

Autumn meeting of SG Construction: 13-14 October 2022 - Porto, Portugal

The international meeting of the Europe Enterprise Network (EEN) construction sector group (SGC) took place in Porto during the Concreta Fair, including also a B2B@CONCRETA matchmaking event. The meeting was organized by AIDA/CCI as a member of the SGC and had the support and collaboration of AEP. The Portuguese Sustainable Habitat Cluster was invited by the organization to participate together with its members in this EEN SG Construction initiative, contributing during these two days, for the discussion and analysis of the construction sector through the sharing of experiences and knowledge on current challenges.



The first day, October 13, had the participation of expert speakers representing the European Commission, such as Sara Machiels, Project Advisor of the Construction Sector Group from EISMEA, Alberto Valenzano, Programme Assistant of the industrial forum, alliances and clusters at the European Commission and Franc Mouwen, from the European Innovation Council, and Programme Manager for Architecture, Engineering and Construction Technologies at EISMEA.

Besides this initial interventions, Victor Ferreira, President of the Sustainable Habitat Cluster, a Portuguese competitiveness cluster, presented the opportunity and challenges brought by the topic of *"Decarbonization, sustainability and circular economy in the Habitat value chain"*. Still during this main event, other Cluster members, such as CTCV (Victor Francisco) addressed the theme of *"Innovation in sustainable ceramic products and materials for construction"* and the PRECERAM Group (José Ávila e Sousa) introduced from the point of view of the enterprises and markets the approach to the *"Circular economy in construction - what changes?"*.



Under the topics of Sustainability, Innovation and Circular Economy, this EEN SG Construction meeting focused on:

- Technical and technological innovations, solutions and new materials
- Trends in construction, architecture, design and engineering
- The design of the future, in an all-inclusive visionary way.
- Low-carbon construction, how to transform the construction sectors
- Digital technology transforming the construction sector related industry.

On October 14, the second day of this meeting, all the members visited the

CONCRETA fair and participated in a special session, a Creative Talk on the theme "Sustainability & Digitalization of the Architecture, Engineering and Construction". The challenges of the construction value chain and several issues such as digital fabrication and design, adoption of alternative and reused materials were addressed in interventions from Franc Mouwen (European Innovation Council) at EISMEA; from Irektra Papadaki, the construction team coordinator at the DG GROW and from Jana Hoskova, the Deputy Head of the Sustainability Team from the EC Consumer Protection Office. Two other interventions at this Creative Talk session focused on the "Scenarios for the transition pathway for a resilient, greener and more digital construction ecosystem", with the participation of a high-level group of experts from various countries of the European Union, which included Victor Ferreira, president of the Sustainable Habitat Cluster and Carlos Manuel, CEO of Amorim Cork Insulation Enterprise, an associated member of the Cluster.

Being the construction ecosystem the second most important ecosystem in terms of employment and value added, all interventions aimed to demonstrate and discuss the importance of the construction sector challenges in the global economy and how it must become more circular, increasing the use of technologic innovations, solutions and new materials, moving towards a more sustainable and greener sector.



It is also important to mention that the matchmaking event B2B@Concreta took place during these two days and that it was an opportunity for the participating SMEs to:

- Find partners and expand their business
- Discover New Products & Services
- Prepare Purchases or Projects
- Meet New Suppliers
- Get Information about the latest trends

This EEN meeting was important to strengthen personal relationships, promote knowledge and share experiences among group members, representatives from European Commission, local, regional and national entities and other stakeholders, facilitating the development of a coherent action plan and supporting the interests of the construction sector. This meeting will be extremely fruitful as another step towards strengthening the network partners to cooperate in one direction: - the increasing of the competitiveness of SMEs in sustainable construction.



Finally, a few words about CONCRETA fair. It is a biennial event and targets the Architecture, Construction, Design and Engineering of the future. It aims to bring together, in a single space, the fields of creativity, sustainability, trends and art to promote the best practices in the construction related sectors in an all-inclusive

and visionary way of the Habitat value chain. Concreta fair in Porto gives Portuguese companies the access to a multiplicity of business, also reflected in a diverse agenda of parallel events, providing the conditions for hosting international co-operation and business meetings, as well as networking and brainstorming sessions to find new clients and distributors. The 2022 edition also provided a digital platform (E+E Concreta), specially selected and highly focused on creating a global ecosystem for the sector and forging closer relations between visitors and exhibitors, promoting sharing of experiences, knowledge, business and encounters. The event also embraced Elétrica, the Exhibition of Electrical and Electronic Equipment, aimed at professionals in both fields. This exhibition presented the latest innovations and solutions for bringing the market and sustainable requirements. This particular sector is one that most reflects the construction growth in Portugal, both in the refurbishment and new construction markets.