



European Construction Sector Observatory

Policy fact sheet

Germany

Good Construction Initiative

Thematic objective 2

September 2020



In a nutshell

Implementing body	Independent association (<i>eigenständiges Netzwerk</i>) composed of over 150 public and private organisations ^{1,2}
Key features & objectives	The Good Construction Initiative (OGB) is an independent industry-led network initiative with more than 150 partners. It provides a range of practical tools and support to help construction companies improve the quality and value of construction processes, practices and projects ³ .
Implementation date	2005–ongoing ⁴
Targeted beneficiaries	Builders, planners, construction and craft companies
Targeted sub-sectors	All sub-sectors
Budget (EUR)	Not Published ^{5,6}
Good practice	★★★★☆
Transferability	★★★★★

The Good Construction Initiative (*Offensive Gutes Bauen* – OGB) was launched in 2005 as part of the New Quality of Work Initiative (*Initiative Neue Qualität der Arbeit* – INQA)⁷. Since its launch, it has proven to be one of the most influential drivers of change within the German construction sector. It primarily targets improvements in two key areas:

- Quality of work;
- Common industry working standards and practices applied by builders, planners, construction and craft companies in Germany.

The OGB initiative is an independent industry-led initiative that aims to encourage and help construction companies improve the quality of their work⁸ and to provide safer working conditions for their employees.

It aims to help public and private stakeholders to better understand and implement occupational safety and health (OSH) measures and solutions promoted by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS). Examples include the National Guide for OSH Management Systems (*Nationalen Leitfaden für Arbeitsschutzmanagementsysteme*), sector-specific guidelines for better quality and working conditions, and quality seals such as AMS BAU, Building with IQ (*Bauen mit IQ*) or Masterful (*Meisterhaft*)⁹.

The OGB initiative provides a range of tools and support services that are designed to help construction companies to self-assess and improve their structures, processes and practices.

Previously known as INQA-Bauen, the initiative was relaunched under a new name – the ‘Good Construction Initiative (*Offensive Gutes Bauen*, OGB) in 2013, and follow three principles¹⁰: (i) Companies should think ahead (*offensive denken*); (ii) Companies should be proactive and actively use OGB instruments and support services (*Offensiv Handeln*); and (iii) partners and regional networks are requested to actively promote the instruments and support services (*Offensiv Kommunizieren*).

To date, the OGB initiative has benefitted more than 3,000 companies and over three million employees. The integrated approach adopted by this industry-led initiative is generally appreciated by the beneficiaries. While the OGB initiative achieved considerable success over the last 15 years, there is room for improvement, in particular regarding its scope. Looking forward, the measure could achieve even greater impact in the sector with improved communication and greater reach.

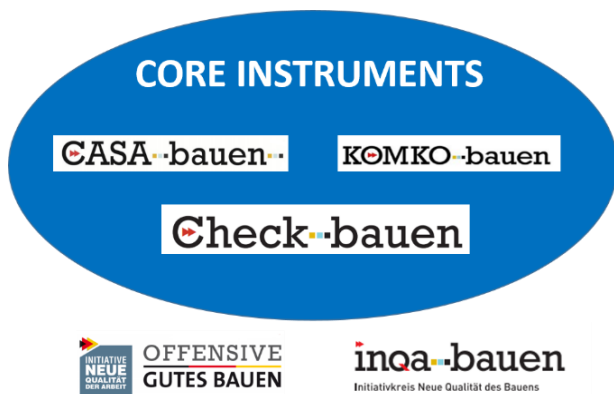
1.

General description

The OGB Initiative – previously known as INQA-Build – aims to establish common rules, principles, instruments and tools to help improve the quality of construction sector activities and provide safer working conditions for companies and their employees¹¹. The OGB originally involved 60 members (organisations, service providers, SMEs, federal institutions) and five independent regional networks.

The OGB features three core instruments, as shown in Figure 1, as well as some support products and services¹² such as Building Cooperation (*KOOP-bauen*)¹³, Good Coordination (*Gute Koordination*)¹⁴, the Good Construction Company website (*Gute-Bauunternehmen.de*)¹⁵ and Building with Machines (*Erdbaumaschinen wirtschaftlich und sicher einsetzen*)¹⁶. Together, they cover all of the basic quality standards that construction sector stakeholders should adhere to.

