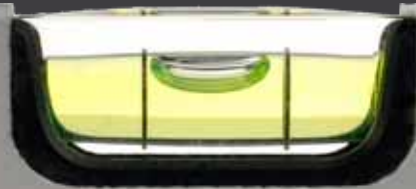




10 > 11

Annual Report



The voice of Construction Crafts and SMEs in Europe

EBC MILESTONES

1990	Creation of EBC Six founding countries – United Kingdom, France, Italy, Spain, Luxembourg and Switzerland	
1995	EBC joins UEAPME	
1996	EBC co-founds NORMAPME	
1998	NACEBO/BOUWUNIE (Belgium) joins EBC	
1999	VAT: Adoption of the Directive on Labour Intensive Services	
2000	IPOSZ/APHMEB (Hungary) joins EBC	
2001	OZS (Slovenia) joins EBC	
2004	EBC joins the Standing Committee on Construction FFACB (France) joins EBC	
2005	Optical Radiation Directive: sun removed SDMSZS (Czech Republic) joins EBC UNPR (Romania) joins EBC	
2006	ZRP (Poland) joins EBC EUJ (European association of tile-fixers) joins EBC	
2007	EBC becomes observer in the Social Dialogue Committee for construction	
2008	European Project on social dialogue 'Under Construction' EBC chairs the UEAPME Construction Forum INTES (Turkey) joins EBC	
2009	Reduced VAT rates: Measure made permanent European Project on health and safety 'Under Construction II'	
2010	EBC turns 20 years old AFNL (The Netherlands) Bouw&Infra Joins EBC	
2011	Construction Products Regulation adopted – important simplification measures for craft enterprises	

Key figures of the EU construction sector

Number of enterprises	3,2	million enterprises
Turnover	1,665	billion Euro
Active population	12,7	million people
Average employees/enterprise	4	persons

Source: Eurostat

EBC is member of UEAPME and founding member of NORMAPME



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FOREWORD BY THE PRESIDENT



2010 has been a year of celebration for EBC. The European Builders Confederation celebrated its 20 years Anniversary. 2011 started as a period of reflection concerning the role of EBC and its new objectives for the years to come. EBC widened its communication tools and saw the accomplishment of two fundamental battles in favour of construction crafts and SMEs in Europe.

To begin with, EBC has welcomed the publication in the Official Journal of the revised late payments directive in February 2011 and the construction products regulation (CPR) in April 2011. However, as this is often the case with European legislation, the political game at national level has just begun and it is now under national responsibility to implement these new pieces of legislation.

Concerning late payments for example, Member States will have up to 24 months to transpose the directive into their own legislative framework and will enjoy a certain freedom of adapting some measures in the process. Therefore, I invite EBC's national members to follow this most closely and continue using EBC as a platform for discussion in order to make the most of the success obtained in Brussels.

On the other hand the CPR, being a European regulation, is directly and immediately applicable in the Member States. However, this does not mean that the work of EBC is over. The opposite is the case. To make sure that these political frameworks introducing important simplification procedures for micro-enterprises become reality at the implementation level, EBC is seated in the Standing Committee on Construction and also acts as a Normapme expert on doors and windows in CEN TC 33.

I believe these two examples show that the 'Think small first' principle is really becoming the cornerstone of EU SME policy, reiterated at the occasion of the revision of the Small Business Act, presented by Commissioner Tajani in February 2011. EBC now has the task to communicate the SBA to its member associations and make sure that the useful list of principles and initiatives launched by the Commission gets full attention and adequate implementation by the governments of the Member States.

To conclude, I would like to thank the EBC General Assembly for giving me the privilege to be the first EBC President to serve a three-year term and thus also have the honour of being the chairman of the EBC Annual Congress for the third straight year in Warsaw, Poland. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the EBC Board members and General Assembly for their trust and confidence in me during this period.

Andrea Marconi
EBC President



PRESENTATION OF EBC



A REPRESENTATION FOR CRAFTSMEN AND SMES IN BRUSSELS!

An increasing number of national regulations are little more than national adaptations of European legislation in the energy, social, fiscal and standardization domains, usually implemented without properly assessing their impact on SMEs.

Six national associations representing construction craftsmen in several European countries therefore joined forces in 1990 to establish the EBC – European Builders Confederation – the Voice of Construction Crafts and SMEs in Europe.

Through its 20 member and partner organisations, EBC represents 2 million craft and SMEs. Via its permanent office in Brussels, EBC works in close collaboration with the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME) and the European Office of Crafts, Trades and SMEs for Standardization (NORMAPME), organisations of which EBC is a member.



THE MISSION - ANTICIPATE, EXCHANGE, POSITION AND THEN ACT

Our political goal is clear: to represent, defend and promote the interests of construction craftsmen and SMEs in close co-ordination with our national member organisations. In order to elaborate common policies, EBC's members meet at least four times a year at Board of Directors meetings in Brussels and at the General Assembly. The latter is normally combined with the EBC Annual Congress, which is organised in turns by the EBC members and dedicated each year to a specific topic.

Throughout the year our permanent team has the task of monitoring EU activities and keeping members informed about forthcoming legislation, projects and other issues. With its network of experts originating from our member organisations, EBC establishes its position papers, which are then validated by the national organisations and defended jointly in Brussels and before national governments.

Lobbying activities are conducted at the European Commission, focusing in particular on certain Directorate Generals - Enterprise and Industry; Taxation; Employment and Social Affairs; Environment; Energy - at the European Parliament and at the European Economic and Social Committee.

EBC takes part in the Standing Committee on Construction, which is chaired by the European Commission, comprises representatives from the governments of all Member States and is in charge of regulating construction work. Furthermore the added representation of EBC is also recognised by the European Commission with regard to the European Social Dialogue in the construction sector FIEC gave EBC two observer seats within its delegation for this committee since 2007. EBC is also partner of the Build-up Platform for the energy efficiency of buildings. EBC is partner and coordinator of several European projects: the current ones are Shelter, QualiCert and EuroApprenticeship.

