

EIB Forum: construction industry major partner to build sustainable cities and promote sustainable mobility

The EIB organised on 12th and 13th March 2009 in Barcelona a forum entitled “Connecting Europe: financing mobility and sustainable cities”. While most of the participants were representatives of the transport sector or of local governments, the construction sector was not forgotten. FIEC Vice-President Luisa Todini was invited to present the views of the construction industry on urban infrastructure/development, in particular related to mobility issues.

“Developing sustainable cities requires the various stakeholders involved to take into account the economic, social and environmental dimension”, recalled Todini, “and the construction sector has the knowledge and know-how to design and build sustainable and innovative infrastructure. As buildings and infrastructure play a major role for sustainable urban development, our industry needs to be considered as a real partner by local authorities.” She added that “a major tool for a coherent and sustainable urban development would be to draw up a plan for sustainable development, which would involve all concerned stakeholders and integrate all aspects of urban development (transport, social housing, health and education, pollution...)”

As regards urban mobility, Todini said that both the improvement of existing infrastructure and the construction of new infrastructure should be promoted, with special attention given to interconnection platforms where the various modes of transport could interact with each other for a smarter mobility.

As usual, the main issue was the question of funding. Todini pledged that, as public financing alone was too scarce to fund the various infrastructure needed, no alternative financial instrument should be neglected. She mentioned, amongst others, EU funding through increased cohesion and structural funds, private financing schemes, for example under public-private partnerships and user-polluter infrastructure charging. One of the main points being to smartly coordinate these various public and private instruments.

Finally, according to Todini, a good option to make public investment easier would be to allow Member States and – in particular concerning Italy – the municipalities to apply the criteria of the Stability and Growth Pact in a more flexible way for the financing of infrastructure projects.

The speech of Mrs Todini is available:

- on the EIB website (<http://www.eib.org/infocentre/forum/speeches/index.htm>),
- as well as on the FIEC website (www.fiec.eu).

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FIEC is the European Construction Industry Federation, representing via its 33 national Member Federations in 28 countries (26 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.