Figure 1: Core Instruments of the OGB



Source: Offensive Gutes Bauen¹⁷

The use of Check Build (*Check Bauen – Check für Bauherren*)¹⁸ is the starting point for companies that wish to join the initiative. It enables them to understand the diverse products and services offered and how together they can help to improve the quality and profitability of construction projects¹⁹.

As shown in Figure 2, Check Build is a 5-step guide developed for builders, planners, and construction and craft companies helping them to: (i) scope and specify a construction project, including equipment, materials and resources; (ii) plan their project in detail and ensure result-oriented communication and cooperation between all stakeholders; (iii) avoid unpleasant surprises and delays in the construction process; (iv) monitor and optimise project implementation; and (v) maximise the long-term economic and social value of the project.

Figure 2: Check Build – 5-step guide

1) orientation Clarify goals, expectations and opportunities	1.1 Goals and expectations Formulate your goals and expectations for the construction project and the later use clearly.	1.2 Find trusted partner Get early advice from a competent specialist who has your trust - it's also worthwhile economically.
2) planning Make defined goals and expectations feasible - later changes always cost money	2.1 Inform and decide Question which construction methods, building materials and energy concepts can increase the utility value of the building and which are profitable in the long term	2.2 Communication and cooperation Place great value on good communication and cooperation in your construction project (applies to all steps).
	2.3 Financial concept Only accept a financial concept that you can understand and that contains all the essentials.	2.4 Planning and service description Only accept one that is understandable and complete planning and service description, in which your quality ideas are clearly described.
	3) construction contracts awarded Hire good partners for the construction work	
	3.1 Offers and contracts Review the offers and contracts critically. Take the most economical and best provider - not necessarily the cheapest	
4) Accompanying the construction work Regularly check the construction work and promote cooperation	4.1 Check construction work Make sure that the construction work is checked regularly and that complaints and defects are documented and rectified immediately	4.2 Acceptance of construction During the building inspection, check whether the agreed services have actually been implemented in the expected and agreed quality.
	5) Use and preservation of value Maintain building fabric and adjust technology as required	
5.1 Preservation of value Provide preventive maintenance with inspections and maintenance at an early stage, then you will enjoy your building and it will remain economically usable for a long time		

Source: INQA-Bauen; Offensive Gutes Bauen²⁰

The second core instrument of the initiative – ‘Explore Opportunities, Build Systematically’ (*Chancen Ausloten, Systematisch Arbeiten Bauen, CASA Bauen*) – is a free-of-charge self-assessment tool²¹ for construction sector companies. Its purpose is to help companies to self-assess their ability to deliver services in accordance with quality standards. The assessment focuses on managerial, technical and technological capacities and competences. The tool was subsequently renamed ‘Good Building: Company Check’ (*Gutes Bauen: Unternehmens-check*)²² in 2013.

During the first implementation phase of the Good Building Initiative (2005-2013), the CASA Bauen tool featured two modules and seven subcategories²³. The tool was later remodelled, with the launch of the second implementation phase in 2013, into a toolbox featuring two modules with 5 subcategories per module, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Gutes Bauen – self-assessment tool

Company Organisation
1. Strategy
2. Market and Customers
3. Management and Organisation
4. Human Resources
5. Liquidity
Construction Site Organisation
6. Offer and Contract
7. Cooperation
8. Planning and Preparation
9. Work equipment (procurement)
10. Implementation and Control

