



BUILDING AN ELECTRIC FUTURE TOGETHER

The electrical contracting sector's key
policy asks for 2019-2024

EUROPE'S ELECTRICAL CONTRACTING SECTOR TODAY

The move to electrification and digitalisation will bring massive opportunities to boost the European economy in a way that promotes local dynamism, a greener society and creates important high-skilled jobs. The electrical contracting sector will be the foundation that paves the way to drive this trend forward in Europe and build a strong, green, and competitive economy.

This sector is much more than the electrician we all think of, sticking cables together to turn the lights on in your house – the work of electrical contractors has evolved immensely over the past couple of decades and has become increasingly sophisticated, complex and wide-ranging, as new technologies and digitalisation are mainstreamed into European society.

From smart homes to manufacturing control systems, from electromobility infrastructure to IT networks, from smart public lighting to intelligent traffic management systems... These are just some examples of new areas in which electrical contractors are increasingly active.

Electrical contractors are the professionals on the ground designing, installing, operating, and maintaining all the solutions needed to power the European economy.

By having electrical contractors that are properly trained and high-skilled in all the latest technologies, Europe can make sure that citizens grasp the full benefits of growing electrification and digitalisation.

Not only this, but the electrical contracting sector itself offers important job opportunities that are local and long-term. As over 90% of electrical contracting companies are small to medium-sized businesses, the growth and expansion of this sector means that business and job opportunities will remain at the local level, directly benefitting Europeans. Unlike other sectors such as manufacturing, these jobs cannot necessarily be automatised and these business opportunities cannot be outsourced – these opportunities will stay in Europe and contribute to thriving local economies for years to come.

As the voice for electrical contractors in Europe, AIE and its members are committed to deliver a wide range of services and installations for an electrified, digital and green society to improve the lives of citizens and contribute to a growing European economy. This sector cannot be overlooked if the EU wants to achieve its key objectives – we therefore call on policy makers to strengthen crucial policy areas that will give electrical contractors the tools necessary to help build a strong future for Europe.

1 ADVANCE THE CLEAN AND DECENTRALISED ELECTRIFICATION OF OUR ECONOMY

As CO² emissions from the European power sector decrease rapidly, electricity use must be encouraged in place of fossil fuel consumption. The EU Commission climate strategy released in November 2018 clearly identifies electrification as one of the main solutions to achieve a low-emissions economy.

Our sector commits to continue raising consumer awareness about the benefits of electrical appliances, both from a consumer and climate perspective. We also commit to continue ramping up our skills and availability to bring best-of-class electrical solutions to Europeans.

We urge policy makers to complement our efforts, notably through the following measures:

- **Strengthen transport electrification policies.** Build on recently adopted EU transport and building legislation (e.g. Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, CO₂ standards for cars Regulation) to make sure that there is a comprehensive set of push-and-pull measures in place to roll out both electric vehicles and electric vehicle charging infrastructure; step up efforts to ensure availability and interoperability of solutions facilitating access to and use of electric vehicle charging across Europe; at the national level, step-up communication efforts to make consumers fully aware of the benefits of electromobility both for them and the environment.
- **Improve consumer information about product environmental performance.** Adapt the indicators used, replacing reference to primary energy consumption with reference to final energy use. Primary energy consumption is a misleading and artificial concept; it may even be possible that while primary energy consumption goes down, greenhouse gas emissions actually go up. Instead, final energy use, provides objective and tangible information to consumers. Reference to final energy consumption could also be coupled with reference to product carbon footprint. Both these parameters will show how electricity performs better than fossil fuels, therefore providing the incentives consumers need to invest in cleaner power sources.
- **Make electricity prices competitive and dynamic,** so that they reward households and businesses who adopt electricity-based low-carbon solutions, decentralised generation and energy management systems to support a cleaner and more sustainable power system.

2 STEP-UP EFFORTS TO MAKE BUILDINGS GREEN, SAFE AND HEALTHY

The pace at which our buildings are being made clean, safe and comfortable, even with the support of digitalisation, is still very slow, as very high-performance buildings continue to be a niche market.

Our professionals will continue to inform building investors, owners and occupants about the benefits of higher building standards for them, the energy system and the environment. We will also advise building managers on the most appropriate combination of solutions to meet this objective.

Policy makers have just revamped and strengthened EU legislation impacting buildings (e.g. Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, Energy Efficiency Directive, Renewable Energy Directive). In the next years, policies should build on what has been achieved within the current legislative period and further accelerate the ongoing building transformation.

