



POLISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Deputy Secretary General

It gives me a great pleasure to welcome You to the 5th Conference of the European Construction Technology Platform, combined with a Conference of the Era-Net Eracobuild to discuss the importance of construction sector to gain more sustainable and dynamic growth in the European Union. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the organizers of this event for inviting me here. Especially considering the significance and necessity of this debate.

The construction sector is of a strategic importance to the EU as it delivers the buildings and infrastructure needed by the rest of the economy and society. The “Europe 2020 strategy” sets the overarching framework for a future strategy for construction focusing on the following three priorities:

- Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation;
- Sustainable growth: promoting a more efficient, greener and more competitive economy;
- Inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

When drafting development strategy like „Europe 2020”, it is essential to grasp the longer-term development trends in all branches and sectors of economy. In all of the challenges facing society as a whole (globalization, climate change, energy efficiency, sustainability, etc), the construction sector plays a key role since it represents more than 10% of EU GDP and more than 50% of fixed capital formation. It is the largest single economic activity and the biggest industrial employer in Europe. The sector employs directly almost 20 million people (according to FIEC – European Construction Industry Federation).



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Although the activities of the construction sector have been severely hit by the recent economic crisis with the loss of several hundred of thousands of jobs it still has a huge impact on European economy. If we want to gain a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union a certain adjustment/re-focussing seems inevitable. However, it is essential for Europe that such restructuring is not done at the expense of the sector's ability to reply to the challenges of the future (losing competences/capacities/ innovation potential). Thus, EU and national policies should be able to facilitate the implementation of investment programmes which address not only immediate social and economic needs, but which will also equip better the construction sector with means to meet its longer-term competitiveness and societal challenges. Nowadays European construction sector should focus on such topics like resource-efficient, low-carbon economy, modern transport infrastructures, ecological products and services.

The challenges made by the Conference are significant, but I am certain that it will succeed in its objectives. I hope this meeting become a valuable contribution to the discussion on the meaning of construction sector in Europe.