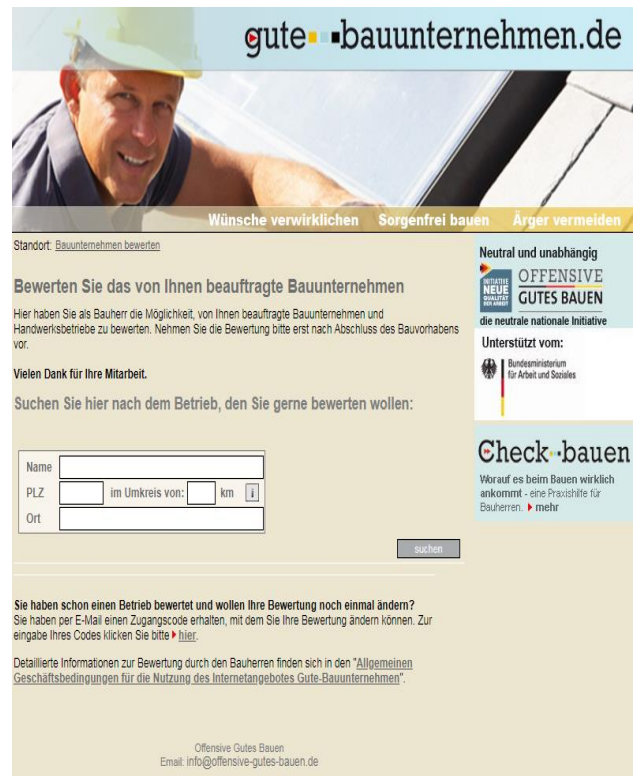
Source: Offensive Gutes Bauen²⁴

The Good Building: Company Check self-assessment tool features subcategories that are based on the AMS BAU framework, which was developed by the German Social Accident Insurance Institution for the Building Trade (*Berufsgenossenschaft der Bauwirtschaft – BG BAU*)²⁵. AMS BAU is a practice-orientated occupational safety and health (OSH) management system that incorporates specific legal requirements for OSH improvements in the construction industry²⁶.

Unlike AMS BAU however, the Company Check tool does not assess OSH management system compliance with national and international OSH laws and regulations. Instead, the Company Check assesses a company’s ability to achieve profits through efficiency, quality and the minimisation of risks throughout the project lifecycle²⁷.

The Company Check also allows companies to use one of the main support services developed within this initiative. The Good Construction Company website (www.gute-baunternehmen.de), as shown in Figure 3, is an independent portal for all construction sector stakeholders. To register their business on the website, companies must agree with the terms and conditions²⁸ and demonstrate they have completed the Company Check self-assessment.

Figure 3. Good Construction Company website



Source: Offensive Gutes Bauen²⁹

The website aims to:

- Improve transparency in construction procurement by publishing information on the quality and capacity of firms to take on construction projects;
- Enable registered users (companies and customers) to access information on companies and their performance history, and enable

customers to score the quality of products/services they have received;

- Provide more efficient matchmaking between products, service providers and specific market requests and conditions³⁰.

The third core instrument of the initiative is 'Construction Communication and Cooperation' (*Kommunikation und Kooperation aller am Bau Beteiligten – KOMKO-Bauen*³¹). It is a guide that provides extensive suggestions and recommendations for building planners, companies and OSH specialists enabling them to better analyse and improve the communication and cooperation practices and processes used in construction project planning.

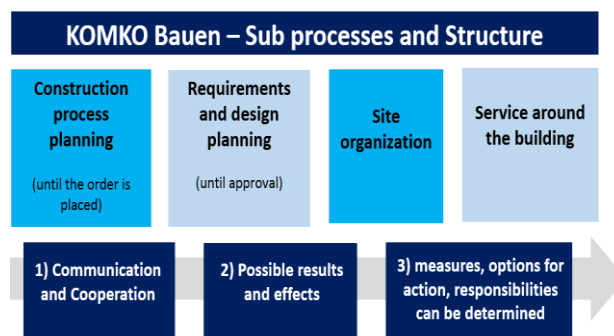
As shown in Figure 4, KOMKO-Bauen provides stakeholders with a structured and customer-orientated framework allowing them to:

- Define the main communication and cooperation actions required to successfully implement a construction project;
- Determine positive and negative effects directly linked to communication and cooperation actions foreseen;
- Analyse and select the most appropriate measures to improve communication and cooperation activities along the four main sub-processes involved in the planning of a construction project.

KOMKO-Bauen is intended to be used in conjunction with other communication and cooperation tools available in the market that are designed to improve the conception, development and implementation of high-quality construction projects. Thus, KOMKO Bauen enables companies to introduce reliable

communication and cooperation activities, and define better construction project workflows.

Figure 4: KOMKO-Bauen framework



Source: INQA-Bauen³²

In addition to promoting interaction and collaboration between companies, partners and third-party providers (public and private), the OGB initiative also addresses specific technical, risk and legal requirements and measures such as OSH management systems, quality checks and construction technology systems. INQA-Bauen also connects construction companies with partners such as *BG BAU* (Social Accident Insurance Institution for the Building Trade)³³ and *Bauen mit Innungs-Qualität e.V.* (Voluntary association for SMEs within the construction sector)³⁴ to provide certification of sector-specific OSH management systems and quality processes.