EBC PUBLICATIONS

- > A quarterly information newsletter, translated into 4 languages (French, English, Spanish, Italian)
- > The Construction Voice, a monthly letter for the press and EU decision-makers in English
- > An annual report, in 4 languages (French, English, Italian and Spanish)
- > Press releases in 2 languages (French, English)
- > Position Papers in 2 languages (French, English)
- > Publications on the projects managed by EBC

EBC BOARD STRUCTURE



President Andrea MARCONI (ANAEPA, Italy)	Vice-president David CROFT (FMB, United-Kingdom)	Vice-president Antonio CALVO-DELGADO (CNC, Spain)	Treasurer Jean-Pierre WAEYTENS (BOUWUNIE, Belgium)	Auditor Patrick KOEHNENS (FDA, Luxemburg)	Auditor Richard DIMENT (FMB, United-Kingdom)
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SECRETARIAT

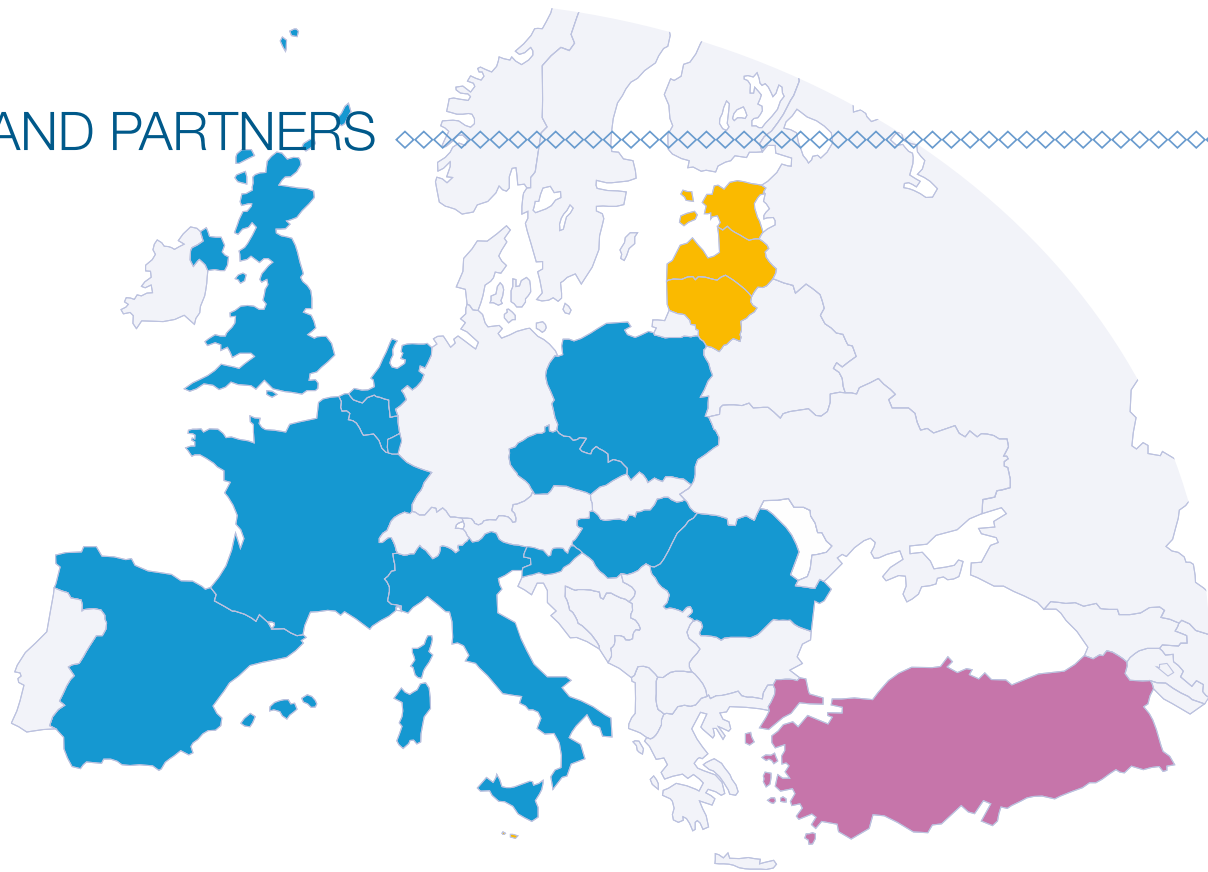


Sabrina FISCHER Project officer Austrian MA in Corporate Communications Languages: German, English, French, Spanish, Russian	Riccardo VIAGGI Secretary General Italian MA in International relations Languages: Italian, English, French, Spanish, Russian	Alice ETIENNE Policy officer French MA in European Studies and Law Languages: French, English, Spanish, German
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All these publications are available on the EBC website www.ebuilders.org

MEMBERS AND PARTNERS

-  FULL MEMBERS
-  ASSOCIATE MEMBERS
-  PARTNERS



FULL MEMBERS

Full members are the national professional organisations of the European Union, which represent the craftsmen and SMEs of the construction sector. Only full members have voting rights.

Belgium

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cnc@cnc.es www.cnc.es

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FMB
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3DP - London
tel: +44 2072 427 583 fax: +44 2074 050 854
brix@fmb.org.uk www.fmb.org.uk

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Associate Members are either national associations of construction enterprises in countries that are not currently member of the European Union, or European associations of construction trades.

Europe

EUF
Federation of European Tile Fixers' Association
Kolbenholz 4 - 6 - 66121 Saarbrücken - Allemagne
tel: +49 681 935 6520 fax: +49 681 935 6519
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Turkey

INTES
Turkish Employers' Association of Construction
Industries
4. Cadde 84 SOK. No: 3 - 06550 Yildiz-Cankaya -
Ankara - Turkey
tel: +90 3124 414 350 fax: +90 3124 413 643
intes@intes.org.tr www.intes.org.tr

PARTNERS

Partner organisations are neither Associate Members nor Full Members of EBC but partners in European projects run by EBC in 2008 and 2009.

Estonia

EVEA
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LBA
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www.statybininkai.lt/?lang=en

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FOBC
Federation of building and civil engineering
contractors
c/o FOI
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info@foi.org.mt www.foi.org.mt

... IN THE PRESS

Last year was also very successful for EBC from a communication's point of view: EBC widened its communication tools and launched a new publication in February 2011 called "The Construction Voice".

This monthly communication tool, a quick one page information letter, gives European policymakers insight into EBC's view and position towards current EU policy which affects crafts and SMEs in the construction sector.

