

EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION FORUM
Press Release – 8/7/2010
ENERGY PERFORMANCE OF BUILDINGS:
Key milestone reached, but much further to go!

The participants in the European Construction Forum warmly welcome the entry into force of the Recast of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (2010/31/EU) but warn that much more remains to be done to ensure the improvement of buildings.

The ECF recalls that energy savings achieved through more efficient management of energy demand are key to bringing down emissions of greenhouse gases responsible for climate change. The built environment plays an essential role in this equation as it is responsible for over a third of all greenhouse gas emissions and 40% of energy demand.

On 19th May 2010 the European Parliament adopted the final text of the Recast of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and thereby concluded the final legislative step for the entry into force of one of the most important pieces of EU legislation that will affect the construction sector in the coming years. This legislation, when fully implemented by Member States, will ensure that all new buildings constructed in the European Union are nearly zero energy buildings from 2021. Residual energy demand will have to be met by renewable energy sources located either on or in the vicinity of the relevant building.

However the recast Directive does not adequately address the most pressing challenge facing the construction sector and European society – the question of the **energy upgrading of existing buildings**. It is a well recognized fact that unless all existing buildings in the EU are given a significant and deep energy renovation that reduces their energy consumption by a significant factor, which according to available information can average as much as 80%, the EU **will not reach its long term target of achieving an 80% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050**. It is for this reason that the European Construction Forum calls on the EU Institutions and Member States to ensure that the potential of action in existing buildings is met and wishes to highlight four priority areas for action:

- **Financing and Funding**

In order to make deep energy renovation feasible for the owners of existing buildings, balanced well-considered and progressive fiscal and financial incentives are required in the short to medium term in order to develop the market for energy efficient renovation. It is likely that these incentives will have to take several different forms and will vary from Member State to Member State, but the EU should set the framework conditions within which Community funding, such as structural funds, and relevant incentives should be designed. In particular, continued support through the funds managed under regional policy objectives should have more stringent renovation requirements attached to them and be maintained and expanded in the area of building renovation. Financial instruments in the form of grants and loans from the European Investment Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development should be channelled into large scale projects that leverage private capital while boosting the energy performance of Europe's buildings.

- **Training and Education**

In order to meet the challenge of upgrading all of the existing buildings there is an urgent need to create a framework for facilitating the development of training and education of all actors in the value chain of the construction sector. European-level action should concentrate on the identification of best practice examples of courses and curricula as well as on facilitating the mutual recognition of qualifications. This is particularly important given that deep energy renovation of existing buildings needs a holistic approach that is carried out under professional leadership that fully accounts for the environmental, social, economic and architectural qualities of existing buildings.

- **Research and Development**

The basic technologies, methods and techniques to achieve the upgrading of existing buildings exist but there is inadequate knowledge about the quantum of projects that must be addressed and on how to most efficiently integrate these technologies, methods and techniques in real projects. There is also an immediate need to collect data on the economics

of actual deep energy renovation projects and to improve the knowledge and risk assessment ability of financial institutions considering such investments. Therefore future research programmes of the EU must include specific economic and technical elements exclusively dedicated to mass dissemination of the results of research in the field of thermal efficiency in buildings.

Public Procurement

Public Authorities in the European Union should be leaders in the field towards the transformation of all buildings to nearly zero energy buildings and should make full use of existing provisions of the Public Procurement Directives and national legislation so as to better include sustainability criteria and deep, cost-optimal renovations and other energy efficiency measures in calls for tender.

With the inclusion of the four specific action points set out above there is hope that the European Union can achieve the long term goals for a low carbon economy. Furthermore studies have shown that action taken to upgrade the energy efficiency of existing buildings can be achieved at low cost and create skilled employment in construction and especially benefit SMEs.

The European Construction Forum stands ready to positively contribute to the realisation of the action points mentioned above and to assist with its expertise in transforming buildings from energy wasters to energy savers.

8 July 2010

Editors notes:

What is the European Construction Forum (ECF)?

The ECF is a platform for cooperation on issues of common interest between independent organisations representing key players in the construction sector and participating on a voluntary basis. The ECF is not an umbrella organisation and does not represent the participating organisations. Consequently, any position paper will only carry the names and logos of those ECF participating organisations that support it. Participants in meetings are the Presidents and/or Directors General of the participating organisations. Where appropriate, working and drafting meetings are open to any person delegated by an organisation participating in the ECF.

What are the aims of the ECF?

The principal aim of the ECF is the establishment and recognition of a single comprehensive policy approach for the European construction sector through raising the awareness of decision makers at European level to the specific issues affecting the sector as a whole. To this end, the participating organisations strive to arrive at consensual views on issues of common interest. This should lead over time to:

- an increase of the construction sector's direct involvement in the preparation of all EU legislative acts, programmes and actions that have a bearing on the sector*
- a more coherent and coordinated approach by the European institutions towards the sector.*



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