Specifically, we call on policy makers to:

- **Support the expansion of markets for quality buildings across Europe.** Adopt measures that maximise the market value of and investment appetite for high-performance and smart buildings by leveraging on recently agreed certification and financing schemes (e.g. Smart Readiness Indicator, Building Renovation Passports and Smart Finance for Smart Buildings Facility).
- **Enable the introduction of clean and efficient technologies into multi-occupancy buildings and districts.** Technologies such as solar panels, electric vehicles and energy management systems are successful with single building owners/tenants, who are typically wealthy and for whom decision-making is easy. The challenge for policy makers now will be to simplify and adapt regulatory frameworks in order to encourage multi-occupancy buildings and local communities to invest in emerging clean and efficient technologies, and to allow related business models to grow.
- **Maximise quality and performance of both single building products and systems.** Minimum performance (eco-design) and information (labelling) requirements are proving successful in improving efficiencies of individual products - but to optimise the performance of systems we suggest requiring skilled workers, inspections and monitoring tools. Systems are made from the aggregation of and interaction among several single pieces of equipment, and their performance can greatly vary depending on how they are designed, installed, maintained and operated.
- **Improve the safety of electrical installations, especially in residential buildings.** Make sure that the introduction of more and more power technologies into our buildings does not put too high a strain on existing electrical installations, jeopardising their safety. Policies to achieve this could be: informing citizens about risks, including especially Do-It-Yourself approaches; promoting good working practices and standards within the fire and security sectors; and encouraging regular inspections of electrical installations and equipment.

3 MAXIMISE BENEFITS OF BUILDING SECTOR DIGITALISATION

Digitalisation can significantly support the transformation of the building sector, from planning, to construction and operation. Digital processes and applications can make building planning and construction efficient, enhancing the coordination amongst different actors - from architects and engineers, to plumbers and electricians. Thanks to real time data, digital services and devices can optimise the energy flows within single buildings and even within entire neighbourhoods, improving comfort for building occupants and creating cost-efficiencies for them and the surrounding energy infrastructure.

Our professionals will continue their efforts to ramp up their digital skills to improve the efficiency of their work and to deliver higher quality services and buildings to Europeans. In particular, electro-technical companies will increasingly use digital representations of building characteristics (Building Information Modelling - BIM) in the design, construction and renovation phases. Moreover, we will improve our technological offers, both to automatically optimise energy flows within buildings and within broader grid areas, and to clearly guide building users and managers on ways to improve their energy behavior. These technologies will make the electricians' job more efficient, allowing them to focus physical maintenance on precise areas.

We call on policy makers to support our sector to:

- **Support the development of a comprehensive set of technology and product neutral BIM standards.** An open and complete ecosystem will allow the broad and efficient BIM use by technical contractors, with no risk of technology or product lock-in.
- **Make sure that energy management systems deliver all benefits.** Not all energy management systems are able to predict, detect and address sub-optimal operation or malfunctioning, and none of them automatically knows how building occupants' needs evolve. Policy makers should require their regular inspection by qualified professionals. This way, energy management systems will truly optimise energy flows, improve comfort and trigger savings for building occupants.

4 SUPPORT DELIVERY OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES BY BEST-IN-CLASS CONTRACTORS AND THROUGH APPROPRIATE STANDARDS

To deliver cutting-edge solutions to citizens and businesses in Europe, electrical contractors need to always be up to date with technological and market trends as well as with changes in product and process standards. This is particularly challenging, as most electrical contractors are employed by small and medium-sized companies and have limited resources to learn about fast-evolving technologies and markets and to follow complex and lengthy standardisation processes.

Our associations are committed to supporting the modernisation of education, training and apprenticeship systems for electrical contractors, and to provide simple and concise guidance to contractors on technologies, markets and standards.

In return, we call on policy makers to:

- **Invest in education, training and apprenticeships.** There is first a need to update and modernise learning material and methods as well as a need to enhance apprenticeship programmes, so that young professionals have greater learning opportunities from first-hand experience in the job market.
- **Encourage electro-technical companies to up-skill and re-skill their employees.** With continuously evolving technologies, markets and standards, to remain competitive and to grasp all new business opportunities, electrical contracting businesses must provide learning opportunities to their employees throughout their entire career. Relevant public authorities should support businesses with appropriate incentive schemes.
- **Improve standardisation processes.** First, modify them to reflect both the need for fast adoption to allow emerging technologies to grow and the need for rules that are fit for electrical contractors, who are mostly employed in SMEs. Second, consider initiatives to streamline standardisation, taking into account the convergence of information technology, telecommunication, facilities management and electro-technical industries.



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ABOUT AIE

AIE is the European Association of Electrical Contractors.

Through our membership, we represent more than 1 million professionals across Europe, more than 100 thousand businesses (90% of which are small and medium-sized companies) and more than 100 billion EUR annual turnover. For over 60 years, our mission has been to promote high-quality and safe electrical installations in Europe. Covering both private and public sectors, AIE promotes opportunities for electrical contractors by helping to build a regulatory environment in the EU that embraces the modern electrical contractor. 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.

OUR MEMBERS