Overall, the OGB is an initiative that provides construction sector companies with access to tailored products and services to help them to improve their quality of work, enhance their operations and raise the profitability of their projects³⁵.

2.

Achieved or expected results

Since its launch in 2005, the OGB initiative has improved working conditions in the construction sector and helped increase the quality of products and services offered by builders, planners, and construction and craft companies in Germany³⁶. Currently, there are **more than 150 partners**³⁷ who participate in the initiative nationwide, which amounts to an increase of 150% since 2005. The initiative has also successfully extended its presence by growing the number of regional implementation networks from five to 11, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: OGB/INQA-Bauen regional networks



Source: BMAS³⁸

In recent years, the initiative also supported the **formation and development of three professional networks**. These provide technical and practical advice to companies, partners and interested stakeholders on how to successfully implement OGB tools and support services:

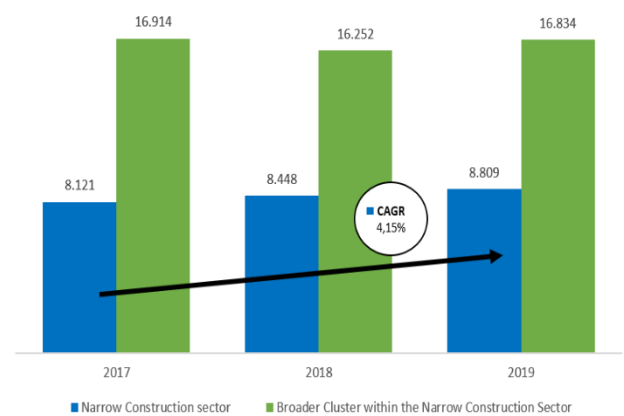
- Consultants Network (*Netzwerk Berater*)³⁹
- Further Education and Training Network (*Netzwerk Aus- und Weiterbildung*)⁴⁰;
- Construction Machinery Network (*Netzwerk Baumaschinen*)⁴¹.

Since its inception, the OGB has successfully targeted three key challenges identified by construction companies and associations:

- Poor quality in project implementation;
- Poor communication and cooperation;
- Lack of common standards to ensure a high quality of work and good working conditions⁴².

To date, the OGB initiative has supported and advised more than 3,000⁴³ builders, planners, construction and craft firms. As shown in Figure 6, they represent just over one third (34%) of the companies that make up the narrow construction sector⁴⁴ and nearly one fifth (18%) of the companies and associations that are considered to be part of a broader cluster of companies within the narrow construction sector in Germany⁴⁵.

Figure 6: Companies in the narrow and broader construction sector in Germany



Source: Destatis⁴⁶

In 2017, for example, more than 810 construction companies⁴⁷ used instruments such as Company Check to assess their project planning and organisational structures, and requested inclusion on the Good Construction Company website (www.gute-Bauunternehmen.de). Those companies represent 27% of the total number of companies that have used OGB tools and support services since the launch of the initiative. This indicates that the OGB initiative is increasingly gaining traction at the national level.

The initiative provides free-of-charge access to easy-to-use and sector-specific support tools and measures, best practices, suggestions and recommendations in the form of guidelines, working modules, methodologies and to-do lists. Examples include:

- COOP Building (*KOOP-Bauen*) 3x7 practical methodology for successful cooperation in the construction industry⁴⁸;
- Good Building: Business plan for companies (*Gutes Bauen: Businessplan für Unternehmen*⁴⁹);
- Evaluation criteria for quality seals in construction (*Bewertungskriterien für Qualitätssiegel im Bauwesen*⁵⁰).

These outputs continue to help construction sector companies improve:

- Working conditions on company premises and on construction sites;
- Communication and cooperation between construction project stakeholders (builders, planners, companies, clients, etc.);
- Quality standards for construction project design, planning and implementation⁵¹.

The OGB initiative also introduced **five basic rules**, as shown in Table 2, that construction sector companies should follow to improve the quality and value of their projects.

