

## THE EESC AND THE CHALLENGES OF EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION

**A**t a conference recently organised by the Section for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure (TEN) of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), in cooperation with the European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC) and the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (FELEDL), the challenges facing the European construction industry were discussed, as well as the need for action to improve the skills of the workforce, reduce construction costs, strengthen worker protection and ensure fair competition. These are, in fact, the main critical issues facing the construction sector in the European Union today, together with an unprecedented real estate crisis, widespread labour shortages,

rules to be reformed on procurement procedures, and the use of abusive subcontracting, all of which have a negative impact on the sector. Opening the proceedings, EESC President Olivier Röpkke highlighted the need to «provide effective solutions to the current housing crisis in Europe and make housing accessible to all Europeans». But the task is not easy because the construction sector on the Old

Continent is experiencing significant staff shortages due to an ageing workforce, the declining interest in this type of activity on the part of the younger generation and the increasing complexity of projects. These shortcomings then result in design delays and higher costs, but also in the risk of a lower quality of work. In addition, rising material costs and stringent regulatory requirements have increased

the overall cost of building a new home, especially in urban areas where land is scarce and expensive and where planning laws often place limits on high-density housing projects, further reducing the availability of affordable housing. In order to tackle these problems, for Councillor Luigi Ulgiati, «innovative construction methods, government incentives and simplified regulations are needed. In addition, the European Union needs huge investments in social, affordable housing. Finally - Ulgiati concluded - it is essential to improve working conditions, offer competitive wages and invest in training programmes, in order to make the construction sector more rewarding, and also increase its productivity».



## EU: DENMARK PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL TAKES OFF

**F**rom 1<sup>st</sup> of July until 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2025, Denmark will hold the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union, taking over the leadership of the EU institution from Poland. “A strong Europe in a changing world” is the slogan chosen by the small Country bordering the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, currently led by a coalition government headed by Socialist PM Mette Frederiksen. The programme is articulated around a vision of a more powerful, autonomous and competitive Europe, with a focus on the themes of green transition, regulatory simplification and economic resilience. Indeed, one of the main thrusts of the Danish Presidency will be the promotion of a green energy transition that does not undermine the competitiveness of European companies. Work will be done to ensure the use of clean and affordable energy, enhance energy infrastructure and simplify the regulatory framework to facilitate investments. In the social and labour field, initiatives will be promoted to strengthen the quality of jobs, access to the skills of the future and the protection of workers. In particular, there is a commitment

to a European Recommendation on quality traineeships, a relevant element for sectors such as tourist accommodation and catering, which are often involved in training and career paths for young people. The Danish Presidency also devotes ample space to the management of irregular immigration, the fight against criminal networks and urban security. The international context and the perception of increasing global instability have also contributed to an important sign of discontinuity: Denmark has officially abandoned the “frugal group”. As a historical advocate of rigour and fiscal prudence, Copenhagen recognised that the new geopolitical phase requires common investments in energy, cohesion, security and defence. With regard to the latter, finally, another break with traditional Danish caution on European defence is worth mentioning: the abolition of the opting-out clause that put an end to thirty years of Danish exception in this regard. A Danish EU Council Presidency, therefore, that represents a novelty, not only for Denmark, but for the entire European architecture.