1/ What is the current situation of economic activity in the construction/construction material and wood/forestry/furniture sectors?

We only have a few figures on the construction situation following the COVID-19 crisis. In March and April 2020, there were unemployment claims for 60 to 70% of workers, but this is only an estimate based on employers' claims, not the actual volume of work. Furthermore, a press release, of April 27, from the ERMG indicates declines in turnover by sector.

The "construction" surveys indicate for March 2020 that “the demand forecasts are down, as is the recent evolution of the order book. Nevertheless, the assessment of the latter remains favourable for the period of the year.” This decline in optimism is confirmed by the construction confederation: "According to a survey by the Confederation Construction published in mid-February, order books forecast work for the sector for 6 months, a record for 10 years. A few weeks later, the situation changed completely. 39% of construction companies saw their order books fall sharply, while 33% are facing a sharp reduction in their planned work. Only 23% of companies have not experienced any changes, according to a survey of 346 construction companies by the Swiss Confederation Construction. Robert de Mûelenaere, Managing Director of the Confederation Construction: "In a short period of time, the construction sector has undergone a real upheaval. Until the outbreak of the coronavirus crisis, our sector was in good, even excellent, health. Not only were order books full, but growth in our sector of 2 to 3 percent would have been higher than for all other sectors combined. Whereas two months ago, business confidence was still high, today that confidence is in serious jeopardy. "66% of construction companies are now at a standstill or have slowed down considerably, according to the survey conducted by the Swiss Construction Confederation. The industry federation wants to work now on restarting the entire sector"
2/ What are the specific agreements, measures or regulations that were adopted to fight the COVID-19 situation in our sectors; Related to what topics?


3/ What is the current situation of migrant and mobile workers in the construction and wood/forestry/furniture sectors? Is it possible for you to monitor the situation effectively?

The situation is really difficult to monitor. Many migrant / mobile workers returned to their homeland during the COVID-19 crisis. The signals are that they are now returning. The situation is difficult to monitor and this is a major concern.

4/ Is there an exit strategy plan on sectoral level? Are sectoral trade unions involved in the discussions and/or implementation of the exit strategy plan (sectoral level)?

On April 16, the Belgian trade unions (3) concluded a first sectorial agreement in the construction industry which is applicable until May 3. In this agreement, it was agreed to draw up a draft memorandum of understanding by 21 April at the latest in order to enable construction activities to be resumed/continued from 4 May.

On 23 April FGTB signed its memorandum of understanding with the employers. The CSCBIE and the CGSLB refused to sign this protocol.

A new meeting is scheduled for 7 May in order to find a new sectoral agreement.

5/ What are your ideas/proposals to fight the COVID-19 crisis and its effects

- Related to Health and Safety for specific occupations/work processes and conditions
  - Multiple construction actors on the same site / customers
    a. Inform PREVIOUSLY and on TIME about measures applicable within the company/on the site
    Before starting up activities, the companies contact each other to make clear agreements on the course of the (re)start-up of the activities. The safety coordinators are involved as much as possible
    b. Compulsory compliance by external parties
    c. Indicate contact person (SPOC Single Person Of Contact)
    d. Organize daily toolbox meeting
  - Work in buildings occupied by residents and users
a. Voluntariness (see sector agreement)
b. Procedure to determine hygienic condition and state of health of residents/users on site (see checklist);
c. Prior consent of the occupant or user required
d. Anytime:
   * Residents/users are asked to ventilate the workplace 30 minutes before the arrival of the employee
   * Residents/users are asked to make the installation/workshop easily accessible
   * Residents/users must be in a different room
   * Limited in time
   * Training (e.g. on correct use of PPE )
e. Which PRM? Differentiate according to type of activity ?
   In case of an urgent activity in a contaminated zone, at least :
   * Mask type FFP2 or FFP3, protective goggles, disposable suit and shoe protection (see measures for asbestos).
   The infected customer shall also wear a mouth mask throughout the duration of the work

- Related to income protection

- Related to an economic relaunch of the construction and wood/forestry/furniture sectors

- Related to better protection of workers in our industries

  • Social distancing
    o Certainly as long as non-essential companies and essential companies are involved, the existing obligations concerning 'social distancing' will remain fully applicable:
      ▪ Non-essential companies: at all times
      ▪ Essential companies (PC124 urgent work and interventions, see sector agreement (to 3/5): as far as possible infringement limited to the strict minimum. Employers make appropriate protective equipment available. Workers wear them. See sector agreement (to 3/5).
    o Afterwards, maintaining social distancing. If 1.5 m cannot be respected, work can only be started/continued when legally permitted. Employers shall provide suitable protective equipment. Employees wear them.
  • Transport
    o Individual
    o If not possible: maximum number of persons based on 1.5m distance (plexiglass only if legally and for safety reasons)
- **Social consultation: maximum**
  Consultation on a regular basis on the measures to be taken/adopted with the CPBW or trade union delegation and with the employees themselves (according to powers)

  - **Related to specific protection of posted and migrant workers in our sectors**
    a. Comply with the same measures as permanent employees
    b. Information in native language
    c. As far as possible, separate work from workers who have not left Belgian territory
    d. Do not interrupt the working period to return home in the meantime
    e. Strict compliance with the rules governing entry into Belgian territory
    f. Employer certificate
    g. Housing