Table 2: OGB’s five basic rules to improve project quality and value

<p>1. Be aware: our construction project is not off the shelf</p> <p>Each project is unique. Unique pieces can only be created by qualified people.</p>
<p>2. Understand the same thing, build the right thing: coordinate quality ideas with each other</p> <p>Communication between stakeholders for a good understanding of plans and ideas.</p>
<p>3. Build together, not against each other</p> <p>Customers, builders, planners and other relevant stakeholders for a construction project must work together to ensure a successful execution.</p>

4. Ensure communication and transparency

Detailed information is provided. This means that even a non-specialist client can understand the entire construction process. Information about any changes and delays is promptly shared between the relevant stakeholders.

5. Make sure that both price and deadline expectations are met

Clients should know how structural changes can affect their budgets and deadlines before the execution has started.

Source: BMAS⁵²

Overall, OGB tools and support services have enabled companies to improve their construction processes and operations, the quality of their projects and working conditions for their employees. The three main tools (*Gutes/CASA Bauen*, *Check Bauen* and *KOMKO Bauen*), for example, have directly benefitted and impacted the quality of work of more than 3 million employees⁵³ within the narrow and broader construction sector.

Looking forward, the OGB initiative expects to increase the number of companies, associations, federal institutions, public organisations and other stakeholders joining the initiative and becoming official partners in this independent network⁵⁴. The long-term goal is to continue extending the impact of industry-specific activities and tools that are designed to promote and support better working conditions and quality of work within the construction sector.

A larger number of partners will mean a broader acceptance of OGB principles and ideas. A larger network of multipliers will also help to drive the use, development and adoption of the initiative’s core instruments and support services for builders, planners, construction and craft companies within the industry⁵⁵.

3.

Perspectives and lessons learned

The OGB is a practical initiative that complements other ongoing OSH initiatives for the construction sector. Whereas other initiatives are more focused on regulatory compliance or management systems, the OGB initiative primarily provides guidance on OSH good practices in project design and implementation.

Examples of other initiatives include Zert-Bau⁵⁶, which targets compliance with OSH regulations, and AMS BAU⁵⁷, which provides an OSH management system. Both are focused on improving OSH processes and practices within construction companies. In contrast, the OGB initiative is more focused on OSH good practices in construction projects which can involve a wide range of industry stakeholders, such as builders, planners, and construction and craft companies. In addition, it is also open to all stakeholders, regardless of whether they are network members or not⁵⁸.

The OGB has actively encouraged and enabled large numbers of construction companies to better understand the importance and value of good practices, quality standards and improved working conditions.

According to Josef Hauphoff GmbH (German Construction Company)⁵⁹ and IG BAU (Industry Union for Building, Agriculture and Environment “*Industriegewerkschaft Bauen-Agrar-Umwelt*”)⁶⁰, the OGB initiative has given German construction companies access to practical, user-friendly and free-of-charge tools⁶¹ that are enabling them to better understand their company and project structures, processes and resources.

The OGB initiative offers construction companies access to the tools and support services they need to assess and improve their processes and projects.

More specifically, it provides an informative and practical framework that enables companies to identify areas of improvement within their organisations, assess their OSH management

strategies, learn from best practices and access third-party support services to help them deliver projects of greater quality and value. It is important to note, the development of the initiative’s core instruments and support services has been industry-led.

According to the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS)⁶² and the Managing Director of BC GmbH Forschung⁶³, the OGB initiative is considered to be successful because it has effectively driven improvements in the quality of work and working standards, both in terms of construction companies and projects.

The OGB initiative is delivering value to both construction companies and customers. It is helping companies to comply with market standards and be more competitive. Greater transparency on company competences and quality standards also empowers customers to make more informed choices.

The Good Construction Company website (www.gute-bauunternehmen.de⁶⁴), for example, is an ad-free platform on which companies can display their quality seals and certificates. They can also accept reviews from customers and clients after contractually agreed services have been concluded, in line with specific principles and guidelines defined by the initiative⁶⁵.

For new construction projects, platform users can filter listed companies by their customer ratings, the quality of their products and services, their quality seals and certificates, their experience in the market and their customer references. To be listed on the website, companies must either complete the CASA-Bauen self-assessment or possess a valid certification from one of the accepted quality seals (e.g. Bauen mit IQ, Meisterhaft, Fachbetrieb Ausbau, AMS BAU, seniorenfreundlich-plus, Qualitätsverbund umwelt-bewusster Betriebe – QuB, Hessendach, Bayerndach).

