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"Infrastructure investment for growth and jobs in Europe"

"Our industry looks forward to the implementation of the right policies and incentives to nurture sustainable growth and jobs", said Ralf Wezel, CECE Secretary General, during the dinner-debate on "Infrastructure, growth and manufacturing" organised on 15th May 2012 by the European Forum for Manufacturing (EFM) in the European Parliament.

CECE and FIEC believe that investment in transport, energy and telecom infrastructure, as well as in the energy efficiency of buildings, are essential for growth and jobs. To strengthen European competitiveness, delivery of this much needed investment must no longer be delayed.

The roundtable discussion, sponsored by FIEC and CECE within the framework of the EFM, was an excellent opportunity for the industry to openly discuss with representatives of the EU institutions directly involved in the legislative procedures on the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and the revision of the Trans-European infrastructure networks (transport, energy and telecoms), both currently under discussion in EP and Council.

MEP Dominique Riquet, Co-rapporteur of the leading EP Committee TRAN, confirmed that "CEF is one of the most relevant tools we have in the current debate between stability and growth. It has a potential for creating jobs in the industries related to infrastructure building and operation, as well as in the service industries more generally. Well-functioning transport, energy and ICT networks are also an asset for the rest of the economy and help the machinery industry to develop innovative products while raising the competitiveness of the EU as a whole". Other participants from EU institutions included Bertel Dons Christensen from the Danish Presidency and Matthias Ruete the Director General of the Commission's DG MOVE.

CECE and FIEC recognize the enormous benefits which the CEF can bring and call on the European Parliament and the Council to support the European manufacturing and construction industries in their efforts to contribute to growth and jobs by securing at least the funds foreseen in the EC proposal.

The Chairman of FIEC's Working Group on PPPs and Concessions, Vincent Piron, stated that the construction industry strongly supports the Commission's financial proposal amounting to €50 billion for the 2014-2020 period. Moreover, he stressed that "this amount is the bare minimum and must not be cut in the negotiations on the future EU financial perspective for 2014-2020 as has been the case in the past".

Both CECE and FIEC agree on the urgency of securing proper levels of public investment from national and local budgets, which should be backed by the earmarking of revenues (e.g. from the Eurovignette), a strong European regional policy and an ambitious lending policy from the European Investment Bank.

Ralf Wezel reiterated CECE and FIEC's support for a healthy balance between public and private investment in this field. "Innovative financial instruments proposed by the Commission, such as Project Bonds, are welcome but, given restricted access to credit, they cannot replace an effective policy of long-term public investment."

Commenting on the round table proceedings, FIEC Director General Ulrich Paetzold recalled that "several major infrastructure projects have been cancelled or delayed, with the risk to Europe's future competiveness and standard of living". He continued that "as a result of the crisis, fiscal consolidation is necessary however this should not negatively impact on infrastructure investment in the discussions on the next EU multi-annual financial framework. Rekindling growth in Europe will only come with a coherent vision for long term investment in vital infrastructure".

__CECE__ is the recognized organization representing and promoting European construction equipment and related industries. CECE represents 16 national associations from 14 countries. The industry behind CECE comprises of 1,200 companies employing directly around 130,000 people with a total turnover of 23 billion €.

Created in 1905, __FIEC__ is the European Construction Industry Federation, representing via its 33 national Member Federations in 29 countries (27 EU & EFTA, Croatia and Turkey) construction enterprises of all sizes, i.e. small and medium-sized enterprises as well as 'global players', carrying out all forms of building and civil engineering activities. The European construction industry represents 3.1 million enterprises (EU 27), employing directly 14.6 million operatives in Europe.

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