Additionally to EBC's written publications, an EBC Channel on YouTube presents videos about the organisation and its projects.



"According to EBC, the European social fund must also seek to form or improve the skills of the building workforce."
 Article on the EP vote on the revision of the energy efficiency action plan in November 2010, EUROPOLITIQUE, 12th November 2010

"EBC president Andrea Marconi said he 'strongly welcomes' the vote 'since it shows a strong position by parliament on the need to protect SMEs from unfair late payments by public administration and other businesses.'
 MEPs adopt key report on late payments, The Parliament, 28th April 2010

"The EBC has long alerted decision makers that for a large uptake and development of renewable energy sources also through small installations in private housing, an enormous pool of construction crafts and micro-enterprises had to be mobilized and involved."

Article on the EBC and challenges of the construction sector, The Parliament Magazine, Issue 325, 4th April 2011

"Riccardo Viaggi, Secretary General of the European Builders Confederation welcomed the vote and pointed out: 'It is now essential that during the negotiations with the Council, that members maintain a strong position and that the simplified procedures for CE marking remain within the scope of a regulation.'"

Article on the EP vote results on the modification of the Construction Products Directive in November 2010, EUROPOLITIQUE, 24th November 2010



EUROPEAN POLICIES AND EBC ACTIONS

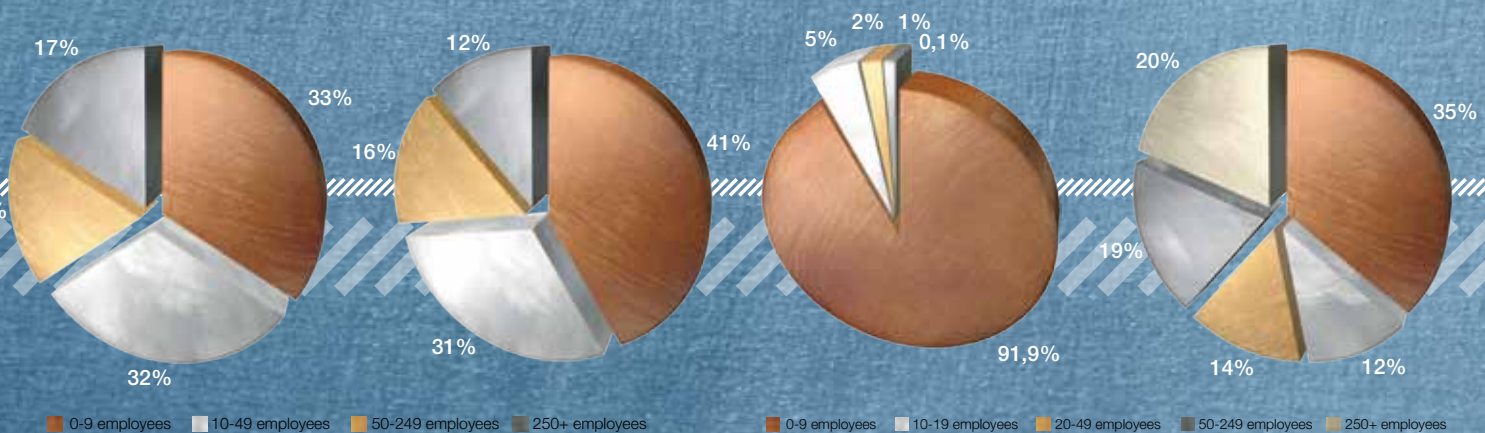
THE REVIEW OF THE SMALL BUSINESS ACT (SBA)

CONTEXT AND EVALUATION – THE PROGRESS MADE AND THE STEPS TO BE TAKEN

The original Small Business Act has been adopted in June 2008 and defined for the first time the general lines of a coordinated SME policy at EU and Member States levels. This has made it possible to make several steps forward thanks to the precise actions undertaken in certain sectors.

- The **Competitiveness and Innovation framework programme**
- The revision of the **late payments directive**
- The reduction of delays and costs to establish a new enterprise
- The simplification of **on-line procedures on public procurement**

Some of these examples and activities have been directly followed by EBC in the past two years. EBC also made use of the SBA principles for the battle in favour of the simplified measures for SMEs in the CE Marking of construction products (see page 16 in the Standardization section).



MICRO-ENTERPRISES
CREATE AN OVERALL
SECTORAL ADDED
VALUE OF 33%

SMES GIVE WORK
TO 88% OF THE
EMPLOYEES IN THE
CONSTRUCTION
SECTOR.

99,9% OF
ENTERPRISES IN
THE EUROPEAN
CONSTRUCTION
SECTOR ARE SMES

SMES PRODUCE 80%
OF THE SECTORS
TURNOVER

EBC ANALYSIS AND NEW GOALS

Because of its non-binding character, the SBA review underlines the fact that the MS must intensify their efforts in promoting entrepreneurship and SMEs in the difficult economic climate of today. The European Commission indeed, wants to continue to support and give priorities to SMEs.

In a general way, the first important element of the SBA Review is the new Governance structure for its implementation. Within this new structure, an SBA Advisory Group will be set up including the European SME associations tasked with observing and evaluating what the MS are doing to implement the SBA principles. Currently, an SBA follow-up group already is in place, with the participation of UEAPME. EBC believes that the establishment of this new group is the right occasion for EBC to get more direct.

In order to take into account the most recent developments in the economic situation and improve the working environment of SMEs, the SBA Review proposes new precise actions and measures in some priority areas. Here is a non-exhaustive list of the most interesting measures proposed:

A. IMPROVE ACCESS TO FINANCE

Easier access to loan guarantees for SMEs with an improved guarantee system;

- Access to credit action plan, with a better access to equity market and capital markets for SMEs.
- Simplified access to credit thanks to the establishment of a “Credit Ombudsman” and one-stop-shops in the MS.

