiration for other sectors. This also illustrates how social partners can work together to implement enforcement tools. The SIDE-CIC project reflects our strong social dialogue and commitment to improving working conditions, fair labour mobility and digitalisation in construction.

FIEC and EFBWW are committed to continuing to work together and we hope that the project's results will inform discussions, at both European and national levels.

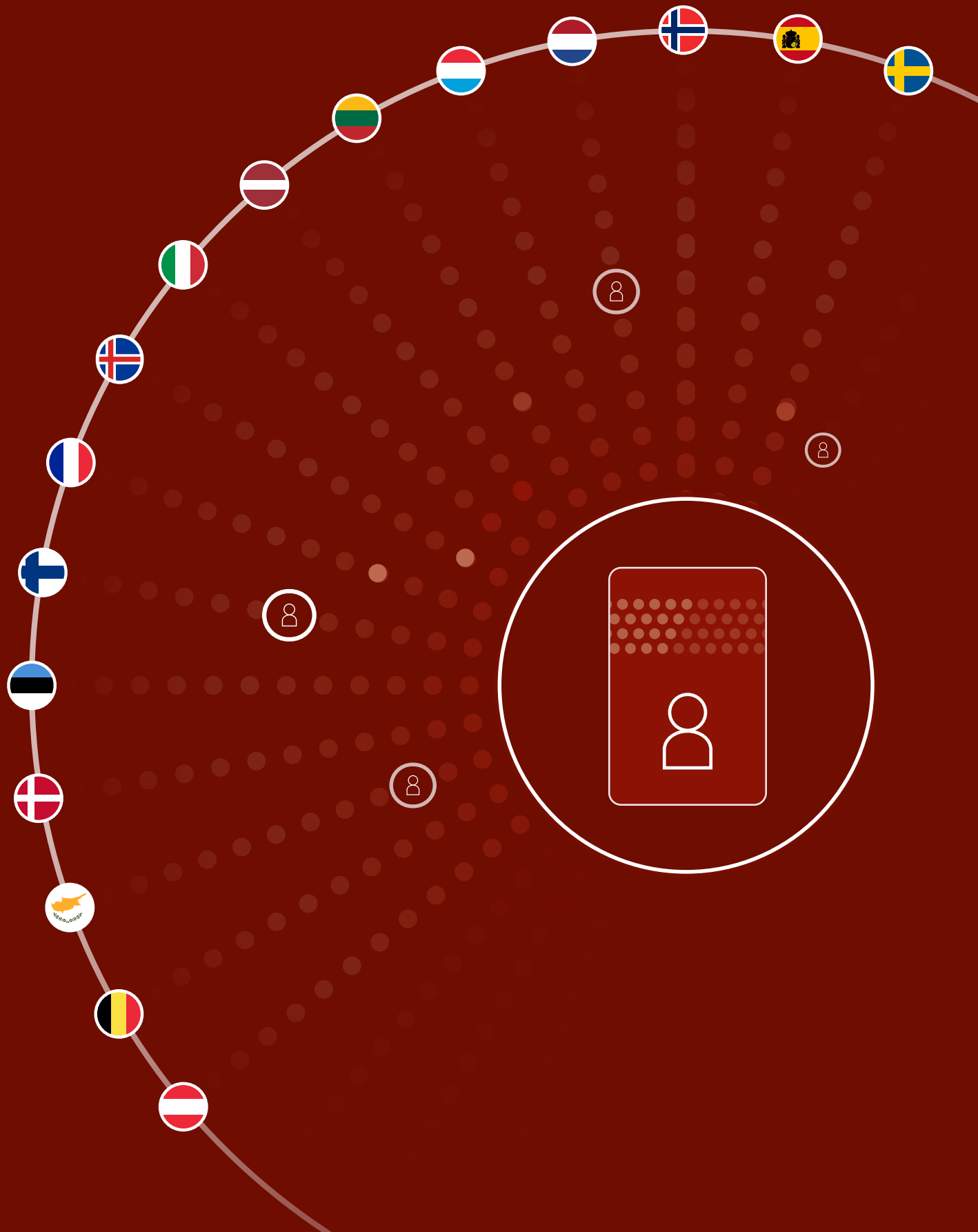
A blue ink signature of Piero Petrucco.

**Piero Petrucco**  
FIEC President

A blue ink signature of Bruno Bothua.

**Bruno Bothua**  
EFBWW President

# Executive Summary



## INTRODUCTION

The SIDE-CIC project is a joint initiative of the European social partners in construction, the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW) and the European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC), co-funded by the European Commission. Its purpose was to examine the feasibility of creating an interoperable framework for social identity cards in construction across the European Economic Area.

Social ID cards are already used in many Member States to verify employment relationships, support inspections, improve OSH standards and combat undeclared work. However, these schemes remain fragmented, with no system for mutual recognition or interoperability. This project builds on earlier work carried out jointly by EFBWW and FIEC in 2015, which assessed the potential of social ID card schemes in construction where it highlighted the added value of an EU-level framework, complementing existing national systems. Since the conclusion of that project, the number of social ID cards has grown, as well as their maturity.

The project carried out three studies: a mapping of existing schemes, a legal feasibility study and a technical feasibility study. Together, they provide evidence on current practices, potential obstacles and possible solutions. Based on the findings, the social partners agreed on a set of recommendations to guide future initiatives, promote interoperability and prepare a potential pilot project.

