

EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION FORUM

Press Release – 17/11/2010

BUILDING PROSPERITY FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPE: The crucial role of the construction sector

Brussels, 17 November 2010: Today, the European Construction Forum (ECF) stressed the essential role of the construction sector in ensuring a prosperous future for Europe. The ECF recognises the urgency of reducing national deficits but, given the long term as well as the short term socio-economic benefits of investment in infrastructure, urges Member States not to sacrifice essential future construction investment in this field. In these times of serious challenges that range from the consequences of the economic and financial crisis through to the global issue of climate change and its impact on humanity, the construction sector stands out as a sector that, given the opportunity, resources and regulatory framework, will be a significant contributor to the establishment of sustainable prosperity in the European Union.

Fiona Hall (MEP) made clear her view on the role the construction sector can play in sustainable development: *On 19th May 2010 the European Parliament adopted the final text of the Recast of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and thereby concluded the final legislative step for the entry into force of one of the most important pieces of EU legislation that will affect the construction sector in the coming years. It is clear that in terms of both buildings and infrastructure, the construction sector has important role to play. As highlighted in the manifesto, Europe's citizens have a right to safe, secure and decent housing, as well as to efficient infrastructure.*

The President of the ACE, Selma Harrington, speaking on behalf of ECF participants recalled that *the construction sector represents about 10% of the EU's GDP and over 7% of all employment. and added that the sector plays a crucial role in the European economy, contributing to renewed growth and employment after the terrible downturn that has affected the entire continent. She continued emphasising that construction is also a sector that invests both in workers' skills and in innovation, helping to create the capacity needed to switch to a low-carbon sustainable future. The expertise and technological know-how that the European construction sector offers can only help to promote European leadership internationally. This leadership can only be gained however with the right regulatory framework in place in the EU, one that encourages innovation at home and ensures a level playing field globally.*

Energy Efficiency

In relation to the challenges facing European society, it is widely recognised that buildings account for approximately 36% of all greenhouse gas emissions and over 40% of primary energy consumption in the EU. It is clear to the actors in the sector, and to policy-makers at European level, that work on improving the energy efficiency of the existing building stock in Europe is key to accelerating economic recovery as well as an essential element of any strategy to significantly reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of the EU, whilst ensuring security of supply and reducing dependency on imported energy. The EU needs to at least triple its current rate (1.2% - 1.4%) of building renovation in order to come close to achieving these aims. Properly carried out, such works will also improve the well-being of Europe's citizens through enhanced comfort and indoor air quality whilst helping to tackle fuel poverty, a major cause of social exclusion.

Investment

Investment in construction creates approximately three times as much new economic activity in the wider economy. Studies^[1] have shown that for every worker employed in the construction industry two further jobs are created in other sectors and that, in the UK alone, it has been estimated that for every £1 invested in construction, there is an additional boost to economic activity of approximately £3^[2].

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^[1] European Commission, The competitiveness of the construction industry, 1997 (COM97/539). Chapter 2

^[2] LEK Consulting report: Construction in the UK Economy: The Benefits of Investment published October 2009.

17 November 2010

Editors notes:

What is the European Construction Forum (ECF)?

The ECF is a platform for cooperation on issues of common interest between independent organisations representing key players in the construction sector and participating on a voluntary basis.

What are the aims of the ECF?

The principal aim of the ECF is the establishment and recognition of a single comprehensive policy approach for the European construction sector through raising the awareness of decision makers at European level to the specific issues affecting the sector as a whole. To this end, the participating organisations strive to arrive at consensual views on issues of common interest. This should lead over time to:

- an increase of the construction sector's direct involvement in the preparation of all EU legislative acts, programmes and actions that have a bearing on the sector*
- a more coherent and coordinated approach by the European institutions towards the sector.*



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