

The future depends on **how we build it**

ALCCC Launch Event Summary Notes

Brussels, May 2023

Introduction

- **Ms. Ann Mettler (Vice President Europe, Breakthrough Energy)** welcomed the audience and emphasised the need to accelerate the decarbonisation of cement. The cement sector is in need for innovative voices. The strength of low-carbon cements lies in that they are cost effective and on the brink of commercial maturity. They need to be scaled up this decade.
- **Mr. Justin Wilkes (Executive Director, ECOS)** emphasised the need to shift from recipe-based to performance-based cement and concrete standards in Europe, creating the much-needed level playing field for low-carbon solutions. The Alliance brings together innovative players who want to ensure the uptake of already existing and scalable low-carbon alternatives.

Keynote

Ms. Katharina Knapton-Vierlich (Head of Unit, DG GROW, European Commission) stressed the need to urgently tackle the emissions from cement and concrete. The European Commission, together with Member States, industry and other stakeholders, is keen to work on this. **The Commission intends to develop a standardisation request for a harmonised performance-based cement standard, aiming to reduce the environmental impact of all types of**



cement. The Commission aims to present this standardisation request in the latter half of 2024, although CEN does not have to wait until then to start its parallel reflection on this.

Furthermore, to achieve our common goals, the Commission must focus on reducing the overall material consumption and exploring alternatives to cement, which involves addressing concerns related to urban planning, building regulations, and promoting the reuse of existing products. This should be founded on performance-based standards and a technology-neutral approach.

Fast-tracking cement decarbonisation Report presentation

Ms. Anna Nilsson (Researcher, New Climate Institute) and Mr. Joren Verschaeve (Programme Manager, ECOS) presented a study by ALCCC, titled “Fast-tracking cement decarbonisation”¹ and the supplementary methodological report on “Clinker substitution in the EU cement sector”.² Both studies point to clinker as the main culprit of cement and concrete emissions, hence clinker substitution is the most effective way to drive down emissions in the short term at near-zero costs.

Moving away from the recipe- to performance-based cement and concrete standards is vital to get us there, as standards today serve as a barrier to the market entrance of existing and scalable low-carbon solutions. The mitigation potential is significant, with the potential to slice the footprint of the industry in half.

Roundtable Discussion

An open and interactive roundtable between different ALCCC members, policymakers, standardisers and other stakeholders offered many valuable insights on fast-tracking decarbonisation.



Key insights from Roundtable:

- A rapidly expanding range of low-carbon solutions, both for cement and concrete, exists today and are ready to be scaled up. These innovative solutions build upon years of research and

¹ <https://allianceLCCC.com/policy/report-fast-tracking-cement-decarbonisation/>

² <https://allianceLCCC.com/policy/methodology-report-clinker-substitution-in-the-eu-cement-sector/>

testing. Many have been successfully used already in flagship construction projects across Europe, demonstrating their strength and performance.

- **Strong consensus** among all participants that a performance-based cement standard for common cement is the most effective way forward for all actors in the value chain.
- **Need to build partnerships across the entire value chain to accelerate decarbonisation.** **Standards** are key, as well as improved legislation, collaboration among industry players, insurance and finance actors, and innovation funding.
- Construction industry has a long tradition of being risk averse. An important task for ALCCC and other frontrunners in the successful marketing of the products is to further **build trust in these new technologies and materials.** Standards play an important role as they are intended to represent the best available technologies and innovations in the market.
- To achieve their goals, **ALCCC members would require further capital investment.** There is a need to increase ambition and acknowledge that the current pace of progress in the industry is insufficient. This suggests a call for accelerated efforts to drive innovation and adoption of sustainable cement production practices.
- **A key barrier to further market uptake of low-carbon cement links to the fact that there is a strong overcapacity in Europe for clinker production,** resulting in excess carbon emissions. Policies are needed to get the incentives right for all actors, creating a level-playing field for low-carbon solutions.
- **The importance of green (public) procurement was widely recognised as they play a vital role in driving the adoption of sustainable practices.** It is crucial for the success of these initiatives to be implemented in a harmonised way across the European Union. Standardised climate certification was also mentioned as a means to ensure consistent and transparent evaluation of the environmental impact of cement and concrete products.

LOW-CARBON TECHNOLOGIES ARE THERE, READY TO BE SCALED UP FOR WIDESPREAD USE. THE PRIMARY FOCUS SHOULD BE ON POLICIES AND STANDARDS, RATHER THAN TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT, ENSURING SUFFICIENT FUNDING, MARKET ACCESS, AND GREEN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT.

