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EFCA outlines pathway for balanced AI and Data regulation in engineering

“To innovate responsibly in safety-critical infrastructure, our companies need clarity, coherence and proportionate obligations. The AI and Digital Omnibuses must strengthen competitiveness while safeguarding Europe’s high standards for safety and public trust,” says Inés Ferguson, President of EFCA, as the Federation publishes its latest position paper.

The European Federation of Engineering Consultancy Associations (EFCA), representing more than 10,000 companies in 27 countries, has adopted its position on the AI Omnibus and Digital Omnibus proposals (focusing on the Data Act). EFCA welcomes the objective of simplifying and streamlining the EU digital acquis, while stressing that consulting engineers require legal certainty, sector-specific guidance and proportionate obligations to ensure innovation.

AI Act: clarity before compliance

In safety-critical projects, premature application of regulation without the necessary technical standards risks legal uncertainty and delayed investment. Therefore, EFCA supports linking high-risk AI obligations to the availability of harmonised standards and clear guidance. The Federation calls for construction-specific examples, which will render the interaction and consequent alignment with sectoral product legislation, clearer. Furthermore, it must be explicit when engineering AI systems qualify as safety components. The sector needs more opportunity to experiment with real-world testing via workable cross-border pilots, as well as guaranteed access for SMEs and small mid-caps (SMCs). Finally, proportionate compliance requirements and clear GDPR-aligned safeguards for workforce-related AI uses in complex, multi-contractor environments are essential.

Data Act: protect know-how while enabling access

EFCA welcomes stronger trade-secret safeguards but calls for clear, sector-specific guidance to avoid divergent interpretations across Member States. Consulting engineers rely on proprietary BIM models, digital twins and infrastructure data that constitute core competitive assets. Access to high-value public sector datasets relevant to infrastructure projects are essential for consulting engineers and consequent project delivery. Therefore, they should remain low-cost or free for SMEs and SMCs, under harmonised and machine-readable conditions. On the other hand, business to government data sharing should be restricted to genuine public emergencies and the subsequent loss of Intellectual Property be adequately compensated. Finally, the sector has long called for easier switching of provider to prevent vendor lock-in and full interoperability in cloud and BIM services, without which collaboration with other partners, for example contractors, becomes extremely difficult.

[Download EFCA's full position paper](#)

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EDITOR’S NOTE: EFCA has member associations in 27 countries and is the sole European federation representing the business interests of professional engineering consultancy and related services, a sector that employs more than one million staff in Europe.