

Saint-Gobain shares findings of first International Sustainable Construction Barometer

Saint-Gobain has launched the Sustainable Construction Observatory and has shared the findings of its first International Sustainable Construction Barometer. The initiative aims to bring together the main stakeholders in the construction industry to promote the sharing of knowledge and accelerate the transformation of the sector worldwide.

The survey participants' feedback provides a snapshot of the development of sustainable construction around the world and identifies the expectations, drivers and trends needed to make sustainable construction a shared reference.

"Saint-Gobain wants to be a benchmark, both a trendsetter and a driving force, to involve all stakeholders in the transition of the construction sector. To achieve this ambition, Saint-Gobain has created the Sustainable Construction Observatory, with the barometer as a key component.

"The good news is that the first results show that sustainable construction is considered a priority by all parties in the main regions of the world. But we note that the full benefits of sustainable construction are not always considered and that the sector is not always clearly understood.

"We also identify the educational efforts to be made, the evidence to be provided and the action levers to be applied to convince the entire value chain of the need to accelerate," explains Benoit Bazin, CEO of Saint-Gobain.

The International Sustainable Construction Barometer survey was conducted by the CSA Research institute with more than 800 respondents (professionals, public officials, associations, students) from 10 countries (Brazil, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, South Africa, Spain, UK and USA). Their responses illustrate how these stakeholders perceive sustainable construction in a context of the fight against global warming, the need to preserve natural resources, the demographic explosion and increasing urbanisation.



Benoit Bazin, CEO of Saint-Gobain. Source: Saint-Gobain/Jean Chiscano

Sustainable construction recognised as a priority issue

88% of respondents say they know the concept of sustainable construction and 97% believe that the implementation of more sustainable buildings is a priority or important.

However, the definition they give is mostly limited to environmental issues, without taking into account the social and human dimension, i.e., the health or well-being and comfort of occupants.

In emerging countries, particularly in South Africa and India, which are more affected by climate problems and rapid urbanisation, awareness of the importance of sustainable construction (building quickly and well from the start) is very high. It is approached with a balanced view, with greater recognition of the impact on health and well-being.



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Operational reality contrasts awareness of the urgency to act

While sustainable construction is widely perceived as a priority issue, it is less visible in the field or in decision-making.

Thus, only 30% of the professionals surveyed have already carried out projects that take sustainable construction into account, whereas 63% of them say that its implementation is a priority, and 57% estimate that more than half of their activity will be in the field of sustainable construction within the next five years.

While students are the most convinced of the urgency of developing sustainable construction, more than half (55%) of them say they would still accept a job offer in a company that is not invested in this sector. The question arises as to what leverage the public and private sectors should use to attract a young generation that is already committed and convinced of the urgency of action.



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To accelerate the development of sustainable construction, the respondents identify three main drivers:

Competitiveness of solutions

For 70% of respondents, all profiles included, the perceived cost is considered as one of the obstacles to developing sustainable construction.

Yet, building sustainably is not more expensive in the medium or long term. By considering the entire life cycle, from the design of a building to its renovation or demolition, sustainable construction solutions make it possible not only to conceive buildings that are very well insulated (direct savings on the energy bill), resilient to climatic hazards and modular (possibility of multiplying the uses of the same building over time), but also to reuse materials. Sustainable construction also brings economic and social benefits through its impact on the well-being and comfort of occupants. At the same time, the ongoing industrialisation of sustainable construction solutions will result in long-term price reductions.

The financial sector, banks and insurers could contribute to positive change by actively supporting the initiators of comprehensive renovation or new and sustainable construction projects.



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Key role of public policy

44% of respondents believe that public institutions are the most legitimate stakeholders to advance sustainable construction. However, even today, most elected officials never exclude from public contracts projects that do not take into account sustainable construction methods.

To accelerate the development of sustainable construction, 52% of students cite private companies. Regarding the role of elected officials, only 22% of students perceive them as legitimate in advancing sustainable construction.

37% of respondents believe that increased regulatory requirements will accelerate the deployment of sustainable

construction, which makes it the second most important factor identified, after funding.

Better support for all stakeholders in the sector

One paradox: the barometer reveals a gap between the importance given to the subject of training in sustainable construction techniques, which seems uncontested, and its expertise, which appears less certain. Thus, 38% of professionals say they do not feel adequately trained in sustainable construction.

61% of students consider the lack of training and qualification of professionals as one of the main obstacles to the development of the sector. This feeling is widely shared in emerging countries: 71% of respondents from South Africa, Brazil and India, versus 50% of respondents from Europe, the United States and Japan.

All the findings from the International Sustainable Construction Barometer are available [here](#).

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