

EFBWW-FIEC PRESS RELEASE

EU Guide on Health and Safety : a tool for construction companies of all sizes

The EU social partners for the construction industry, EFBWW and FIEC, presented last week, during their plenary meeting, a guide on Health and Safety (H&S) for construction companies of all sizes and in particular SMEs.

Despite the overall reduction in the number of work related accidents and illnesses, statistics clearly indicate that construction is still among those sectors where further improvements are needed.

Therefore, one of the main priorities for EFBWW and FIEC is the improvement of health and safety, not only through legislation at EU and Member State level, but also through promoting the development of a real culture of health and safety within each company, with the active involvement of all the concerned stakeholders, especially the workforce and its representatives.

The guide aims at encouraging and helping companies to introduce and develop a H&S management system, to be endorsed on a voluntary basis, which would adequately take into account the needs and capacities of SMEs and would be flexible enough so as to take into account measures already existing at national level.

The size of the company should not be an obstacle for setting up such a H&S management policy and the guide describes the basic steps and requirements necessary to develop a H&S system in a construction enterprise. For companies that are able to document their competencies relating to health and safety, the aim of this guide is also to increase the additional competitive advantage that they can provide to their public and private clients.

Of course, it does not intend to replace existing European and/or national legislation on H&S, which must in any case be respected, and should therefore be considered as a complementary tool, which is consistent with the International Labour Organisation's ILO OSH 2001 guidelines, as well as with the EU legislation on H&S.

In order to support the dissemination of this guide at the national level, with the financial support of the European Commission the guide has been translated into 13 different EU languages.

Electronic PDF versions of the guide, available in 13 EU languages, can be downloaded from the FIEC (www.fiec.eu) or from the EFBWW (www.efbww.org) websites.

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.

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EFBWW is the European Federation of Building and Wood Workers and representing via its 72 national member trade unions in 31 countries 2.3 million workers from the building and woodworking sector. In its capacity as a European Federation, the EFBWW occupies a key position as observer of the social and economic situation in the construction sector.

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