



Cross-fertilization of industrial ecosystems in textile manufacturing and construction leveraging digital and advanced technologies to build up green and digital resilience in Europe.

MISSION TO SAUDI ARABIA

FROM 24TH TO 27TH FEBRUARY 2025

The goal of xBUILD-EU is to establish a strategic EU partnership that fosters cross-sectoral collaboration and synergies among the textile, construction, and advanced technology sectors. This partnership aims to act as a catalyst for implementing green solutions and driving a more digital Europe, ultimately enabling smarter living.

xBUILD-EU is focused on enhancing resilience through diverse lump sum grants, totaling €1.05M, to support SMEs in their green and digital transitions, innovation efforts, and internationalization activities. These initiatives are designed to create global growth opportunities and align with the five key objectives of the Joint Cluster Initiatives for Europe's recovery program.

As a cross-fertilization Eurocluster, xBUILD-EU builds bridges between different industrial ecosystems (textile, advanced manufacturing and construction) while leveraging the strengths of the high-tech sector to promote the uptake of digital skills by SMEs and foster the cross-sectoral collaboration needed to move towards a greener and digital transition. This partnership consists of five clusters: three in the textile sector, one in advanced technologies and advanced manufacturing, and one in the construction sector.



From February 24th to 27th, 2025, the xBuild-EU consortium conducted a high-level mission to Riyadh (Saudi Arabia), focusing on exploring market opportunities and strengthening collaboration with local stakeholders.

As the largest economy in the Arab world, Saudi Arabia presents significant prospects in construction, healthcare, logistics, and e-commerce, particularly under the Vision 2030 framework, which aims to diversify the economy beyond oil dependency. The delegation focused on high-growth sectors such as construction, logistics, and sustainable infrastructure, aligning with the country's major development projects.

During the mission, consortium members gained valuable insights into Saudi Arabia's evolving regulatory landscape, investment incentives, and increasing demand for international expertise, particularly in technical textiles, smart construction, and e-commerce solutions. The visit reaffirmed Saudi Arabia's position as a strategic gateway for European companies seeking to expand in the region, leveraging its ambitious reforms and infrastructure expansion.



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DAY 1: 24TH FEBRUARY 2025

Meeting with HUB5 Consulting

Business consultant | Ambassador of Slovenian Business Club in Saudi Arabia | Entrepreneur

With over 20 years of experience in management and consulting within the manufacturing sector, he is a seasoned business executive. As General Manager at SPSV in Saudi Arabia, he developed long-term business, investment, and budget strategies while also providing leadership training for managers and teams.

During our meeting, he shared valuable insights into doing business in Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the importance of trust, personal connections, and long-term relationships. He highlighted that, unlike purely transactional approaches, success in the region requires patience, mutual respect, and ongoing engagement.

He also stressed that networking, face-to-face meetings, and understanding local customs and business etiquette are key factors in fostering trust and building strong business partnerships.



Visit to Big 5 Construct Saudi

Big 5 Construct Saudi is the most important event for the construction and building sectors in Saudi Arabia launched in 2011, serving as a gateway to the \$2.1 trillion market. Co-located with HVAC R Expo Saudi, Stone & Surface Saudi Arabia, FM Expo Saudi, and the Windows, Doors & Facades Event Saudi, it showcases products across the entire construction cycle, supporting Vision 2030.

With Saudi Arabia's construction sector booming, establishing a direct presence in the Kingdom is now essential for success. At Big 5 Construct Saudi, industry leaders, contractors, and suppliers discuss strategies for thriving in this fast-growing market. With mega-projects like NEOM and The Line, physical presence in Saudi Arabia is no longer just an advantage—it's a necessity.



Companies managing operations remotely risk missing out on one of the biggest construction booms in modern history. If your company is in the sector, now is the time to act.

The 2025 edition features 2,000 exhibitors from 60 nations. Saudi Arabia's construction market is expected to grow from \$70.33 billion in 2024 to \$91.36 billion by 2029 (Mordor Intelligence). To meet industry demand, the 13th edition has expanded to a two-week format.



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DAY 2: 25TH FEBRUARY 2025

King Saud University

Advanced Manufacturing Institute (AMI) at King Saud University

The Advanced Manufacturing Institute (AMI) at King Saud University (KSU) was established in 2012 (1433H) as an expansion of the Program of Manufacturing Technology Transfer. AMI plays a crucial role in supporting the industrial sector, which is a key pillar of the national economy, while also providing assistance to both civilian and military sectors. Its mission is to enhance technical capabilities and technological facilities to serve a broader range of industrial clients. Additionally, AMI focuses on providing advanced training, supervising students, and developing research-based innovative solutions in manufacturing, design, and material processing.

We had an insightful meeting with Zeyad Almutairi, the director of AMI, along with other colleagues. Following an introductory discussion and a tour of their laboratories, we explored various possibilities for future collaboration.



Federation of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry

The Federation of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FSC) is the official representative of 28 different Saudi Chambers, established by Royal Decree #R/6 in March 1980. Headquartered in Riyadh, its mission is to support the private sector, represent Saudi chambers at local and international levels, and strengthen their role in national economic development.



As an umbrella organization for Saudi chambers and the broader business sector, FSC advocates for their interests, facilitates economic growth, and enhances the Kingdom's trade relations. Internationally, FSC represents Saudi businesses in global forums, shapes international economic policies, and fosters trade partnerships. It also supports Saudi exports through 31 Saudi-foreign business councils.

The group held the meeting with the Assistant Secretary General for International Affairs and the Business Councils Affairs tea



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DAY 3: 26TH FEBRUARY 2025

Fashion Commission

The group was received by the Director of Investments and Partnerships - Fashion Commission at Ministry of Culture. They were warmly welcomed by a large delegation from the Fashion Commission. After giving us a tour of their facilities and showcasing their machinery, we held an engaging discussion on key topics such as sustainability and recycling. We also explored the possibility of organizing a visit to Europe, allowing them to see the available facilities firsthand and identify additional areas for collaboration.

The meeting was focused mainly on sustainable practices as it is a strategic pillar for them.



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DAY 4: 27TH FEBRUARY 2025

Visit to Big 5 Construct Saudi

On the last day of the mission, the group visited Big 5 Construct Saudi, the Kingdom's largest construction event, to explore business opportunities and strengthen collaborations in the region.

One of the key meetings took place with **SASO** (Saudi Standards, Metrology, and Quality Organization), where we gained insights into product registration, certificates of conformity, and shipment certification requirements. Understanding these processes is crucial for ensuring compliance and smooth market entry in Saudi Arabia.



During the Big 5 Construct Saudi trade fair, the xBUILD-EU consortium held productive meetings with key industry players, including Decan Sports Equipment & Seating Solutions, specializes in sports equipment and seating solutions for stadiums, arenas, and sports facilities, and Sofalca, a Portuguese company specializing in the production of black cork. These interactions reinforced the potential for European companies to collaborate on Saudi Arabia's evolving construction and infrastructure landscape.



The consortium also had the opportunity to explore other companies as Zcamp, a leading provider of innovative modular housing and construction solutions, that offers high-quality, sustainable, and customizable structures.



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