



# Promoting specialized hemp building construction services in the EU

The non-profit organization Nutzhanf-Netzwerk e.V. (NHN) represents the German industrial hemp sector with a dedicated hemp building competence group. The German Cannabis Business Association (BvCW) represents all sectors of the cannabis economy and promotes the use of industrial hemp in the bioeconomy. We wish to highlight how the hemp construction sector exemplifies all three issues identified and how EU action could unlock significant potential for sustainable, cross-border construction.

## On Issue 1: Mutual recognition of authorisations and competence

Hemp building materials (hempcrete/hemp-lime, hemp fibre insulation, hemp blocks) are a rapidly growing segment of bio-based construction across Europe. France has established comprehensive professional rules (*Règles professionnelles d'exécution d'ouvrage en béton de chanvre*) through the association Construire en Chanvre since 2007, validated by the state and enabling hemp-lime buildings up to seven storeys. Belgium-based manufacturers hold European Technical Assessments (ETAs). Yet in Germany, these products and qualifications face severe market access barriers: hemp building products typically require individual national approvals (*allgemeine bauaufsichtliche Zulassung*) from the Deutsches Institut für Bautechnik (DIBt), even when holding valid CE markings or European Technical Assessments (ETAs) from other Member States. A French company with full hempcrete certification cannot seamlessly operate in Germany. This fragmentation directly contradicts the Single Market principle and raises costs for an emerging sustainable sector.

No harmonised European standards (HES) cover hemp building products, forcing manufacturers into lengthy ETA procedures (1.5 to 3 years). Revising existing standards to include bio-based products could take 4 to 5 more years. This gap disproportionately affects Small and Medium-sized Enterprises who cannot afford parallel certification in multiple Member States.

## On Issue 2: Construction site cards

Standardised EU-wide site cards would benefit specialised hemp building professionals working across borders, for example French hempcrete applicators on German projects. Current inconsistencies create unnecessary friction.

## On Issue 3: Professional mobility and qualifications

Hemp construction requires specialised skills not yet captured in most national qualification frameworks. France's VAE system (*Validation des acquis de l'expérience*) offers a model for recognising practical expertise. Germany has valuable training programmes ("Fachkraft Strohballenbau", "Fachkraft Lehmabau"), but these lack formal recognition under trade law (*Handwerksordnung*). A European framework for mutual recognition of construction qualifications, particularly for emerging sustainable building techniques, would directly enable professional mobility and address the growing skills shortage in green construction.



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## Our policy recommendations

We strongly support Options 1.3/1.4 (mutual recognition and harmonisation of authorisations), Option 2.4 (EU-wide construction site card), and Options 3.3/3.4 (harmonised European standards and mutual recognition of qualifications).

Additionally, we urge the Commission to

(1) Accelerate the development of harmonised standards for bio-based building materials, involving organisations such as EIHA (European Industrial Hemp Association) and Construire en Chanvre in the standardisation process

(2) Ensure that sustainability criteria (life-cycle carbon performance, material health, circularity) are integrated into any new framework for construction services. Hemp building materials offer carbon-negative performance (up to  $-194 \text{ kg CO}_2\text{-eq./m}^3$  over the full life cycle) and full material transparency.

(3) Recognise that removing cross-border barriers for sustainable construction services directly contributes to the EU's climate, housing, and industrial policy objectives.

*This response is prepared by Nutzhanf-Netzwerk e.V. (NHN) and supported by Branchenverband Cannabiswirtschaft e.V. (BvCW). NHN and BvCW are available to provide further technical expertise and welcome participation in targeted stakeholder consultations.*

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