Making CO_2e assessment work for public works: FIEC, EIC and EuDA's priorities for a practical European approach

A new study provides a comparative picture of how CO_2e assessment is being integrated into public works procurement across Europe and sets out four priorities for a more consistent, proportionate and workable approach.

Public procurement can play an important role in reducing the carbon intensity of construction and infrastructure. Yet approaches to measuring and integrating CO_2e performance into public works tenders remain diverse across Europe.

The European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC), the European International Contractors (EIC) and the European Dredging Association (EuDA) commissioned a comparative study to examine current practices, identify areas of convergence and difference, and provide a basis for integrating CO_2e assessment into procurement in a way that is consistent, proportionate, comparable and workable in practice.

Growing convergence, but significant differences remain

The study compares ten CO_2e assessment frameworks used or proposed across Europe – eight covering infrastructure and two covering buildings. It draws on desk research, expert interviews and a stakeholder workshop involving FIEC, EIC and EuDA members.

The analysis covers methodologies, calculation tools, data and procurement practices, as well as monitoring and verification. It finds a gradual move towards life-cycle assessment (LCA)-based approaches, but significant differences remain in system boundaries, data availability, tools and the level of detail required. Infrastructure frameworks generally focus on embodied carbon, particularly life-cycle stages A1–A5, while building frameworks tend to have broader life-cycle coverage.

Towards a proportionate European approach

A key finding is that CO_2e assessment needs to reflect the procurement model and the decisions that contractors can actually influence. Traditional *Design-Bid-Build* gives contractors limited influence over design, while *Design & Build*, *Early Contractor Involvement* (ECI) and *Alliancing* provide greater opportunities to contribute to design, material selection and construction solutions. Requirements should therefore be calibrated to the procurement model and project context rather than applying a single approach to all public works.

The study also finds that measuring carbon emissions alone does not ensure that lower-carbon solutions influence procurement outcomes. Product-level and project-level carbon criteria can be complementary, while carbon commitments made during tendering should be reflected in contracts through appropriate monitoring, verification and proportionate incentives or consequences during delivery.

Four priorities for policymakers

Based on the findings, FIEC, EIC and EuDA identify four priorities for EU and national policymakers:

1. **Recognise procurement-model and project differences**

   CO_2e assessment should reflect the procurement model, project circumstances and the parameters that contractors can influence.

2. **Strengthen the European methodological and data framework**

   Greater methodological consistency and improved interoperability of emission-factor databases are needed to make assessments more comparable.

3. **Introduce requirements through a proportionate, phased approach**

   Implementation should take account of the maturity of the relevant sector and contracting authority, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach. Frameworks could begin with prescriptive requirements (e.g., minimum low-carbon construction binder ratios) and transition to performance-based targets as data maturity improves.

4. **Support implementation through accessible tools, guidance and capacity-building**

   Recognised and usable tools, guidance and coordinated capacity-building across the value chain are essential for effective implementation.

FIEC, EIC and EuDA consider the study an **evidence base for further discussion** with EU institutions, Member States and other stakeholders. Many of the technical and procurement instruments needed to incorporate carbon performance into public works tenders are already being applied in different European contexts. The challenge is to bring these approaches together within a coherent framework while retaining sufficient flexibility to reflect different sectors, projects, procurement models and levels of maturity.

FIEC President, **Jean-Pierre Paseri** stressed that "*thanks to this comparative study's findings, we can further contribute to the ongoing discussion on how carbon assessment can be effectively integrated into public works procurement, while supporting innovation and a level playing field across Europe*".

"*This study, which analyses current European best practice, will also inspire the debate on the international level and will allow us to enter into a dialogue with the Multilateral Development Banks (MDB), which are working on a methodology to support the integration of local, low-carbon supply chains into MDB-financed projects*. " – said **EIC** President, **Gustavo Martínez**.

EuDA Chairman, **Marc Van den Broeck**, concluded that "*the study has confirmed the importance of coherence between the procurement method and the requirements on which contractors have an effective influence. And that a constructive dialogue between administrations and contractors should be part of the procurement approach (e.g. Design & Build, Early Contractor Involvement and Alliancing).*"

Click here to download the Study

FIEC - **European Construction Industry Federation**
Press and media contact: g.garofalo@fiec.eu - info@fiec.eu
Phone: +32 2 514 55 35

EIC - **European International Contractors e.V.**
Press and media contact: illgen@eic-federation.eu - info@eic-federation.eu
Phone: +49 30 212 86 244

EuDA – **European Dredging Association**
Press and media contact: vassia.nikolopoulou@euda.be; info@euda.be
Phone: +32 2 646 81 83