

Better homes ●

● Better built homes to last generations



**EUROPEAN MASONRY ALLIANCE**

# Industry commitments

## > Better homes for EU citizens and the next generations

Buildings are predominantly used to provide shelter and safety to its occupants. Masonry plays an important role in the provision of comfort and security to the users of buildings. A masonry building is highly resistant to **fire, rain, theft** and is **adaptable to climate** change. Fundamentally, masonry units secure buildings with a solid structure and provide protection against severe climate conditions. Moreover, masonry buildings are future proofed and adaptable, meeting the needs of an ageing population.

Masonry units stand out with their high **durability** thanks to a life expectancy in excess of a hundred and fifty years. Hence, the unique characteristics of these products contribute to a long-lasting building. This allows homeowners to protect their property in the long term and to easily pass their residence on to the next generations. Ancient structures bear testimony to the durability of masonry which is built to last at least **150 years.**

The European masonry industry offers products with a range of shapes, colours, formats, textures and finishes. This contributes to the architectural diversity visible across Europe.

Last but not least, masonry construction is affordable. Masonry buildings require little or no maintenance and their properties provide good **thermal performance** and high **thermal mass.** This helps to keep energy bills low and save money.

## > Local jobs, growth and sourcing

The masonry industry comprises a large number of SMEs dispersed across Europe. For this reason, the industry is firmly established at regional level and provides local jobs. In addition, the industry's raw materials, mainly of mineral origin, are available both widely and locally. The quarries are generally near the production plants, keeping the environmental impacts of transport very low. The use of masonry from indigenous sources reduces the dependence on imports from unsecure countries outside of the EU.

The masonry industry directly employs 100,000 people, but indirectly provides over 300,000 jobs across Europe. This contributes to social development and economic growth of the construction sector in the European Union.

The masonry industry provides 2 million homes for European citizens every year



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## > Innovative solutions

Masonry solutions are flexible enough to allow the integration of modern heating, cooling and energy generation systems to achieve excellent energy rating standards for homes. Products continuously evolve to provide better thermal and sound insulation, improved mechanical characteristics and easier workability on site as well as providing thermal mass to keep buildings warm in winter and cool in summer.

The European Commission is currently paying special attention to resource efficiency. Resource efficiency only makes sense if a holistic approach is considered, which means that the whole life cycle of the construction product must be taken into account. In fact, a range of innovative solutions is being developed in order to boost the performance of masonry units and make them highly suitable to future-proofed buildings.

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# Industry pledge

## Europe needs new housing, both social and private, to face the 21st century challenges of our society

### **Safe shelter is a critical human need and affordable housing a fundamental social requirement.**

A German study has shown that in combination with home-based care, 100,000 dwellings adapted for the elderly can spare health and social care systems up to 2 billion euros per year, yet the supply gap for such housing in Germany is continuously growing. Europe is facing changes in society: an ageing population, smaller household formations and continuous population increase. This combination of factors leads to a considerable rise in rents and purchase prices for housing in the major urban areas. Since 1995 house prices have increased by around 70% and rents by more than 30%. Consequently, over 12% of the population of the EU-27 spend 40% or more of their income on housing. These societal and demographic changes are a constant challenge for the housing market. Sufficient quantity of affordable and safe housing is therefore a prerequisite for social justice. The effects of ageing population are already very much observable in our health and social care systems and will

grow to become a major financial challenge. Investing in and funding adequate, accessible housing for independent living at home therefore improves the quality of life, combats old age poverty, creates jobs and unburdens health and social care systems. Improving the energy efficiency of the existing building stock both in terms of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and ensuring energy supply has been, and remains, high on high on the EU political agendas and a main societal task. In that respect not only the energy performance, but the renovation of the existing building stock in a sustainable and manner, including cost efficiency is the main challenge. So far policies and incentives have almost solely focused on the energy aspect of the problem, promoting almost exclusively retrofitting measures while disregarding replacement of buildings as an alternative. Renovating the existing building stock in a sustainable way requires a holistic approach taking into account the local market perspectives and customer demands. Impact factors will include inward migration, distribution and development of households, urban development

plans; adaptation to climate change and natural hazards, etc. For this reason replacement of up to 20% of the post war buildings is considered the most sustainable option. Due to negligence of market perspectives it is estimated that up to 10% of the retrofitting measures over the past years will never pay back.

### **We call the European Parliament, Commission and the Council to:**

- > Coordinate national policies on social housing and increase the supply of affordable housing**
- > Develop financial mechanisms within the existing European funding system to become a real support to the access to property**
- > Increase the supply of accessible housing for an ageing population**
- > prevent further falls in investment of public money by encouraging holistic pre-assessment of renovation measurers and promoting replacement as a possible alternative to retrofitting**



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The European Masonry Alliance gathers the European masonry industry (clay bricks and blocks, calcium silicate, aerated concrete and concrete blocks) representatives for delivering” and add “to deliver common messages on the economy, jobs and growth across the whole of the European Union in the building sector.

## Get Europe building

**For every euro invested in construction, there is an additional boost in economic activity of approximately 3 euro.**

A study contracted by the European Commission recently revealed that for the aluminium industry, the costs generated by EU rules represented on average 8% (with a maximum of 10%) of total production costs over the period 2002 - 2012. Concrete figures for the construction product sector do not exist, but are estimated to be in the same range. Consideration also has to be given to the fact that the use of construction products falls under national legislation that refers to non-harmonised design and application standards.

