



# EUROPEAN BUILDERS CONFEDERATION

*The Voice of Construction Crafts and SMEs in Europe*

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For immediate release

## EBC Annual Congress

**Energy efficiency of buildings will help overcome the crisis, but it will not come for free, say construction SMEs**

Valladolid, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2010

European Builders Confederation EBC - the Voice of construction crafts and SMEs in Europe - celebrated today its **Annual Congress in Valladolid**, Spain. On this event, close to 100 delegates and European entrepreneurs met to discuss the situation of the construction sector in a time of uncertain economic conditions, changing EU panorama and further regulatory development coming from Brussels, namely on energy efficiency of buildings.

Andrea Marconi, President of EBC, declared: **“The most important challenge for construction SMEs is to drag the sector out of the crisis. The most recent data on the activity shows a serious decline in 2009, with -8,4%, even if the economic confidence of SMEs seems to be increasing after a severe fallback in spring 2009. The current monetary crisis gives us an instable and uncertain economic situation”**.

### SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION AND TRAINING

Andrea Marconi also added: **“Sustainable construction and energy efficiency can be one of the answers and EBC believes it will be. This is why, our Annual Congress this year revolved around this theme focussing on the market chances that can be exploited only by living up to the challenge of training the construction working population for green jobs”**. On this matter EBC welcomed the Commission’s announcement concerning the launch of a multi-annual “Qualifying the Buildings Workforce” Initiative in the framework of the Intelligent Energy Europe programme. The most relevant message coming from the experts taking part in the conference was that energy efficiency in buildings will now be a compulsory goal, but will not come for free. Indeed, Mr. Marconi continued: **“The recent adoption by the European Parliament of the revised energy performance of buildings directive will call on further efforts on retrofitting and improvement works which constitute the most important market share for construction SMEs in Europe. However these works constitute a strong monetary effort to be made by private citizens and enterprises, who will need public support.”**

### FINANCING

EBC positively welcomed the recent news concerning the European Commission’s decision to earmark a portion of the European Recovery Plan to energy efficiency. A total amount of **€ 114 million** will be included in an ad hoc fund, managed by the European Investment bank and its European network of local banks in order to finance projects on the ground mainly in urban areas. The Parliament and the Council will review this decision shortly and the fund should become operational by the end of 2010. This decision proves once more that energy efficiency measures and improvements will not come for free.

### SMEs’ ACCESS TO FINANCE

On the long-standing issue of SMEs access to finance, EBC also reminded that the crisis will not be over as long as bank's credit policies will not change. Indeed, Andrea Marconi said: **"I call on Vice-president Tajani Commissioner for Enterprise to keep the commitment kicked off on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010 with the inaugural meeting of the SMEs Finance Forum. This platform for high-level discussion is due to meet every 3 months and can be the political arena giving impetus to the necessary practical work, supported by the banks and the financial community and with a strong role of follow-up from the SMEs associations, at national and European level"**.

#### **EBC WELCOMES A NEW MEMBER**

Today, the Dutch association of **BOUW&INFRA** was approved as new full member of EBC during the General Assembly. This new member, representing at national level construction SMEs, enlarges the EBC representativeness to cover 20 associations from 15 European countries.

#### **MANDATE OF EBC PRESIDENT MARCONI PROLONGED**

Today, the EBC General Assembly also approved a statute change, prolonging the Presidential mandate from 2 to 3 years, effective from the current presidency mandate. Andrea Marconi will thus remain in function as president of the EBC Board of directors until December 2011.

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Established in 1990, the European Builders Confederation - E.B.C. - is a European professional organisation representing national associations of Craftsmen and SMEs working in the construction sector. Through its national members, E.B.C. represents 2 million micro, small and medium sized enterprises from the construction sector.

The construction sector is of vital importance to the European Economy. With 2.9 million enterprises, an annual turnover of almost €1300 billion, a total direct workforce of almost 16 million, the construction sector contributes about 10% to the GDP of the European Union.

The European construction sector is composed at about 99% of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), who produce 80% of the turnover. The small enterprises alone (less than 50 employees) are responsible for 60% of the production and employ 70% of the sectors working population.

#### **Information to the press:**

*For any other question, please contact Riccardo Viaggi, EBC Secretary General*

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