

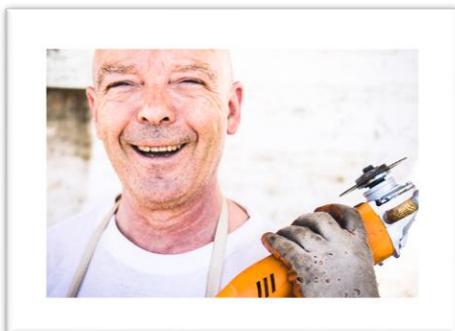
Oped: Skills Agenda - Towards a job-rich recovery with sustainable buildings
Elisabeth HOFFMANN, Senior Policy Adviser, VELUX, EuroACE Member



In its recent Renovation Wave, the European Commission outlined its vision on making Europe's current building stock more energy efficient and sustainable by at least doubling the annual energy renovation rate of buildings by 2030. Without any doubt, Europe has a unique opportunity to rethink, redesign and modernise our buildings to make them fit for a greener, more digital society, that generates a sustained economic recovery and creates better and healthier homes.

But for this vision to become a reality, we will need to have the right framework conditions. Let's focus on one important aspect which has the potential to water down the Renovation Wave if not tackled: **skills**.

As the Commission rightly pointed out **“the transformation towards a climate-neutral building stock will only be possible if existing jobs are transformed to include green and circular skills and if new job profiles emerge”**. So if we want to significantly boost energy renovation rates and use greener technologies to decarbonise our building stock, **we have to train, re-skill and up-skill workers in line with the Green Deal objectives** and provide them with the right toolbox to help them properly advise building owners along the renovation journey. We must also attract new talents to avoid a potential shortage of qualified workers. This will not happen overnight but requires joint action, particularly at national and local level, building on existing initiatives like BUILD UP Skills Initiative. But how can we achieve this?



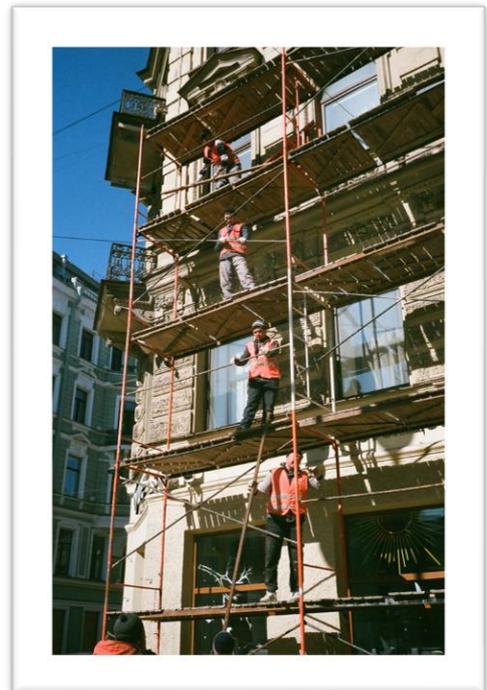
The good news is that the recently launched **European Skills Agenda and the Pact for Skills**, which will be launched during the Vocational Skills Week (9-13th November 2020), **represent good starting points**. Buildings and the construction sector will be among the focus areas and we are ready to work with relevant stakeholders all along the value chain. But in order to move to the next level, we must adopt a more collective approach linked to a real political will (particularly at national level) to mobilise investments in skills.

We therefore call on Member States to come forward with ambitious national roadmaps for training the construction workforce in 2021. Only then we can unleash the full potential of creating new local jobs in the construction sector as part of Europe’s economic recovery. According to a [Renovate Europe study by the BPIE](#), an average of 18 jobs can be created in the EU per million euro invested in energy renovation activities. Important elements will be to:

1. showcase the construction sector as an attractive choice thanks to its diverse range of job opportunities, requiring very different skills and talents; and
2. find more ways to share best practice examples across Member States on training programmes for youth and lifelong learning (similar to [Construction Blueprint](#)).

The construction sector is already active itself, e.g. by educating and training craftsmen to ensure renovations are properly done to lead to the expected results in energy savings and comfort as well as providing (digital) tools to architects to facilitate the design process and address the wider benefits of energy renovations such as improved indoor climate. **But clearly more needs to be done.**

We need a better ‘connected’ construction ecosystem and involve the whole value chain – from workers and craftsmen to architects, energy advisers and city planners. **In this context, the creation of a New European Bauhaus sounds promising.** It could act as a catalyst, identifying new design concepts for sustainable buildings by looking into aspects like climate resilience, accessibility, improved indoor climate and digital construction. This could ultimately help further drive building innovations, attract new talents, and define a more European approach to sustainable living.



There is a clear need for action if we want our building stock to deliver its share of the 2050 climate neutral objective, while providing local quality jobs to millions of Europeans, so let’s get on with it. **The coming months will offer many opportunities to ensure the building and construction sector will not only be decarbonised but also contribute to Europe’s economic recovery and people’s wellbeing.**

