

CITIES OF TOMORROW BUILT WITH EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION PRODUCTS

EUROPEAN URBAN AGENDA INPUT

20th February 2014

This week, the European Commission hosted the Cities of Tomorrow Conference in Brussels. Given the strategic importance of the construction sector, Construction Products Europe took part in the debate on the need for a European Urban Agenda and paid close attention to the foreseen policy priorities. This was a first step in the drafting of this European Urban Agenda and Construction Products Europe aims to be a responsible partner to policy-makers and other stakeholders.

LEGISLATIVE COORDINATION

Construction activities cover a wide range at the level of the product, building, infrastructure and city. These are all affected by EU legislation, therefore Construction Products Europe agrees with calls at the conference that there should be better coordination of existing policies and initiatives rather than new legislation. Moreover initiatives already in existence need to be implemented efficiently with coordination at a relevant scale. Proper coordination of policies would create a level playing field across European cities and ensure competitiveness.

HOUSING

Housing finance was a major cause of the economic crisis meaning that access to housing is a defining issue that needs to be taken up within this European urban agenda. There have been some positive steps from the European Commission towards incentives and funding (for example, European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund investments for 2014-2020 will include projects to enhance energy efficiency and smart energy management in the housing sector), but to increase access to housing there is a need of better market conditions for construction.

INCREASED INNOVATION

Construction is one of the industrial sectors facing the most hardship at the moment and is looking for a long-term EU strategy. Research and development in our companies are delivering innovative building solutions to the market that help solve some of the EU's most pressing urban issues. We therefore hope that a new European Urban Agenda will be able to facilitate the uptake of these solutions in our communities, buildings, infrastructures and cities.

There was almost universal agreement that Europe needs a European Agenda. What must follow now is defining what this agenda will be exactly and how it will be implemented.

Construction is one of the practicalities of the European Urban Agenda barely touched upon in the conference, due to the early stages of this framework. Nonetheless, Construction Products Europe would like to emphasise the sector's fundamental importance within this agenda and looks forward to see how we can be involved in its development.

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