B. BETTER AND MORE CLEVER REGULATION TO ALLOW SMES TO REALLY CONCENTRATE ON THEIR ACTIVITY

- Improve the European regulatory environment through an ex-ante SME Test on the impact of all legislative proposals from the Commission on small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Invite public administration to apply the “only once” principle, allowing enterprises to provide documentation and information only once for all interactions with the administration.
- Adopt quantitative measures and goals in order to limit “gold plating” of European legislation by national governments.
- Invite MS to really adopt and implement the Code of good practices on public procurement

C. USE ALL THE POSSIBILITIES GIVEN BY THE INTERNAL MARKET

- Measures to facilitate the collection of transnational debts
- Proposal for a legislative instrument on commercial law
- Revision of the standardization system to improve the access of SMEs
- Measures increasing Energy efficiency of SME through appropriate support mechanisms and financial support

In addition to the EBC role at European level, It is fundamental that the national members of EBC will have a major role to play in influencing and overseeing the national reception and implementation of the SBA review.



Vice President and
Commissioner for
Enterprise and Industry,
Antonio Tajani
© EP

“SMEs are the engine behind our economy and must be kept strong, competitive and innovative. Member States must act quickly to ensure that the Small Business Act is fully implemented.”

ACCESS TO INSURANCE

Elios: a European study on construction insurance schemes

Following a request from EBC, the European Parliament in association with the European Commission has supported since 2008 the ELIOS project (“European Liability Insurance Organisation Schemes”). This was a pilot project to facilitate access to insurance for small building firms and self-employed contractors in order to stimulate innovation and the promotion of eco-technologies. After a long stalemate and following the conclusions of the first study, French MEP Estelle Grelrier managed to revitalise the project by ensuring a continued Parliament budget line, in order to find a quicker solution for small firms.

EBC strongly approved MEP Estelle Grelrier’s involvement and participated in a meeting hosted by the Parliament and the Commission in March 2011. However, the outcome of this meeting fell short of finding a quick solution to the problem. Indeed, the decision to create a European forum for the exchange of information will require a lot more additional time to setup, but EBC will follow the process and make sure that the problem is addressed.

ECONOMY AND MARKETS

REVISION OF THE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT DIRECTIVES

EBC REPLIES TO THE GREEN PAPER CONSULTATION

The European Commission released the Green Paper for the public consultation on European public procurement laws. The goal of the Commission is to gather information and feedback on the points where and how the directives need to be revised. EBC has prepared a reply, always pursuing the goal of SMEs access to public procurement and using the recent results of a Commission study showing a worsening situation for SMEs and the absolute lack of impact of the Commission's Code of good practices.

Indeed, the main point that EBC raised in the reply was that – if the directives are to be revised – some of the measures introduced in the Code of good practices must be included in the directives and become legally applicable. First of all, the division of contracts into lots must become a reality, since the sheer size of the tenders can automatically exclude the smaller enterprises from the bidding process entirely. Connected to the size of contracts, EBC also praises for the limitation of disproportionate technical and financial requirements to access public procurement tenders.

From the point of view of the administrative burden, EBC demands a true application of the “only once” principle outlined in the Small Business Act, with public administration requesting documents only once from companies and possibly requesting additional documents to bidding companies only in advanced stages of the tender negotiation process.

In addition, as it is often the case, the great risk of payment delays in public procurement is also a major deterrent for SMEs not accessing public procurement, most of all because any potential delays are exponentially duplicated along a subcontracting chain, exposing the weakest and smallest enterprises to even more serious risks and treasury problems.



The Head of Unit on public procurement legislation from DG Internal Market of the European Commission, Joanna SZYCHOWSKA, has addressed the March 2011 meeting of the EBC Board of directors to present the Green Paper and the expectations from the Commission. This was also the perfect occasion for the members of EBC to voice their opinions, provide ideas and suggest solutions to improve the current state of European public procurement.

ACCESS TO FINANCE

EUROPEAN MICROFINANCE BUDGET LINE LAUNCHED

Recently, the European Microfinance Facility Progress (EMFP) was adopted to facilitate access to credit for micro-entrepreneurs and self-employed and to make it easier for people who might have difficulties in accessing funds for business start-ups. A budget of € 200 million has been made available for the period 2010-2013 and will be indirectly earmarked for entrepreneurs for loans under €25,000. On 11 February 2011, the first EMFP project was set up in the Netherlands where the Commission signed with the Dutch microfinance organisation Credits, a guarantee contract and a loan contract for an amount of €20 million.

The Commission has already announced a second project in Belgium with the signature of a contract with the BNP Paribas Fortis group. Up to 14 projects should be running throughout 2011.



“Over the next eight years, we hope to provide small loans to around 45,000 European entrepreneurs,” said EU's Employment Commissioner, László Andor during the EMFP-launch ceremony held in The Netherlands. © EP

THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR & ITS SMES IN FIGURES

In December 2010, Euroconstruct, the network of 19 construction survey institutes announced a de facto stability in the European construction industry output in 2011 (- 0,1%), followed by a steady and progressive return to growth (+ 2% in 2012 and + 2,5 % in 2013). The activity in 2011 will be supported by residential construction (+ 1,9%) while civil engineering, for the first time, decreases by 2,1%. It is interesting to note a transfer of the activity from new built to renovation and improvement works: in 2013, the share of the latter should account for 50% of the whole sector's activity.

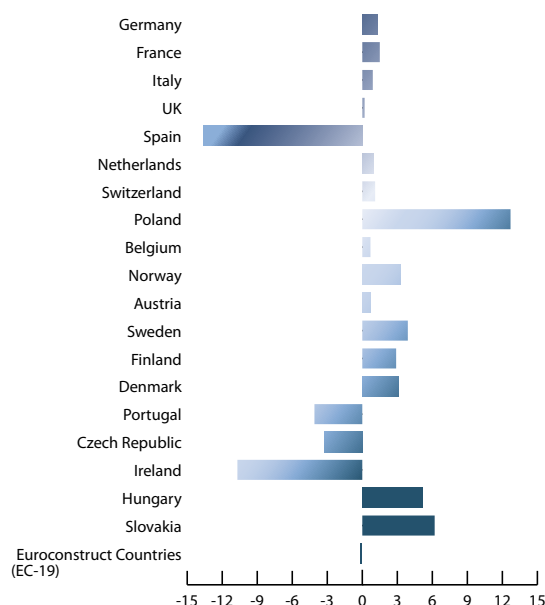
It is important to mention that the strongly negative forecast for Spain in 2011 (- 13,6%) results in a continental result of -0,1% whereas the majority of the 19 countries of the zone covered by the European research network will see their activity progress, even if the increase for Europe remains weak compared with other areas of the world.

