Introduction: The building clients can influence OSH challenges, but therefore more involvement is required in OSH practice at the construction sites. The key is a high degree of safety commitment, and specific people and resources dedicated to aiding, influencing and controlling the main contractor’s OSH efforts.

Methods: In our project, we analyse two client companies as case studies of this type of 'client-led regulation' with providers from several European countries. The first example concerns a large infrastructural transport project, second a multinational IT hardware manufacturer has developed its own professional construction function to aid in the building of projects where it is the client.

Résultats: The two examples above represent client companies that voluntarily go beyond the mandates of European and national legislation. It is vital to understand the mechanisms that have led them to adopt this position and find out if and how these mechanisms are transferable to other client companies in other contexts.

Discussion: There is great potential for improving OSH and working conditions in the European construction sector, if public policy-makers can encourage client organisations to actively partake in regulation and management of OSH activities in major construction projects.

Conclusion: Our research shows that active client involvement in day-to-day activities has the potential to improve the effectiveness of OSH activities across the board. There are several examples of such activities: safety walks and assessments of concrete risks, activities related to serious incidents such as accidents and near misses, and activities raising awareness and boosting cooperation around OSH issues on construction sites.