



# **Wooden construction for CO<sub>2</sub> reduction in the building sector**

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1.1 The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) sees bio-based building materials as an important lever to drive the green transition. An increase in the share of wood in construction to reduce carbon emissions must be promoted through active and sustainable forest management in the EU and should be not hampered by policy constraints.



1.2 Given the public sector's capacity to lead by example, the EEESC calls on the Member States to increase the use of wood in public buildings, which is below the overall average.



1.3 The EESC also considers that easily accessible support measures to help SMEs research, develop and innovate on alternative building materials are an important means of exploiting the potential of timber construction.



1.4 The EESC suggests that barriers to timber construction arising from formal, legal and technical requirements should be scrutinised as to their necessity with respect to planning quality, and notes that innovations must be able to comply with the state of the art not only by meeting standards, but also through the use of "equivalent alternative solutions".



1.5 As different building regulations also create barriers to the use of renewable building materials, the EESC calls for harmonisation measures and sees the New European Bauhaus (NEB) as an important driver in this connection.



1.6 The EESC recommends the consistent use of life cycle assessments for expert sustainability assessments over the whole life cycle of buildings and when comparing environmental impacts.



1.7 The EESC stresses the importance of minimum standards for life-cycle carbon emissions from buildings and for the corresponding carbon reporting requirement across the construction sector.





1.8 The EESC sees the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) as the main policy tool for setting requirements to reduce carbon emissions over the full life-cycle of buildings. The EESC calls on the European Commission to develop a carbon certification scheme that takes full account of the role that wood products play in offsetting emissions.



1.9 The EESC considers it essential to transfer know-how, as envisaged in the NEB Academy, and to provide appropriate training and development at national level. Training and development on the use of new sustainable construction methods and materials is needed for all those involved in the construction process: planners, architects, engineers, technicians, IT specialists and construction workers.



1.10 In the EESC's view, quality-based procurement procedures, including sustainability and life-cycle criteria, as well as the choice of appropriate procurement procedures that allow innovative solutions, are a prerequisite for achieving climate objectives and promoting timber construction. The EESC therefore calls for both a stronger legal obligation with respect to quality-based competition and climate-friendly public procurement as well as for measures to train contracting authorities accordingly.



1.11 The EESC calls on the Member States to participate in the Austrian and Finnish Governments' Wood POP initiative, which aims to mobilise public and private players in the timber sector at national and regional level and to support the reorientation of investments towards sustainable bio-based solutions and timber-based value chains.