Construction sector	turnover 2009 billion €	% evolution 09/10	% evolution 10/11
Germany	259,5	3,4	1,3
France	191	-4,2	1,5
Italy	172,8	-4,8	0,9
UK	153	3,1	0,2
Spain	123,3	-16,1	-13,6
Netherlands	65	-9,4	1,0
Switzerland	38,4	2,4	1,1
Poland	38,3	4	12,7
Belgium	34,8	-0,6	0,7
Norway	33,7	-3,1	3,3
Austria	27,6	-3	0,7
Sweden	27,2	2,4	3,9
Finland	27	4,4	2,9
Denmark	24,3	-7,2	3,1
Portugal	21,4	-7,5	-4,1
Czech Republic	18,1	-10	-3,2
Ireland	12,9	-28,3	-10,7
Hungary	9,6	-3,8	5,2
Slovakia	5,2	-6,3	6,2
Euroconstruct Countries (EC-19)	1283,1	-3,3	-0,1

Source: Eurostat

Eastern Europe will continue to draw the sector upwards in 2011 (7,2%) - in particular Poland which should increase by 12,7% - and will remain dynamic thereafter (8,2% in 2012 and 5,7% in 2013). The activity in western Europe will be at a standstill for a year longer (- 0,5% in 2011) before beginning to grow again (1,6% in 2012 and 2,3% in 2013). The "big five" - except Spain - will improve their performances, especially France (1,5% in 2011, 1,4% in 2012, 2,7% in 2013), Germany (1,3%, 1,6%, 1,7%) and Italy (0,9%, 3,1%, 3,3%). The United Kingdom (0,2%, 1,5%, 2%) will, however, have a slower recuperation, penalized by the governmental austerity programme.

FORECAST OF THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR IN 2011



LATE PAYMENTS DIRECTIVE

REVISION BRINGS IMPROVEMENTS FOR CONSTRUCTION SMES

The revised version of the Late Payments Directive has been published in the Official Journal of the EU on 23rd February 2011. The Member States will now have up to 24 months to implement it. EBC warmly welcomes the agreement reached between the EU institutions in first reading on the revision of this directive, since this piece of legislation is deemed to improve the financial conditions and the cash flows of SMEs. Indeed, it is expected to limit payment delays and most of all the powers of derogations by public authorities and big companies, to use small companies as their personal bank accounts. Several significant improvements have been added to the original Commission text:

- 30 days for payment between public administration and enterprises – maximum justified extension to 60 days.
- 60 days for payment between enterprises – possibility to derogate with agreement of the parties.
- Enterprises will be automatically entitled to claim interest for late payment and to obtain a minimum fixed amount of €40 as a compensation for recovery costs.
- Statutory Interest rate + at least 8% will be the reference rate in case of late payments.
- Enterprises will have more opportunities to challenge grossly unfair terms and practices.

MUSCOLO-SKELETAL DISORDERS

EBC SAYS NO TO A NEW EUROPEAN DIRECTIVE

The European Commission's DG Employment recently restarted the process to prepare an impact assessment for a possible community initiative on musculo-skeletal disorders. As it was already known to EBC, the Commission aims at proposing a directive repealing two existing directives on health and safety and enlarging the scope to ergonomics in general.

Indeed, the new Directive would cover all the professional activities that involve ergonomic risk factors. It would clearly expand the scope of the existing directives to a broader set of diseases and workers than the existing Directives and would thus impact on all types of work organization in enterprises. In addition, this would include new and more burdensome obligations of proof for construction SMEs, which are already struggling to cope with the administrative and financial charges created by the well established European and national legislation on health and safety.

For this reason, EBC strongly advocates that the legislative option can not be seen as a simplification for SMEs of the regulatory environment as it will impose new obligations. In addition, this legislative approach is not even in line with the simplification objective that the Commission pretends to pursue. What made EBC and other SME organizations even more worried is that the impact assessment study was not going to take into account SMEs and was foreseeing the most stringent policy option leading to the new directive. The question was addressed by the SBA follow-up group meeting at the beginning of February 2011, during which UEAPME – alerted by EBC – mentioned that this approach is certainly contrary to the principles of better regulation and Think small first.

Contacted by the Commission's consultant, EBC and its national members provided economic data and price indications showing clearly that the most stringent legislative option – strongly supported by the Commission – is too burdensome for construction micro-enterprises and that EBC is in favour of sectoral information and awareness-raising actions. Similar campaigns are already undertaken by European and national social dialogue institutions and show the direct involvement of employers and employees representatives in improving health and safety conditions at work, without the need for new European legislation.

INTRA-CORPORATE TRANSFERS

PROPOSAL FROM THE COMMISSION

A new Commission proposal was released on 13th July 2010 for regulating the movement of skilled workers within multinational companies who are normally resident outside of the EU. The Intra-Corporate Transfer Directive seeks to make the conditions for entry into the union more attractive to skilled workers, and thus to increase the supply of available and skilled human resources and implement the Europe 2020 goals of making Europe's economy more knowledge-based. The proposed Directive will seek to harmonize and simplify existing national regulations on intra-corporate transfers, and create a common set of rules for a new fast-track entry procedure (30 days time-limit, combined residence/work permit) for 'highly specialised staff' - managers, specialists and 'graduate trainees from non-EU countries. The time duration of the intra-corporate transfer is envisaged to be between 1-3 years for managers and specialists, and one year for graduates (Art. 11).

The EBC expresses concerns about the impact of the proposed Directive on SMEs in the construction sector. In particular, the EBC is concerned that the definition of "specialist" employed by the Directive could result in large numbers of third country nationals being granted permission to work within the EU construction sector.

“Specialists”, indeed, are defined simply as those ‘possessing uncommon knowledge essential and specific to the host entity’, and holding a ‘trade requiring specific technical knowledge’ (Article 3). This broad definition, the EBC believes, could also apply to any specialised employee within the construction sector that possesses a number of years of experience within their trade.

EBC adopted a position paper that will serve as the basis of the advocating work in the Parliament and Council.