The OGB is incentivising the German construction sector to compete more on quality than on price.

According to companies and associations such as Josef Hauphoff GmbH, Geckeler Hoch und Tiefbau GmbH⁶⁶, Riffel Bau & Fertigteile GmbH⁶⁷ and Aumann Katzsch GmbH⁶⁸, the OGB initiative helps the whole construction industry shift from competition based on pricing to one based on quality, reliability, good practices and performance. In turn, this shift contributes to improving i) the appeal and value of German construction companies to customers, industry and employees; and ii) company performance.

Construction projects are safer and more successful when supported by effective and systematic processes and practices.

According to the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS)⁶⁹, occupational safety and health (OSH) strategies, plans and measures are much more effective when supported by clearly defined structures and processes. This is crucial to achieving its expected outcomes and impacts.

According to OGB partners⁷⁰, companies that use the initiative's tools and support services, especially for project design, are able to:

- Quickly identify improvements that need to be made to their projects;
- Reduce the impact of unexpected risks and setbacks by adhering to sectoral standards on quality and safe working conditions;
- Increase the quality of construction projects, products and services.

According to IG BAU⁷¹ – the Industrial Union for Building, Agriculture and Environment – failure to allocate sufficient resources (technical, economic, human) to implement and ensure compliance with quality standards and safe working conditions can significantly reduce the profitability of a construction project, as well as a company's reputation and growth potential. According to the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS)⁷², poor quality standards and working conditions can also significantly lower employee job satisfaction and customer confidence. Poor standards and conditions are therefore a barrier to success in the short, medium and long-term⁷³.

4.

Conclusion and recommendations

The OGB initiative is an industry-led initiative that has achieved considerable success since its launch in 2005. It continues to help a growing number of companies and employees understand the need for, and value of, quality standards and safer working conditions, supported by effective processes and good practices.

To date, more than 3,000 companies (builders, planners, construction and craft companies) and over 3 million employees have used and benefitted from the tools and support services developed and promoted by nearly 150 OGB partners and 11 regional networks in Germany.

Moving forward, the OGB plans to continue expanding its membership, networks and activities with a view to increasing its impact across the domestic construction sector.

Looking forward, four recommendations are suggested to help improve the impact of the OGB initiative:

- Improved guidelines on how, and in which order, OGB tools and support services should be used would help companies and stakeholders to better understand how to make the best use of those tools and services;
- Improvements in communication and messaging activities would help make the initiative and its tools and services more easily recognisable (e.g. avoid multiple names), to communicate any changes to names or activities more clearly, and to maximise its reach across the sector;
- Clearer information and guidance are needed to explain the relationship between the OGB and other OSH initiatives that affect the German construction sector. Companies would benefit from a clearer understanding of why the OGB is and should be the starting point of their OSH

improvement journey, before they make use of other initiatives, such as Zert-Bau or AMS BAU;

- Clearer information and guidance are also needed to explain the relationship between the OGB and newer schemes, such as the '*Offensive Mittelstand*', which are being promoted by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS). Current and future users of the OGB would benefit from a better understanding of the benefits and opportunities that companies can obtain by using its tools, services and regional networks.

Overall, the Good Construction Initiative (OGB) is rated as a '4-star good practice measure' on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high).

This score is based on the value and benefits that the OGB initiative delivers to its users. The rules and standards introduced help users implement higher quality, safer and more profitable construction projects. In addition, the number of partners supporting the initiative continues to grow steadily. There is however room for improvement. To achieve a 5-star good practice score, the initiative would need to be scaled up to achieve greater reach throughout the German construction sector. Improved communication, for example, would help attract larger numbers of companies to join the initiative.

The Good Construction Initiative (OGB) is rated as a '5-star transferable measure' on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high).

The integrated industry-led approach adopted by the OGB initiative has proven to be an effective way to encourage and help companies improve their quality of work and working conditions. A blend of standards, guidelines, tools, support and competitive incentives (e.g. customer ratings on the quality of contractors) provides an interesting framework for similar initiatives in other construction sectors.

Endnotes

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- 6 Partners support the network with their own resources, including all projects and activities to be developed. Core Instruments are provided free of charge to all interested stakeholders.
- 7 INQA-Bauen was previously known as INQA-Building.
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