

Brussels, 24.03 2015

Time for healthy indoor climate to go hand in hand with energy efficiency

That was the main conclusion of the VELUX Group's "Healthy Building Day" conference in Brussels on 24 March. The conclusion is based on scientific learnings about indoor health and well-being from the VELUX Model Homes 2020 programme. Europeans are ready to invest in renovating their homes. The know-how is available and the VELUX Group is ready to pave the way for sustainable renovation of European buildings.

Brussels, 24 March 2015. At the "Healthy Building Conference", the VELUX Group zoomed in on how to ensure that more than 80 million Europeans who presently live in unhealthy and damp buildings can achieve a healthy indoor climate through daylight and fresh air.

The VELUX Group started its journey with sustainable living in buildings as early as 1999, when it took part in the first experiments to find ways to reduce the energy consumption of buildings. The ideas matured and the growing concern for global warming and climate change encouraged further development. By 2008, the VELUX Group had built several full-scale demo-houses designed for northern and southern climates.

Throughout the many experiments, the VELUX Group had one important priority: concerns for the environment must never precede concerns for the health and well-being of human beings. Sustainable living in buildings is never a question of either comfort or energy efficiency; it must always be a quest to find solutions that benefit both people and planet.

In 2009, the VELUX Group launched the Model Home 2020 programme, comprising six buildings in five European countries. VELUX has gathered many learnings from our Model Home programme, built on the active house principles integrating comfort, energy and environment. Families have been living in the Model Homes while scientists monitored their well-being and indoor climate, as well as energy consumption. With their large window areas of 30-50% of the living area, the elevated daylight levels improved the mood and productivity of the residents.

"Building legislation governing the renovation or building of houses should include standards for energy efficiency, but never at the expense of the health and well-being of people living in them. Energy efficiency and a healthy indoor climate with plenty of daylight and fresh air should always go hand in hand. With The Model Home programme, we have proved very convincingly that it can be done. The high levels of daylight and fresh air improved the health of the families living in the carbon neutral Model Homes," said Michael K. Rasmussen, Chief Marketing Officer at the VELUX Group.

The VELUX Group is very happy that architects, contractors, politicians and manufacturers, as well as scientists and universities, were eager to participate in pioneering, forward-thinking solutions based on the Active House principles.

According to the Fraunhofer Institut für Bauphysik white paper from 2014, 80 million Europeans live in unhealthy and damp buildings, with the risk of developing respiratory diseases such as asthma, and that people spend 90% of their time indoors. The white paper also concludes that children's learning ability improves by 15% in a good indoor climate. At the same time, 90% of the building mass in Europe has already been built and much in need of sustainable renovation.

When asked about the role of a healthy indoor climate, the answer from DI Dr Peter Holzer, an engineer, dedicated researcher, teacher and consultant in sustainable building design, was:

"An essential one. More than 90% of our lives are spent in built environments. So they have to be health supportive and bright and warm. But a healthy indoor environment has to be assured with the same ambition as resource conservation and cost-effectiveness. It was a great achievement of the Model Home 2020 project that it focused on users' needs as well as physical and technical goals."

From VELUX Group surveys it is safe to conclude that Europeans are not only aware of the importance of fresh air and daylight for their health and well-being, they are more than ready to invest in home improvements. So it is time for the VELUX Group to pave the way for sustainable renovation across Europe. Our next exciting project will be a social housing project in Belgium named RenovActive.

The latest report from the Buildings Performance Institute Europe (BPIE), a non-profit think tank, analyses how indoor air quality (IAQ), thermal comfort and daylight are regulated in the legislation of eight Member States for new and existing residential buildings. It identifies loopholes in regulations that are intended to ensure that the European population live in highly efficient, healthy, comfortable and well lit buildings.

Join the discussion anytime at **#HealthyBuildings**

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About the VELUX Group

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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