EUROPEAN SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE

On 15th September 2010, UEAPME organised a high-level seminar on the participation of SME associations in European sectoral social dialogue, attended by Commissioner László Andor. The main sector in the spotlight was the construction sector, where EBC has been looking for official recognition alongside the existing social partners since 2004.

The President of the EBC, Andrea Marconi, has strongly put forward the points of view of construction crafts and micro-enterprises, arguing that these companies are not represented in the sectoral social dialogue, because although the members of the EBC are recognised social partners at national level, they still do not have an official seat in the social dialogue committee for construction at European level. Marconi, reminding the participants that EBC now takes part in FIEC’s delegation as an observer, criticised the level of representativeness, ‘both numerical and geographical’ of the committee, and pointed out that, while the SME member associations of the EBC cannot actively participate in the Committee and ‘cannot sign joint positions or agreements’, their enterprises must nevertheless comply with the European legislation that results in part from discussions within the construction Committee.

Marconi went on to conclude that the working relations between the EBC and the other social partners should be based on cooperation and trust at European level.

“UEAPME EVENT ON SECTORIAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE”

“Why at European level, as well as at national level, are SMEs under represented and almost always subordinated to industrial representations in social dialogue even if they represent the almost totality of enterprises and give work to 88% of the workforce?” asked EBC President Andrea Marconi – pictured here.



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Mr. Robert Hoedemakers, President of BOUWUNIE, the Belgian member of EBC, represents EBC in the European social dialogue committee for construction where EBC seats as an observer within FIEC’s delegation.

ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY



ENERGY EFFICIENCY PLAN COMMISSION PROPOSES A REVISION

On 8th March 2011, the European Commission (EC) adopted its Energy Efficiency Plan (EEP). The long overdue document revises the 2006 Energy Efficiency Action Plan with an aim to boost progress towards the achievement of 20% improvement of energy efficiency in the EU by 2020.

As a first stage, the EC only envisages indicative targets for Member States. However, as of 2013, if the EC should have evidence that progress towards the European 20% objective is unlikely to be achieved, the Commission is expected to propose legally binding national targets for 2020. As such the EEP mainly targets public authorities and their buildings as well as consumers.

The plan also foresees some legislative proposals, such as the joint revision of the existing Energy Services and Combined Heat and Power Directives, further measures in the area of eco-design (possibly covering systems as well as individual products) and energy labelling and new financial tools. The EEP recognises that SMEs face most acute problems in the field of energy efficiency and that they should be given support through adapted financial incentives, training schemes and information campaigns.

Concerning the building sector, EBC acknowledges the importance of the leading role played by the public sector and agrees that refurbishment target for the public sector is a way to start the process, but without a real target for the whole sector, it will not bring about the necessary change. Therefore EBC has alerted the EC that to achieve the goal of 20% energy savings by 2020, targets should also cover all other buildings, including privately-owned, both commercial and residential and has been asking that MS include annual refurbishment targets in their National Action Plans on energy efficiency (NAPs).

DIRECTIVE ON RENEWABLE ENERGIES

Since June 2009, the EU Directive on renewable energy sources (28/2009/EC) is published in the EU Official Journal. This Directive sets a European binding target for an overall 20% share of renewable energy in the EU energy mix by 2020 and provides the EC with a controlling power through intermediary targets.

The Directive sets individual targets for each Member State who had to submit, by June 2010, national action plans (NREAPs) detailing how they will meet their target. Member States in the 27 NREAPs expect the share of Renewable Energies (RES) to reach 20.6% of final energy consumption by 2020. The majority of the MS will reach the targets by domestic production, but two MS - Italy and Luxembourg - will partly rely on the cooperation mechanisms. The total renewable energy consumption will double from 99 Mtoe (2005) to 245 Mtoe (2020). Member States in their NREAPs expect the share of RES to meet 34.3% of electricity demand, 21.3% of heating and cooling and 11.3% of transport consumption.

Focusing on the requirements imposed by article 14 of the directive regarding qualification and certification of installers of renewable energy systems, EBC got involved in QualiCert. This European project aims at developing recommendations to MS during their process of writing national schemes for quality certification or equivalent qualification for installers. For more information on the QualiCert project, please see page 18 in the projects section.



A fundamental call from EBC and the construction sector has always been the need to upgrade the qualification of the building workforce, starting from publicly-funded training programmes. Finally the call has been heard by the Commission, which decided to launch the Build-up skills programme, a multiannual framework programme providing co-financing grants for training of operatives of the construction sector.

IEE PROJECTS

EBC INVITED TO GIVE THE POINT OF VIEW AT EUROPEAN INFO-DAY

The 2011 call for proposals for projects under the Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) programme was launched on 18 January 2011. The annual European IEE Info Day in Brussels took place at the same time and over 500 participants were informed about the new funding opportunities and priorities.

Invited by the European Commission to take the floor, EBC provided insights on the necessary market transformations for the construction sector to reach the target of nearly-zero energy buildings, as requested by the recast of the Energy performance of buildings directive. Such an objective will

only be achievable if construction SMEs are put in a position to fully use their potential for energy saving. Therefore, they should be given the opportunity to adapt and upgrade their skills through access to training. The creation of enterprise networks where craftsmen and SMEs can share solutions will also be a key issue. At the same time, information campaigns should be launched to raise awareness of the public, and accessible financial schemes should be increased. Finally, the public sector will play a crucial leading role in achieving this ambitious target.



ECO-DESIGN

COMMISSION CONTINUES TO WORK ON THE IMPLEMENTING MEASURES

Originally the Eco-design Directive set the framework for specifying principles, conditions and criteria to fix environmental requirements for energy using products, such as fridges and washing machines. The European Union decided for a radical extension to include all energy-related products, such as construction products.

This framework directive is currently being applied via implementing measures for each product group which are being prioritised by a working plan drafted for the Commission by a consultant. The action plan and the priorities will be fixed according to the environmental potential and market relevance of each product group. EBC attended a stakeholders meeting in February 2011, where several industry representatives have alerted the Commission of the intrinsic difficulty in achieving the eco-design goal with passive energy related products such as doors, windows and insulating materials, since a fundamental impact on their performance is played by the installation.

