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EU countries missing out on dual gains, energy savings and better health

A report published today, 3 November 2014, by The Buildings Performance Institute Europe (BPIE) reveals that 6 out of 10 EU member states have submitted renovation strategies that are not compliant with Article 4 of the EU Energy Efficiency Directive. An opportunity is being missed to stop energy waste in buildings and kick-start economies – and, not least, to improve the health of people living and working in renovated buildings.

The report "Renovation Strategies of Selected EU Countries"¹, analyzing national renovation strategies in 10 EU countries, reveals that 6 of those 10 countries have not succeeded in setting a clear, strategic path, and most lack bold and determined action plans. Furthermore, 6 months after the European Commission's deadline, 6 out of 28 member states have still not published their strategies.

The disclosed results surprise the VELUX Group, a global leader in the building industry and manufacturer of roof windows and modular skylights, as it sees a great, untapped potential in sharpening the focus on renovation of buildings.

"There's a lot of opportunities to be missed in the countries with no or less ambitious renovation strategies. Stop energy waste in buildings and kick-start the economy, as the Renovate Europe Campaign states. In fact, it is not only about reducing energy use but also about green growth, health and jobs. And, according to our customers all over Europe, that is what really matters," says Ingrid Reumert, Vice President of Stakeholder Communication and Sustainability in the VELUX Group.

"We would also have liked to see the prioritization of health and a good indoor climate in the renovation strategies. We spend 90% of our time in buildings – and buildings account for 40% of all energy consumption. We regret that this dual challenge isn't addressed in the strategies. Energy savings and healthy buildings should go hand in hand," continues Ingrid Reumert.

There are many good reasons for turning buildings into safe, efficient and healthy places. A study by the Technical University of Denmark shows that pupils' learning abilities can be improved by up to 15% when the indoor climate is improved², and those students with the most daylight in their classrooms progressed 20% faster in maths tests and 26% in reading tests³.

Furthermore, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has estimated that 10-50% of the indoor environments where people live, work and play in Europe are damped⁴, and that humid buildings are known to cause health problems such as allergies and asthma⁵. On the other hand, new or retrofitted buildings that are too airtight can overheat which also has implications on health and well-being⁶.



Sources

¹"Renovation Strategies of selected EU countries. A status report on compliance with Article 4 of the Energy Efficiency Directive", Buildings Performance Institute Europe (BPIE), November 2014. Available from November 3 at www.bpie.eu/benchmark_renovation_strategies.html

The report, published 3 November 2014 by BPIE, analyses national renovation strategies in 10 EU countries. As required by the EU Energy Efficiency Directive (2012/27/EU), Article 4, the 10 strategies were submitted within the deadline to the EU in April 2014 and should incentivize investments in renovation of the building stock.

² Wargocki, P., and Wyon, D.P. (2013) Providing better thermal and air quality conditions in school classrooms would be cost-effective, Building and Environment

³ 1999 by George Loisos for The California Board for Energy Efficiency Program. Submitted by HESCHONG MAHONE GROUP. Test score results for over 21,000 students in 2000 classrooms from districts, located in Orange County, California, Seattle, Washington, and Fort Collins, Colorado.

⁴WHO, 2009: "Damp and Mould. Health risks, prevention and remedial actions"

⁵13 See e.g. J. Sundell, W. Bischof, et al., Dampness in Buildings and Health (NORDDAMP), Indoor Air, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 72-86, 2001

⁶14 Investigation into overheating in homes for the UK Department of Communities and Local Government by AECOM (2012)

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For more than 70 years, the VELUX Group has created better living environments for people around the world. Making the most of daylight and fresh air through the roof. Our product programme includes roof windows and modular skylights as well as a range of decoration and sun screenings, roller shutters, installation solutions and intelligent home controls. These products help to ensure a healthy and sustainable indoor climate. For work and learning. For play and pleasure. We work globally – with sales and manufacturing operations in more than 40 countries and around 10,000 employees worldwide. The VELUX Group is owned by VKR Holding A/S, a limited company wholly owned by foundations and family. For more information, visit www.velux.com.

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