



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

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Environment/industrial policy: Live and work in better buildings

Today the Commission adopted new proposals which aim to reduce the environmental impacts of new and renovated buildings by increasing resource efficiency and improving the information available about the environmental performance of buildings. The results should be:

- good for the environment. Almost one half of the EU's final energy consumption and extracted materials, and about one third of EU water consumption, are related to the construction and occupancy of buildings;
- good for the building sector. Europe's construction sector generates almost 10% of GDP and provides 20 million jobs;
- and good for occupants. Sustainable buildings are cheaper to operate and maintain and they have positive impacts on the occupants when it comes to health and well-being.

European Commission Vice-President Michel Barnier, acting Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship said: *"The construction sector should see today's proposals as a chance to innovate and attract new talent. New technologies offer big potential, not only for new houses, but also for renovating millions of existing buildings to make them highly energy efficient. Let's not miss this opportunity."*

Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik said: *"We hear a lot about the energy efficiency of buildings, but we need to look at the bigger picture as well. Better public information on environmental performance is a sure way of raising the overall performance of our buildings. That's good for the environment, good for people's health, and good for their wallets."*

When buildings are constructed, used and demolished, they often have a substantial impact on our environment. While remarkable improvements have been achieved in the field of energy efficiency over the last years in the EU, very little information is available about the overall environmental performance of buildings. [Research](#) has shown that 79 % of households across Europe would like to be able to take environmental aspects into account when renting or buying a property. Despite that, less than 1% of buildings in Europe have been assessed in this respect.

Today's proposals would give architects, manufacturers of construction products, builders and anyone wanting to rent or buy a building access to better information about the environmental and health aspects involved. The environmental impacts of different options in design, construction, use and demolition could be compared more easily, which in turn would increase incentive for sustainable buildings around the EU.

With that in mind, together with stakeholders and national authorities, the Commission will now develop a framework with a limited number of indicators for assessing the environmental performance of buildings. The aim is to provide a tool which can be used

across Europe, by private actors and also by public authorities. A public consultation last year concluded that such a framework would be a major step towards boosting the supply of and demand for more environmentally friendly buildings.

Steps will also be taken to directly improve the environmental performance of buildings. New proposals will make it easier to recycle construction and demolition waste, and to re-use it when constructing new buildings or renovating. This means less waste will end up in landfills, and fewer virgin materials will be required.

The initiatives, together with the Communications on waste and the circular economy, green employment and the green action plan for SMEs also published by the Commission today, launch a renewed resource efficiency agenda for the coming years.

Next Steps

The first set of indicators should be available in two to three years. After that, information will be collected and will gradually have an impact on new and renovated buildings. The Commission will also boost the market for recycling of construction and demolition waste through more support for research and demonstration projects, and more collaboration with Member States to make recycling more economically attractive.

Background

The [Roadmap to a Resource-Efficient Europe](#) adopted in 2011 showed how nutrition, mobility and housing are typically responsible for 70-80 % of all environmental impacts in industrialised countries. It concludes that existing policies for promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy use in buildings need to be complemented with policies for resource efficiency which look at a wider range of environmental impacts across the life-cycle of buildings. Furthermore, such policies would contribute to a competitive construction sector and the development of resource-efficient building stock. The Roadmap defines milestones for 2020 and sets out actions to be carried out by the European Commission. It also called for a Communication on Sustainable Buildings to help achieve the Roadmap milestones.

The initiative will propose approaches to mutual recognition or harmonisation of the various existing assessment methods, which should also make them more operational and affordable for construction enterprises, the insurance industry and investors. This is line with the [Strategy for the sustainable competitiveness of the construction sector and its enterprises](#), which lays down policy actions up to 2020 in the field of investment, human capital, environmental requirements, regulation and access to markets.

Further information

Link to the Commission Communication:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/>

See also

Questions and answers on sustainable buildings [MEMO/14/451](#)

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eusss/buildings.htm>

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/magazine/articles/sustainable-industry-innovation/article_11121_en.htm

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