In addition, EBC has alerted the Commission and the consultant in charge of the study that some construction products are made in a customised approach, which makes them completely inadequate to a real design procedure. Finally, considering the impact of these initiatives on European standardization, the Commission has sent out for consultation a draft horizontal standardization mandate, in order to start the activities of the different CEN Technical Committees, whose products will be concerned by the implementing measures. The limit values mentioned in the draft mandate will make it probable that some products – not deemed adequate under the eco-design criteria – will be excluded from the market. Please see page 20, for more information on the CEN Technical Committees

GREEN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

EBC INTEGRATES THE BUILDINGS GROUP



Following the new Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria development procedure, EBC joined in 2011 the Commission's advisory group on EU Ecolabel/GPP criteria for building products – representing UEAPME. As a stakeholder, EBC will be able to attend

the Commission's meetings and contribute to the drafting of criteria for the different GPP building products. These meetings will mainly discuss the technical background report with first draft criteria. The criteria will be based on scientific assessment studies of the environmental impacts of the building for each part of its life-cycle and consider different

environmental aspects such as air quality, water quality, soil protection, waste reduction, energy savings, natural resource management, environmental safety, noise and biodiversity. The first open working group meeting regarding the development of Ecolabel and GPP criteria for buildings takes place at the end of June 2011.

EBC will follow this activity in order to make sure that the criteria – however voluntary in the beginning – do not become de facto tools to exclude craft products by imposing unnecessary requirements and red tape on small construction businesses.

STANDARDIZATION

CONSTRUCTION PRODUCTS REGULATION

The new Construction Products Regulation – revising the 20 years old Construction Products Directive (CPD) – has been finally agreed and published in the EU Official Journal in March 2011 and has entered into force at the end of April 2011. Being a directly applicable regulation, it is important to remind that some transitional agreements were included in the regulation. These agreements provide for the entry into force of some of the most important and new articles only in July 2013 in order to allow the manufacturers and the authorities to adjust to the changes.

Concerning the content of the regulation, the fundamental SMEs simplification measures are kept in the final text, agreed with the Council at the end of 2010. However, what remains to be considered is the impact of the revolutionary change brought by this regulation concerning the compulsory character of the Declaration of Performance for construction products, after more than 20 years of voluntary CE Marking. Concerning the impact on SMEs, EBC strongly welcomes Commissioner Tajani's words about the need to monitor the implementation of the regulation and to perform an ex-post study of the impact some years after its entry into force. Concerning the entry into force, it is important to remind that some transitional agreements were included in the regulation. These agreements provide for the entry into force of some articles only in July 2013 in order to allow the manufacturers to adjust to the changes.

Among the most relevant changes, EBC is concerned by the new provision obliging the manufacturers to include information about dangerous substances in the declaration of performance accompanying the CE Marking. This is indeed a duplication of efforts and paperwork since REACH also obliges to declare these aspects. The Commission will take a closer look to this aspect, which will also be introduced gradually.



Former Commissioner Laszlo Kovacs and EBC president Andrea Marconi

EBC SPEAKS AT THE NORMAPME EXPERTS MEETING IN THE PARLIAMENT

On 9th February 2011 NORMAPME has organised an Experts meeting in the European Parliament in order to raise awareness amongst policy makers on the challenges that SMEs face in the standardization process. The theme was illustrated by practical examples delivered by six of NORMAPME's 48 experts active in the Technical Committees of the European and International standardization organisations.

In this occasion, EBC presented the successful experience of the intervention by EBC-NORMAPME in the work of Technical Committee 33 on doors and windows, where an SME-friendly amendment to the European harmonised standard had been adopted and entered into force in December 2010.

CEN TECHNICAL COMMITTEE 33 ON DOORS AND WINDOWS

EBC is the mandated expert of NORMAPME in the CEN TC 33-WG1 on doors and windows. Considering the vast majority of SMEs producing windows in Europe, the work of EBC mainly consists in defending SMEs interests in the drafting process of the technical standards. The most important points and concerns in this committee are the introduction of shared ITT in the standard, since this will strongly reduce the costs of testing to obtain the CE Marking.



All public and private stakeholders at European and national level are evaluating and anticipating the concrete impacts of the new regulation on the product declaration, on the production of the harmonised standards and on the work of the CEN Technical Committees. EBC is also following this work and will keep its members updated about this.

In addition, EBC will put in place an information campaign, which will be necessary to inform and train craftsmen all over Europe about this and other radical changes. EBC asks the Commission to provide the necessary means—financially and politically—to accompany this effort by European and national SME trade associations.

REVIEW OF THE EUROPEAN STANDARDIZATION SYSTEM

In the framework of reforming the European Standardization system, the European Commission will present its proposals in June 2011. The so called “standardization package” consists of 3 elements:

1. A Communication with a Strategy on European standardization for 2020
2. A proposal for a Regulation on European Standardization
3. An impact assessment related to the legislative proposal

The “Standardization Package” is meant to take into account the strengths and weaknesses of the current European system – based on the national delegation principle - and will allow facing forthcoming European and international challenges in the field of standardization.

Whilst SMEs form the backbone of the European economy, evidence shows that their involvement and representation in standardization does not correlate to their economic importance. SMEs usually lack specific knowledge on the benefits of using standards, they are not fully aware of how and where to obtain such knowledge and have not enough capacity to follow any new initiatives being developed. Moreover, they do not have sufficient resources to participate in the standardization work. Hence, it is of crucial importance to fully consider SMEs in the review of the standardization system and the positive effect that Normapme had in this process from its creation as the only European association representing and defending exclusively the interests of crafts and SMEs. Indeed, it is fundamental to remember that EBC is a founding member of Normapme, which – for the first time – allowed the concerns of EBC to be taken into account in the drafting of the European standard for doors and windows.

Finally, since one of the objectives of the European Union is to ensure a better application of standards by SMEs, EBC is confident that the current reform will address the main concerns of SMEs in the most efficient manner, therefore ensuring:

- Increased participation of SMEs in standardization;
- Openness and transparency of the standardization process and a balanced representation of stakeholders’ categories;
- Market relevance of all new standardization projects both on products and services;
- Symbolic voting rights ensured to the European organisation representing SMEs in standardization;
- Measures to make standards more SME friendly including a review of the price policy for SMEs

All these elements are included in Normapme’s position paper which will form the basis of the advocating work that EBC and all the other SMEs associations will carry out in the upcoming months.