The development of the housing industry (and of construction in general) can have a tremendously positive impact on the re-industrialisation of Europe because of the manufacturing business of construction products, mainly produced by local SMEs. Growing uncoordinated legislation is imposing additional unproductive

burdens on industry by increasing costs, which results in a benefit for the service sector at the possible expense of the much needed affordable housing sector.

The construction sector is probably the most regulated industrial sector. For instance, more regulations are required to build a house than to manufacture an aircraft. The amount of EU, national, regional and local building regulation is immense and has become almost unmanageable for the players. The consequences are an increased burden for finding and meeting the applicable legal requirements and at the same time a high risk of missing a requirement (this is especially the case for SMEs).

At EU level the Construction Products Regulation (CPR) harmonises compliance with national requirements and establishes a common market for construction products in terms of the free trade, including the placing and making available of construction products on the EU market.

However, the additional burden caused by the lack of harmonisation of building regulations at national level, the slow implementation and harmonisation of common design standards and the unequal implementation of EU laws continues to frustrate the market.

**We call the European Parliament, Commission and the Council to:**

- > Provide a stable regulation for construction products, based on the effective implementation of the existing CPR**
- > Coordinate the EU legislation to ensure consistency and compliance with the principles of the CPR and to avoid overlap with other national and EU pieces of legislation (e.g. Eco Design)**
- > Ensure that European laws are not an “additional layer” of regulation, but an effective set of rules for the marketing of construction products in the European territory**

# Sustainable solutions for jobs and growth

**European regulation must set targets and objectives for the wellbeing of European citizens, not how to achieve them.**

National laws sometime ignore this fact by subsidising certain products or requiring the use of certain amount of a product in buildings. In doing so, these laws disrespect the principals of sustainable construction and considerably distort market competition.

At the market level, more and more players claim that they are providing the most sustainable solution for the built environment. The client (be it the architect, the promoter, the contractor or the end user) is entitled to make his choice based on the most reliable information available. This should be without forgetting that it is

the entire building which should provide the desired performances, not the single component.

All choices must be based on a life cycle assessment at the building level to optimise the combination of all components.

The design, the execution and financial implications of construction works (buildings) depend on a great number of factors, such as local boundary conditions, climate, the purpose of the building, legal and individual requirements, the envisaged useful life, social aspects, etc. It is therefore generally agreed that design, execution and investments must take the full variety of these factors into account to find optimal solutions and make the right, sustainable decisions and product choices. As a result there should be no bias towards any particular

construction solution or material which may not take all factors into account

**We call the European Parliament, Commission and the Council to**

- > **Investigate national legislation with regards to its compliance with EU competition legislation**
- > **Provide the same effort in controlling the implementation of the enforced EU law as in issuing new regulations**
- > **Guarantee a better market surveillance to ensure a level playing field for market operators, including manufacturers, importers and distributors.**

The masonry industry employs 100,000 European citizens and have a combined turnover approaching 10 billion euros. Products are locally sourced and produced in 5,000 plants around Europe.



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## EUROPEAN MASONRY ALLIANCE

### BIBM

Alessio RIMOLDI

t: +32-473-950.690

ar@bibm.eu

www.bibm.eu

BIBM is the Federation of the European Precast Concrete Industry. It works for the common development, the promotion and the representation of its interests at the European and international level.

Masonry units (concrete blocks) are a family of precast concrete products, produced in factories and assembled on site.

### EAACA

Georg FLASSENBERG

Tel. +49 30 25928214

info@eaaca.org

www.eaaca.org

The European Autoclaved Aerated Concrete Association was created in 1988 to promote the interests of producers of autoclaved aerated concrete (AAC) and their national associations across all of Europe.

AAC is a very strong but lightweight and easy-to-use construction material and is used to manufacture masonry units and reinforced products such as lintels. These are produced in factories and assembled on site.

### ECSPA

Antonio CABALLERO GONZÁLEZ

t: +49 (2408) 599 6207

antonio.caballero@ecspa.org

www.ecspa.org

The European Calcium Silicate Producers Association protects and promotes the common of its members at European level. Full members are directly or indirectly calcium silicate masonry unit manufacturers from EU of EFTA countries.

Calcium silicate units are produced of a mixture of siliceous aggregates (sand), lime and water which is formed under high pressure into units. The units obtain their final properties after autoclaving in high pressure saturated steam. Calcium silicate masonry units are used for structural (load-bearing) and non-load-bearing walls, columns and partitions.

### EMO

Antonio CABALLERO GONZÁLEZ

Tel. +49 (2408) 599 6207

acg@euromortar.com

www.eaaca.org

The European Mortar Industry Organisation represents European manufacturers of factory-made mortars and pasty products including masonry mortars, plastering & rendering mortars based on inorganic and/or organic binders, tile adhesives, repair mortars, thermal insulation composite systems (ETICS) and other products. The aim of EMO is to protect and promote the common interests of its members especially with regards to technical and administrative/regulatory aspects. Its members are associations and companies from 14 European Union and EFTA Member States.

### TBE

Adolfo AIELLO

t: +32-2-808.3880

Aiello@tiles-bricks.eu

www.tiles-bricks.eu

Tiles & Bricks Europe represents industry associations and companies from 21 European Union Member States plus Norway, Russia and Switzerland. The association promotes the interests of the clay brick and tile industry in Europe. It provides a forum for its members to exchange information on technical development, sustainable construction, climate change, resource efficiency and other emerging issues.

Clay building materials include protected and unprotected masonry units, such as facing bricks and blocks.

