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## Horizon Europe must take a holistic approach to construction, to build tomorrow's Smart & Sustainable Europe

### Our Proposal

Adopt a holistic approach in Horizon Europe by creating a Co-programmed European Partnership on the Built Environment and Construction.

### Our Vision

*How do we imagine our lives and our society in 2050?*

Around 75% of EU citizens will be living in smart cities, in energy efficient and accessible districts and buildings, made even more efficient – and even energy positive - by innovative products and appliances. While the preservation of our cultural heritage and the energy efficiency of buildings will remain of utmost importance, smart, automatic control systems implemented in new and renovated buildings, regulating output from renewable energy sources, will further improve our quality of life and reduce energy bills. The use of digital technologies from the design phase, throughout the life cycle of buildings; and the integration of innovative products and materials combined with urban mining will contribute significantly to the achievement of the Circular Economy.

The transport we use between home, work and other daily activities will be completely different. Greener, healthier, smarter, faster, accessible and inclusive; while staying affordable.

The built environment will have supported the transition towards a climate neutral Europe.

### Our Built Environment

Construction **underpins all key European Union policy goals**. In fact, construction is at the crossroads of different economic sectors and essential to all human daily activities. The significance of the sector is reflected in its ability to respond to the multi-faceted main challenges of the European Union: jobs, digital economy, energy efficiency, Circular Economy, climate change, demographic changes, health and safety, etc.

However, this promising future that we want to offer European citizens depends on the modernisation of the built environment.

**This means that the transformation of the built environment and of the construction sector must be a priority in Horizon Europe in order to build the sustainable Europe of tomorrow.**

This transformation is already underway but needs to be accelerated to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and beyond. **Horizon Europe will be crucial to achieving these aims.**

To cope with the disruptive pace of digitalisation and to capitalise on its potential **we need a holistic approach in Horizon Europe** that will encourage cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral and cross-border collaboration.

## **Our Message**

The construction sector welcomes the three-pillar approach proposed for Horizon Europe by the European Commission and in particular the important link between Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness as defined in Pillar 2 of the programme. However, **we believe that a holistic approach amongst the different clusters of this Pillar should be guaranteed by creating a Co-programmed European Partnership<sup>1</sup> on the Built Environment and Construction.** In fact, EU industrial competitiveness and the Sustainable Development Goals underpinned by the five clusters cannot be achieved without a holistic approach that focuses on the lives of people in the built environment and on essential infrastructure.

Digitalising the construction sector will be crucial for all clusters of Pillar 2 and in particular, this holistic approach will allow co-ordination of the following clusters:

- ***Culture, creativity and inclusive society:*** to develop and apply innovative techniques to better preserve European cultural heritage while adapting it to current needs
- ***Digital, Industry and Space:*** to integrate the different technologies, increase construction productivity and provide higher value with fewer resources
- ***Climate, Energy and Mobility:*** to integrate energy efficiency technologies with, for example, district heating and cooling systems, boosting the circularity of the sector and building our smart cities of tomorrow.

We understand that Pillar 2 will be implemented through a strategic planning process, which will involve all relevant stakeholders, Member States and society. **Construction stakeholders call upon the European Institutions to make us a fundamental actor in this strategic planning process.**

In particular, the Co-programmed European Partnership on the Built Environment and Construction would ensure that strategic planning is thorough and effective and achieves the research and innovation missions of Pillar 2.

A Co-programmed European Partnership on the Built Environment and Construction will also ensure that the crucial Horizon Europe mission of creating climate neutral and smart cities will be supported by prioritised investment, creating more impact as a result of a systemic approach and aligned instruments and agendas for research and innovation across Europe.

**The Co-programmed European Partnership on the Built Environment and Construction will moreover ensure effective and operational synergies with other Union programmes,** in order to increase the leverage of Union funding for a more effective science-policy interface. It will address policy needs and promote faster dissemination and uptake of research and innovation results. Programmes in the scope of the partnership's activities include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF+), Single Market Programme, Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), Digital Europe Programme (DEP), Erasmus Programme and the InvestEU Fund.

In particular, the Co-programmed European Partnership on the Built Environment and Construction will make sure that useful technologies developed under the framework of Horizon Europe will be swiftly adopted in the market at all levels and used by appropriately retrained professionals, workers and companies with the help of the right blending of funding and financial instruments.

Finally, we strongly believe that **the Co-programmed European Partnership on the Built Environment and Construction will facilitate the creation of Digital Innovation Hubs<sup>2</sup> with a specific focus on construction.**

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<sup>1</sup> As defined by the Commission proposal on Horizon Europe, art. 8 par. 1 (a): EU "participation in partnerships set up on the basis of memoranda of understanding and/or contractual arrangements between the Commission and the partners referred to in Article 2(3), specifying the objectives of the partnership, related commitments for financial and/or in-kind contributions of the partners, key performance and impact indicators, and outputs to be delivered"

<sup>2</sup> Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) are one-stop-shops where companies –especially SMEs, startups and mid-caps– can get help to improve their business, production processes, products and services by means of digital technology. One of the key [Digitising European Initiative](#) of the European Commission priorities is to support a strong network of DIHs to ensure that every company in Europe can take advantage of digital opportunities.