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Mattia Pellegrini, member of Vice-president Antonio Tajani’s cabinet, Klaus Tillmann, Secretary General of NORMAPME, Malcolm Harbour MEP, President of the Internal Market Committee of the European Parliament.

EUROPEAN PROJECTS

QUALICERT

The QualiCert EU-funded project has been kicked-off in July 2009 in Brussels and will run until December 2011. The project has been developing recommendations to assist Member States during the preparation of their national scheme for quality certification or equivalent qualification for installers of small-scale renewable energy systems, which is required by article 14 of the directive on renewable energy sources.

On 12th April 2011, during the European Sustainable Energy Week, EBC hosted a QualiCert seminar where national and European representatives from builders and installers associations, the renewables industry, national energy agencies, accrediting bodies and EU institutions discussed the findings of the project as well as the challenges and opportunities rising from article 14 of the directive. In a fruitful debate, the participants acknowledged that there is a real need for improving access to training for installers but disagreed on whether the scheme should apply to companies or individuals.

For more information on the QualiCert project, please visit www.qualicert-project.eu



Hungarian Deputy Secretary of State for green jobs and climate change, Peter Olajos (pictured here), addressed the participants during the panel discussion reiterating the importance of a qualified force of installers to increase the confidence of the market in renewable energy sources and the feasibility of a sustainable energy for Europe.



SHELTER

SHELTER is a EU-funded project which was launched in June 2010 and will run for 36 months until June 2013. The goals of the project are to promote and facilitate the use of new models of cooperation inspired by integrated design, for the energy renovation of social housing, in order to promote energy savings of up to 20% by 2020. More specifically, the project aims to:

- Promote the implementation by European social housing organisations of relevant cooperation models in energy renovation projects.
- Develop long term gains in costs and time for professionals and social housing organisations in energy renovation.
- Contribute to the structuring of the economic sector dedicated to energy renovation in the European Union by establishing links with existing networks.

In order to ensure the best results in coordinating professionals' energy renovation activities, Shelter relies upon an interdisciplinary and integrated design approach, involving builders (EBC), architects (ACE), 6 national social housing organisations – from France, Italy, UK, Bulgaria and Belgium – the European association of social housing organisations (CECODHAS) and a research centre (TU Delft).

For more information, please visit www.shelterproject-iee.eu



EURO-APPRENTICESHIP

The EuroApprenticeship project on transnational mobility of apprentices was officially launched with the presentation of the web-platform during the European conference celebrating the 15th Anniversary of the Leonardo programme in Brussels on 10th November 2010.

During the conference – opened by Commissioner for Education and Culture, Androulla Vassiliou – UEAPME and APCMA (the French assembly of craft chambers – project coordinator) presented the EuroApprenticeship project, its partners and objectives reminding that it is an EU-funded action aiming at enhancing mobility of apprentices among the EU countries as part of the Leonardo programme in support of education, life-long learning and training.

The official launch of the project was the occasion to present the first main result of its work, the creation of the EuroApprenticeship web platform, which will be the basis for all information and contact between training centres, intermediary organisations, apprentices and employers' federations at national level.

EBC, which is also partner of the project, aims at giving a sectoral dimension to the work and its implementation at national level through local seminars and events. They will start at the beginning of the new project phase and will continue through all 2011.

For more information, please visit www.euroapprenticeship.eu



PARTNERSHIPS | WORKING COMMITTEES | GROUPS |



EBC PARTNER OF THE OSHA BILBAO CAMPAIGNS

As in the past, EBC signed up to the new biennial campaign run by the EU-OSHA Bilbao Agency in 2010 and 2011. Living up to the commitment to improve Health and Safety, EBC has decided to devote time and actions to the partnership of the campaign on "Safe Maintenance" and spoke in favour of the partnership at the networking event organised in Brussels in March 2010. The relation between EBC and the agency is long and fruitful and has seen a peak of interest and synergy with the Under Construction II project managed during 2009, whose main goal was to spread the OSHA Campaigns messages and materials.



FOCOPE – FORUM FOR CONSTRUCTION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

At the end of 2010, EBC joined the FOCOPE, a stakeholders forum within the European Parliament concerning the construction industry. The goal of FOCOPE is to facilitate the contact between Members of the European Parliament and the construction sector's representatives, with the objective of delivering a more competitive and sustainable construction sector. Several European and national associations of contractors, construction product manufacturers and installers are members of FOCOPE.



STANDING COMMITTEE ON CONSTRUCTION

Since October 2004 EBC has the status of observer at the Standing Committee on Construction. This Committee has been created by the Construction Products Directive (89/106/CEE) with the task of examining any issues related to the implementation of the directive. The Committee is chaired by the Head of the Construction Unit (DG Enterprise and Industry) and is formed by representatives of the Member States.



EUROPEAN SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE FOR CONSTRUCTION

The European Social Dialogue Committee for construction was created in 1999 by FIEC (European Construction Industry Federation) and EFBWW (European Federation of Building and Wood Workers). In 2007 FIEC gave EBC two observer seats within its delegation for this committee. The EBC Board of Directors mandated Robert Hoedemakers (BOUWUNIE, Belgium) and Riccardo Viaggi (Secretary General) to represent EBC at the committee meetings.



CEN TECHNICAL COMMITTEES

EBC, as an expert, represents NORMAPME at the CEN TC 33: "Doors, Windows, Shutters, Building Hardware and Curtain Walling" and specifically in the Working Group 1 on doors and windows in charge of the elaboration of standards hEN14351-1 / 14351-2 / 14351-3.

BUILD-UP INITIATIVE

Build-UP is a European Commission initiative with the objective of providing information to all actors involved in the implementation of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD). In 2009, replacing the EPBD Buildings Platform, EBC signed a collaboration agreement with the consortium appointed by the European Commission.



EBC CHAIRS THE UEAPME CONSTRUCTION FORUM

As of 2008, EBC – in the person of Vice-president David Croft – chairs the UEAPME Construction Forum, the most active sectoral committee within UEAPME. The Forum meets twice a year with a full agenda decided by the members of UEAPME in order to inform, present and discuss on the most important policy developments regarding construction crafts and SMEs. Several European sectoral associations and national horizontal associations take part in the Forum which also adopts positions and lobbying strategies to be carried out.

