



The European Association of Electrical Contractors

## Electrical contractors are critical for the digitalisation of electricity in Europe

The electrical contracting sector represented by AIE in Europe is made up of businesses which are involved in any type of electrical works in buildings - at residential, commercial and industrial scale - and at the infrastructure level (power grids, mobility networks, public lighting, etc).

Today, the sector in Europe is composed of hundreds of thousands of businesses, with more than 100 billion EUR total annual turnover and 1 million employees. These local, mainly small and medium-sized companies are thriving and hiring an ever-increasing number of professionals to deliver the technologies and solutions required by the energy transition.

Electro-technical service companies are carrying out an evolving range of activities.

First, these businesses are no longer dealing with basic electrical infrastructure and products; they are increasingly integrating a number of connected devices and machines, often controlled by energy management systems.

Second, these companies are increasingly dealing not only with the design and installation of electrical infrastructure and products, but also with their operation and maintenance.

Both trends imply that electrical contractors are leaving the “hardware world” and embracing the “Internet of Things world”.

For our sector to deliver a portfolio of digital solutions and services to consumers, supporting the energy transition, while improving comfort and quality of life, two challenges need to be addressed:

1. **Our professionals must have fair access to the non-sensitive energy-related data** produced by the multiple devices they deal with, particularly to offer high-quality operation and maintenance services. For this to happen, we recommend the speedy development of a limited amount of standardised open platforms, providing a few simple access points (indicatively maximum 3 per building, possibly websites). These platforms should rely on an independent third-party oversight body, which users could lodge complaints with, in case of difficult or discriminatory access.
2. **Our sector needs political and financial support to equip its professionals with the skills and competences required to carry out these new digital tasks.** There is a need to predict which skills will be required in the next years, and to adapt education, training and apprenticeship offers. This must be done very quickly, as the sector is already suffering an important workforce shortage and the gap could widen tremendously if urgent measures are not taken today.

A final area which policy makers should pay attention to is the role played by electrical contractors in the cybersecurity area. Of course, it is not electrical contractors, but rather energy infrastructure operators and energy product vendors who bear the responsibility to guarantee cybersecurity.

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However, our professionals have a role to play, as first, they are tasked to integrate different products into systems making sure these systems, and not only the single pieces of equipment, are secure; second, they are the first point of contact for consumers when an installation has suffered a cyberattack. Our sector should therefore be involved in governments' initiatives in the cybersecurity area and should receive proper training on the matter.

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### Background

This paper has been prepared in the context of an informal European Commission consultation on the digitalisation of the energy sector closing on 15 September 2019.

### About AIE

AIE is the European Electrical Contractors Association. We were founded in 1954, and ever since we have been promoting high-quality and safe electrical installations in Europe. From energy efficiency, energy services and standardization, ICT, smart and new digital technologies, renewable energy, electromobility, and training and education - AIE makes sure that the key strategies and main priorities for the modern electrical contractor as a solution provider in Europe are well represented.