



The Federation of the European
Precast Concrete Industry

PRESS RELEASE

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BIBM welcomes the Renovation Wave initiative

The Federation of the European Precast Concrete Industry (BIBM) welcomes the publication of the European Commission's Renovation Wave Strategy and calls on EU decision-makers to seize this opportunity to move towards more sustainable, circular, energy efficient and low-carbon built environment. The initiative comes at a crucial moment for the economic future of the EU, which is searching for sustained growth following the coronavirus outbreak and climate emergency.

BIBM fully supports the basic principles of the renovation wave aimed at reducing energy consumption of buildings and **updating the building stock to present and future needs**. Energy-efficient buildings can truly be efficient when a combination of crucial factors like thermal mass, air tightness and ventilation are properly addressed. Energy efficiency is not only linked to insulation, which is what is added in the renovation of an existing building. A proper thermal performance benefits the environment and brings lower costs to the consumer.

Our sector has adopted **life-cycle approach (LCA)** and implemented ambitious goals to improve the sustainability, safety and health aspects of concrete construction, including in the field of decarbonisation. It also uses *local raw materials* efficiently, *preserves energy* in buildings and *promotes circularity* (reduce, repair, re-use and recycle). On a full life-cycle perspective, concrete is one of the most durable and affordable building material for many applications; that is why the Commission's proposal to promote bio-based construction materials over others, without substantial technical and scientific proof, can be misleading.

Renovation and refurbishment are handy solutions in cases, where buildings are relatively new, the building does not have major structural damages, does not contain any dangerous substances and will have the same functional use. In this case, besides energy efficiency solutions like insulation, it is necessary to provide flexibility for including the use of alternative heating and cooling solutions like renewable energy sources or chimneys for wood heating. **Rebuilding can be the most cost-effective and energy saving solution in the long run**. Despite of sometimes having high initial cost, investments will pay off in a long term by low energy use of the new building. LCA tool should be used to assess the impacts of these two solutions and identify which one fits better to users' need. Economic incentives should therefore be equally attributed to the best retained solution.

When it comes to **deep renovation**, the rebuilding option should be considered as a valid alternative to refurbishment. The construction sector has noticeably evolved lately, especially due to the introduction of new techniques of construction that use industrialized processes such as precast concrete elements or the possibility to recycle materials coming from demolition for new building products. One of the possible keys to the avoidance of demolition of concrete buildings is the design of buildings for future disassembly that supports reuse and adaptation. The possibilities given by new flexible designs adapt easily to the new needs of a changing society and are far better and cheaper than having to reach a forced "compromise" due to the presence of constraints linked to the existing work. See the full *BIBM position* [here](#).



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A modern new building is normally more sustainable and flexible, its lifespan lasts longer and energy technologies can be implemented much more efficiently. Significant energy savings can be achieved by **incorporating thermal mass** that can also be *actively enhanced* through the use of Thermally Active Building Systems (TABS). TABS combines the advantage of radiant surface heating and cooling and the utilization of building structure as thermal energy storage. New buildings can be constructed for production and use of renewable energy and quarters can become independent smart grids.

Furthermore, **rebuilding has social impacts** as construction elements can be highly factory produced instead of work itself, enhancing the labor safety of workforce (more automatized production, better environment conditions, etc.) and design of new buildings based on precast concrete industrialized solutions enables to achieve longer spans and free work spaces, an added value specially for the upcoming times if minimum security distances are requested.

BIBM will actively support the **New European Bauhaus** project to help Europe move to a circular economy. New techniques in construction, including precast concrete, could pave the way for designing aesthetic and efficient buildings. With every building made of concrete now, we are building the raw material stock of the future (due to its 100% recyclability).

The major challenge remains the proper implementation of the rules and putting them in the right context for the construction sector. The main specificity of construction products is that they are intermediate products and therefore their **performance should only be measured at building level.**

BIBM is eager to get involved in the future work and provide the precast concrete experience in the field for the full implementation of the initiative.

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BIBM is the Federation of the Precast Concrete industry, involved in the supply of sustainable solutions for the built environment. The sector employs more than 160.000 people in 7.000 production plants around Europe, generating more than 30 billion Euros of turnover.