

# 1<sup>st</sup> European Engineers Day, 8 December 2011

## Key Note Speech

Dear Presidents of the European Engineering Organizations,

Dear Distinguished Guests and Participants,

The economic situation Europe has stepped in is undoubtedly of critical importance. Crisis is here, showing its teeth. Fostering development and growth and creating jobs has now become our main target. We need to act in a responsible and effective manner. The debate on more economic coordination and integration is already open. The European Summit, next door, has to give positive signals. We need to decide when and how we will transform our monetary union into an economic union.

Besides macro-economic reforms, the European Union has to continue the reforms of its financial services. Inappropriate behavior on the side of the market forces has cost us a lot so far.

But most of all, we need to focus on how to strengthen the real economy. This is the only way to deliver growth and jobs to the European citizens. In this context, engineers have an important role to play.

In an open competitive world with obvious priorities on sustainability and innovation, we need well educated, well-equipped and competent engineers, ready to provide high level quality services to meet new challenges.

Mobility within EU is essential for the engineering profession. On one hand, because companies in the construction sector may be involved in transnational projects. On the other hand, because some Member States, such as Germany, already experience labour shortages in the engineering sector or will face these shortages in the future.

The mobility of professionals is still low in the EU. According to estimations by CEDEFOP, 16 million more people will be needed to fill high skill jobs by 2020, which under current trends will lead to severe shortages of qualified professionals.

In this context, new possibilities are provided with the modernization of the **Professional Qualifications Directive** which will be adopted by the Commission next week. This file falls under the portfolio responsibility of colleague Michel Barnier, Commissioner of Internal Market and Services. I would like to say a few words as a Member of the Commission and an engineer myself.

At present, due to the fact that the profession of the engineers is regulated by Member States, engineers willing to provide their services abroad need to have their professional qualifications recognized. Under the revised directive the conditions for the recognition of the professional qualifications will be clearly defined, avoiding in this way each Member State's different bureaucratic bargains.

One key element of the modernization of the Directive is the possible introduction of the **European Professional Card**. This innovative tool will be issued by the national

authorities of the departure country and will help cross-border mobility across the EU, in particular by speeding up and simplifying recognition procedures. More certainty to professionals will be given and the trust among national authorities will be fostered. Furthermore, transparency of the holder's qualifications will increase the confidence of the potential clients.

I am glad that the idea of this card was supported during the public consultation procedure by all European Engineers Organizations.

Apart from professional qualifications, the rules on **Public Procurement** are essential to the engineering sector. The Commission is working on a legislative proposal concerning the Modernization of EU Public Procurement Policy. It will be adopted before the end of the year.

Our first concern is to achieve the maximum simplification of the procedures. This will benefit both contracting authorities and enterprises, especially SMEs. For instance, we will reduce the documentation required from bidders, for example by requiring the acceptance of self-declarations by bidders. Then, only the winning bidder will then have to submit formal evidence.

In addition, we want to pursue the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, that is to say environment, social inclusion and innovation.

We are therefore currently considering the possible introduction of a life-cycle cost concept, which would encourage public authorities to consider the full life cycle of products in their purchasing decisions.

We are also examining the possibility of laying down new procedures for the procurement of innovative products.

Finally, we want to help SMEs to improve their access to Public Procurement. One option examined is to limit turnover requirements, as far as the proof of their financial capacity is concerned.

### **Dear Presidents, Distinguished Guests and Participants,**

The European Commission tries to select its legislative actions according to their real impact on growth and jobs. Last October we adopted a plan which will fund 50 billion Euros for investments in order to improve Europe's transport, energy and telecoms networks.

Targeted investments in key infrastructures will help to create jobs and to boost Europe's competitiveness. The "Connecting Europe Facility" will finance projects which fill the missing links in Europe's energy, transport and digital backbone.

It will also contribute in making Europe's economy "greener" by promoting more environment-friendly transport modes, high speed broadband connections and by facilitating the use of renewable energy in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Your profession will play a crucial part in making this, and many other projects, a success.

All in all, it is clear that in the Commission we are reviewing all available tools at our disposal in order to drive the European economy out of the crisis and into a path of recovery and growth. We need to build our next economy on solid bases. And in this effort, Engineers have and need to play – I repeat – a key role.

Thank you for your attention.