## MAPPING REPORT

The mapping examined nineteen schemes across seventeen countries, plus local initiatives in Italy and Denmark. The mapping report defined social ID cards as a physical or digital tool used to verify the identity of workers and employers, supporting the enforcement of labour, social security and tax rules. It assessed their legal basis, issuing authorities, scope and data features. Key findings show that social ID cards are increasingly valued for ensuring compliance, tackling undeclared work and increasing transparency. While design varies, common patterns emerge:

- Legal basis: Most are compulsory by law, others are based on CBAs or local initiatives.
- Issuance: Usually centralised, often via inspectorates or paritarian bodies.
- Functions: Primarily to combat undeclared work, with some focused on training and qualification checks.
- Data: Accessible via physical cards, QR codes or platforms; some link directly to tax or social security databases.

Despite this diversity between schemes, they tend to converge around transparency and fair competition. Social partner involvement has been critical to their success. Coverage of posted workers is common, though approaches to self-employed workers vary. Challenges remain on data standards and privacy, but Nordic cooperation and models like Sweden's ID06 demonstrate potential for interoperability.

## LEGAL FEASIBILITY STUDY

The legal feasibility study examined whether national social ID card schemes in construction could be made interoperable within the existing EU and national legal frameworks. It confirmed that such interoperability is possible, but only if supported by political will, careful institutional design and sustained cooperation between stakeholders.

The analysis highlighted significant differences across Member States: some schemes are created through law, backed by mandatory enforcement, while others are established through collective agreements or voluntary arrangements. This variety affects the extent to which information can be recognised across borders. Data protection practices also diverge. Although all schemes must comply with GDPR, Member States apply different legal bases: mandatory systems rely on statutory obligations, while voluntary systems often depend on consent, which causes problems for the feasibility of interoperability. Likewise, enforcement powers and penalties vary widely, as does the role of social partners in design and governance.

According to the study, any future framework or initiative would need to operate in line with the principles of free movement of workers and services (Arts 45 and 56 TFEU). Such a system would benefit from alignment with broader initiatives like the Interoperable Europe Act, the Single Digital Gateway and the European Digital Identity (EUDI) Wallet.

The study reviewed five possible legal pathways:

- bilateral agreements between card issuers (pragmatic but limited);
- a federated data space (flexible and legally feasible but complex to govern);
- a shared European card through a social partner agreement (possible under Articles 154–155 TFEU, but difficult to secure recognition by authorities);
- integration with EU-level tools (promising but still under development); and
- new EU legislation (legally strongest, but politically unlikely in the near term).

Overall, the study concluded that the most realistic short-term options are bilateral arrangements or the creation of a sectoral data space, with gradual integration into an EU framework in the longer term.

## TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY STUDY

The technical feasibility study examined in detail how national social ID card schemes could interconnect through a secure and governed data exchange network. It mapped existing systems, analysed their technical characteristics and identified the gaps that would need to be addressed. Despite differences in design and maturity, all schemes are built around the same core relationship between a worker, a company and an employment contract, providing a common basis for interoperability. Where differences exist, such as in data quality, these could be managed through shared standards, technical connectors and verification processes.

Several models for data exchange were considered. Bilateral agreements and regional clusters were seen as possible short-term solutions, but too limited or fragmented to be sustainable. A centralised EU-wide system was determined to be unrealistic given the national diversity. Instead, the most promising approach suggested in the analysis is a federated data space inspired by Gaia-X and other EU data initiatives. In this model, each participant would operate its own “node” while adhering to common rules on data, levels of assurance, consent management and security. Proof-of-concept work between Finland and Lithuania demonstrated that cross-border exchange is technically viable.

The study also explored governance, recommending a trust network overseen by a steering group with a common rulebook and accreditation system. It highlighted the importance of transparent logging, robust authentication and strong security.

Financially, it found that EU funding could help to establish the necessary services, and that the costs of inaction (i.e. continued fragmentation, fraud and administrative burden) would be greater than those of implementation. The overall conclusion is that there are no insurmountable technical barriers, but gradual progress through pilot projects would be essential.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Drawing on the mapping and feasibility studies, EFBWW and FIEC issued joint recommendations to guide the development and interconnection of social ID card schemes in construction. These are not binding but serve as a ref-

erence for Member States, social partners and EU institutions.

### Part I: National Systems

For those countries that do not yet operate a card, the social partners recommend considering the introduction of a mandatory scheme covering all workers on site, including posted and self-employed. Such cards should record essential details of the worker and employer, the contract, training records and, where relevant, information from the portable document A1. These systems can be managed by public authorities or by social partners, but in either case must be backed by effective enforcement and reliable data validation. For countries that already have a card in place, the emphasis should be on aligning the scope of information collected and updating the technology to allow real-time use.

### Part II: Interoperability and EU-Level Measures

Here, the recommendations focus on building a framework of trust across national systems by adopting shared assurance levels, secure data exchange protocols and consent models that comply fully with GDPR. Bilateral cooperation between existing schemes should be encouraged as a first step, while in the longer term a governance model should be developed, with EFBWW and FIEC playing a role in its oversight. The European Commission is invited to support these efforts by funding pilot projects and initiatives.

### Part III: Considerations for a Pilot Project

A pilot would test interoperability in practice but requires clear purpose, scope and resources. Considerations include:

- Defining objectives (technical proof of concept, real-world demonstration, or both)
- Choosing the type of pilot (real-site, simulation, or national/regional test)
- Involving willing schemes, inspectorates, contractors and social partners
- Securing adequate funding and logistical support, with Commission involvement
- Evaluating outcomes through systematic feedback and a public report

Together, these recommendations provide a roadmap: establish or strengthen national schemes, build interoperability through shared standards and governance, and prepare for a pilot to demonstrate feasibility in practice.



