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ARCHITECTS' COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DES ARCHITECTES D'EUROPE

ACE POLITICAL POSITION

Public consultation on the progress towards the 2020 energy efficiency objective and a 2030 energy efficiency policy framework

ACE response to the EU Commission consultation

Final

ACE POSITION HIGHLIGHTS

- Energy efficiency in buildings is often mis-directed by the EU and consequently by Member States. There is increasing evidence that compliance with current legislation can sometimes have negative consequences for overall building performance, including energy demand and occupant comfort, and result in increased life-cycle costs. Measurement and verification, along with the anonymised disclosure of energy consumption data must lie at the heart of any future legislation.
- It must be recognised that any construction work or upgrade to a building that is connected with the improvement of energy efficiency can put unnecessary additional financial pressure on building owners and tenants. Further tightening of energy legislation without robust evidence demonstrating its lasting economic, spatial and comfort benefits will erode the credibility of energy legislation and is likely to result in poor compliance and unrealised savings.
- The current framework is already regarded as a barrier to investment by building owners and investors, reducing the willingness to invest in the energy efficient upgrade of the existing stock. Better financial incentives are needed to achieve energy saving and efficiency targets to ensure that private investment in energy efficient retrofit is financially viable without a negative impact on long term building resilience and social inclusion.
- Harmonisation of performance metrics across Member States is essential to monitor how the Directive affects the upgrade of the private as well as public building stock across the EU. Calculated and achieved building performance metrics must become comparable while benchmarking the performance of buildings across national boundaries must also be possible.
- To foster a holistic view on energy efficiency and sustainability the emphasis should be put not only on buildings but also on city, town quarters and urban and rural communities.

ACE POSITION

B. Energy efficiency sectors

- **Do you think that further policy measures are needed at EU level to foster energy efficiency in buildings?**

⦿ **YES** ○ **NO**

Energy efficiency in buildings is not adequately addressed by the EU and national legislation (EED/EPBD and national implementations). Current legislation should be amended to foster a more holistic view of energy efficiency and sustainability that addresses the short and long-term risks of energy efficiency measures and creates a viable economic case for such interventions.

There is an increasing body of evidence demonstrating that investment in energy efficiency measures to meet existing legislative targets rarely bring the predicted benefits and can result in increased energy use, reduced comfort levels and greater life-cycle costs. The new legislation must ensure that investment in energy efficiency measures improves the resilience of our building stock to changes in use, occupancy patterns, demographics and climate.

Furthermore it is not enough to focus on singular assets such as buildings. The legislation needs to create an incentive for neighbourhoods, districts and cities to engage with large scale efficiency measures. Whilst building scale interventions are central to achieving energy saving targets, these must be considered within a strategic legislative framework for more efficient energy supply, transportation, industrial and agricultural production. A sustainable future can only be achieved with combined efforts in urban and rural areas.

With regard to the recent EU policy in the area of energy efficiency in the building sector ACE would like to add following recommendations:

Neither the definition of Nearly Zero Energy Buildings nor the increasing requirements for existing buildings consider procurement and operational risks of interventions and therefore need to be viewed critically. The resulting high-tech solutions are extremely prone for defects, are difficult to implement and are often in conflict with other requirements (e.g. fire safety, sound protection). It is also of concern that the construction methods currently needed to meet energy efficiency legislation can lead to a short lifespan of essential building components and thus a shorter service life of buildings.

Long term maintenance and resilience risks bring an additional challenge to the economic viability of energy efficient building retrofits. With the uncertainty associated with the capital and whole life cost of technological interventions, owners and occupiers have showed a low willingness to invest in the energy efficient upgrade of their buildings. ACE member organisations have reported increasing social tensions resulting from rising rental costs due to the higher investment required for low-energy refurbishments. Tighter legislation that does not address such concerns will continue to be viewed as a barrier for investment by building owners and operators. The mandatory disclosure of operational energy use alongside asset ratings is viewed as a fundamental step for achieving real energy savings in building operation. Extensive feedback from public and commercial developers, landlords and owner occupiers indicates that creating a ‘level playing field’ in this way is the most effective way to engage stakeholders with the economic benefits of energy efficiency. Such a measure would also ensure that energy efficiency measures consider downstream operational and maintenance risks, resulting in more holistic interventions and resilient buildings.

Therefore new legislation must ensure that operational energy use can be more effectively targeted. Design stage predictions must be possible to compare to operational performance and enable more robust verification of actual energy use and comfort levels achieved.

Energy efficiency legislation need to take into account regional differences in the construction process and meet the varying skills of construction workers. The tendency to view energy efficiency as a field exclusively for specialists and to introduce certification- and control-systems limits the reach of energy efficiency interventions.

The legal requirements in the building sector are already exceeding an agreeable level. In order to achieve higher and constant energy and carbon dioxide reduction rates in the building sector, cost-effective and average-oriented requirements in energy efficiency should be preferred over the sole focusing on best practice examples. These would not need to be strained with additional control systems as stipulated within the EPBD (Energy Performance of Buildings Directive 2010/31/EU).

Current directives lack the mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of the legislation to achieve actual reductions in energy consumption at a building level. Nor does the framework require the monitoring of unintended consequences at either building, neighbourhood, urban or national level. There is increasing evidence that compliance with current legislation can have a negative impact on overall building performance, social inclusion and long term economic benefits.

Therefore measurement, verification and the anonymised disclosure of energy consumption data must lie at the heart of any future energy legislation. The EU must urgently invest in the research and analysis of gathered data and the dissemination of lessons learned to industry, academia and policy makers.

Harmonisation of performance metrics (not ratings) across nation states is paramount to monitor how the directive affects the upgrading of the private as well as public building stock across the EU. The new framework of compliance must create the incentives for developers, landlords and occupiers to achieve a cost effective upgrade of existing stock while contributing to social inclusion and economic growth.

Any new construction or retrofit that is linked to an improvement of energy efficiency puts financial pressure on owners and tenants. This pressure should be kept at the least possible minimum and should not exceed capacities of these groups as in some cases and member states it already leads to social exclusion and indebtedness. It needs to be kept in mind that the cost of reaching the targets in energy savings and energy efficiency in the building sector cannot be carried by the private economy alone.

ACE CONTACT PERSONS

Author of the note: Thomas Karpati and Judit Kimpian

Chairman of the Work Group: Judit Kimpian

Secretary General: Ian Pritchard

ACE Secretariat: info@ace-cae.eu

ANNEXES

Link to ACE website: www.ace-cae.eu

Link to this particular issue on the EU Institutions Website:
http://ec.europa.eu/energy/efficiency/consultations/20140428_eed_2020_2030_en.htm