

TIME TO MOVE FORWARD

A joint industry statement on the future of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive

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At the beginning of this month, the deadline for implementing the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive ran out, three years after it was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council. The Directive is widely acknowledged as having a crucial role to play in the achievement of key European policy goals, since buildings account for over 40% of our energy consumption and over 40% of our CO₂ emissions. It is estimated that, if properly implemented, the Buildings Directive can deliver 45 million tonnes of CO₂ reductions by 2010. According to estimates by the European Commission¹, an effective legal framework for the buildings sector could lead to annual energy savings of 70 Mtoe. The Buildings Directive has three main requirements:

- the production of energy performance certificates for buildings;
- the application of minimum energy standards to all new buildings and to those over 1,000 square metres undergoing major renovation; and
- the regular inspection of boilers and air conditioning systems.

In light of the EU-wide prioritisation of energy efficiency, the seven European industry associations signing this statement call for the Buildings Directive to be used to its full potential. In particular, the signatories call for:

1. full and rapid implementation of the Directive by *all* Member States; and
2. an early revision of the Directive to achieve even greater energy savings and reductions of CO₂ emissions.

1. IMPLEMENTATION SHOULD NOT BE DELAYED

European industry deplores the fact that most Member States have failed to implement the Buildings Directive on time, and that all of them are asking for extra time to transpose key parts of the Directive.

¹ European Commission (2005), Green paper on energy efficiency, p. 32

We call on Member States – and, where relevant, their regions – to implement the Buildings Directive without delay. It is especially important that the EU-15 countries show a lead to the ten new Member States, as it was they who adopted the Directive in 2003 and made it part of the *acquis communautaire*.

The signatories believe that the European Commission should fulfil its role as guardian of the Treaties by taking a tough stance with Member States that seek to delay implementation: Member States should be asked to explain the grounds for proposed delay. Most importantly, they should explain which measures have already been undertaken and why these have been insufficient. They should also outline a programme of additional measures. Moreover, the European Commission should not hesitate to commence infringement proceedings against Member States whose grounds for delay it considers unjustified.

2. THE BUILDINGS DIRECTIVE SHOULD BE EXTENDED AT AN EARLY DATE

1. Inclusion of existing buildings below 1,000 square metres

The current text of the Buildings Directive excludes the majority of European buildings from two key measures:

- the application of minimum energy standards at the time of renovation; and
- feasibility studies for efficient, localised energy supply.

The signatories believe that the Directive needs to be extended to *all* buildings in order to realise the full potential of energy savings and renewables in the buildings sector. There are massive energy savings and environmental gains at stake – extending the Directive to cover all residential buildings would achieve an extra 45 million tonnes of CO₂ savings every year. There is also huge job-creation potential: it is estimated that a further 530,000 jobs would be created across the European Union as a whole.

2. Extension of inspection requirements

Regarding the requirement to carry out regular inspections, the Buildings Directive likewise limits its scope to air conditioning systems and boilers above a certain size, thus covering only one-fifth of such appliances installed in the EU. This means a missed opportunity to promote efficient and sustainable energy applications such as high efficiency appliances, cogeneration and renewable energy production in buildings.

The signatories see a clear need for a debate on the inclusion of smaller boilers, air-conditioning systems and other fixed appliances such as lighting installations.

It is clear that Member States have to speed up training and education programmes for experts in this field in order to be prepared for this task.

3. Public buildings

The public sector is in a great position to give a strong lead on sustainable energy solutions, as a staggering 16% of the European Union's GDP is spent on public sector procurement. Reducing energy consumption can only be achieved by changing behaviour. Public authorities should visibly practice what they preach in order to convince citizens of the necessity and practicability of investment in energy saving measures.

The signatories to this Statement therefore believe that all public buildings – whatever their size - should display their energy certificates, and minimum energy standards should be set at a higher level than for private buildings. Moreover, the definition of “public building” should be clarified to include *all* buildings visited by the public, not just those that are publicly owned – e.g. theatres, supermarkets, banks, sports facilities, etc.



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