

Blueprint for sectoral co-operation on skills

There is a need for a more wide-ranging and co-ordinated approach to dealing with the skills gap that is facing the construction industry

Although the level of unemployment remains high in several Member States, construction companies are facing increasing difficulties in finding the right workers with the right skills.

This can be explained by technological changes, including the digitalisation of the construction process through BIM (Building Information Modelling) and other tools such as robots, drones, etc; by policy choices, such as for example the “greening” of economies and the related initiatives on energy efficiency in buildings; as well as by the ageing of the workforce.

The last of these, combined with the lack of attractiveness of the construction industry for many youngsters, is further increasing the pressure on employers.

The European construction sector is a prime driver of economic growth and employment in every Member State of the European Union (EU), but also for the whole European economy. It has the potential to respond to a number of economic and societal challenges such as jobs and growth, greater urbanisation, social inclusion, digitised communication, demographic

changes, ecological pressures and, at the same time, energy and climate change challenges.

Also, EU policies in the areas of climate change, energy efficiency and renewable energies, together with a policy for sustained encouragement of building renovation and infrastructure management, should be an opportunity to revitalise business and employment in the construction sector.

Construction also plays a key enabling role in the transition to a low-carbon economy, as buildings account for nearly 40% of total energy consumption and a third of CO₂ emissions.

Around 75% of the existing building stock is considered energy-inefficient. Seeing this major need for modernisation, there is a big potential for creating jobs in a green economy, with the view to decarbonising the EU building stock by 2050.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Finally, the construction sector is recognised as a key sector in the 2015 EU Circular Economy Package, as waste originating from construction and demolition represents one of the highest volumes of waste in Europe.

Recycling is encouraged by the EU-wide mandatory target of 70% of construction and demolition waste to be recycled by 2020.

Within this framework, initiatives aiming at addressing the problem of skills gaps and skills mismatches have been launched at national level. Others – such as the SKILLCO EU-funded project (www.skillco.eu), in which FIEC is participating and which covers Germany, Hungary and Slovenia – are aiming at enlarging the co-operation on this topic beyond the national borders.

However, there is a strong need for a more wide-ranging and co-ordinated approach.

For this reason, in the framework

of the Erasmus+ programme – the main EU programme in the fields of education, training, youth and sport – the European Commission launched a call for projects at the end of last year focusing on six sectors that are experiencing severe skills shortages, including the construction sector.

The aim of this initiative is to support the development and the implementation of a new strategic and co-ordinated approach – a blueprint – to sectoral co-operation on skills by enhancing the responsiveness of initial and continuing vocational education and training (VET) systems, at all levels, to the labour market needs.

So, its aims are to identify or draw on existing and emerging skills needs and/or translate them into vocational curricula to respond to those needs.

This blueprint strategy has to lead to systemic and structural impact on reducing skills shortages, gaps and mismatches, as well as ensuring appropriate quality and levels of skills to support growth, innovation and competitiveness in the sector concerned.

For construction, the strategy should, among others things, detail how major trends, such as global, societal and technological developments in the sector, are likely to affect jobs and skills needs.

It should describe the expected timeline and give particular attention to the impact of digital and key enabling technologies.

It should also develop a common methodology for assessing the current situation and anticipating future needs, as well as for monitoring on a regular basis progress and evolution of the demand and supply of skills based on credible foresight scenarios.

Finally, it should develop actions to promote the attractiveness

of the sector as a career choice, in particular among the young, while also aiming for a gender balance in the sector.

A particular focus will be on digital skills as they are increasingly important on all job profiles across the entire labour market, as well as on the transition to a circular and greener economy.

CONSORTIUM

At the initiative of FIEC and under the co-ordination of the Spanish Fundación Laboral de la Construcción, a consortium of 24 partners from 12 different countries was set up and presented a project which has been approved by the European Commission and which will start at the beginning of 2019 for a duration of four years.

Among the main objectives of the project, several can be highlighted – collecting good practices at national and regional level to illustrate and promote other initiatives addressing skill gaps; designing and delivering a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) to raise awareness among construction workers about new skills drivers in the fields of digitalisation, energy efficiency and circular economy; creating a WatchTower to provide valuable information about particular skills needs at least at regional and national level; developing a methodology for a regular revision and update of construction professional profiles and qualifications; carrying out an outreach campaign to promote the attractiveness of the sector among youngsters and women; and identifying and promoting solutions to facilitate mobility of construction workers in Europe.

Needless to say, this ambitious project will represent a major challenge over the next few years not only for the partners involved, but for the sector as a whole. **ce**



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