

REHVA Brussels Summit 2023 – Day 2



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On the 14th of November, REHVA hosted the annual Policy conference. This year’s conference was centered around the theme “Indoor Environmental Quality, Digitalization and Skills in the Decarbonization of Buildings”. The event aimed to delve into these interconnected aspects, addressing pressing concerns in the building industry. Speakers from various sectors, including the European Commission, industry leaders, and experts in the field, contributed to the discussions. This report offers a comprehensive summary of the sessions, featuring insights and key points covered during the conference.

Please access recordings and presentations for further review and information at this link:

<https://www.rehva.eu/knowledge-base/event-presentations/event-detail/rehva-brussels-summit-2023>



Session 1: The EPBD Refresh: IEQ and Skills in the Digital Age

In the first session, **Silvia Rezessy from DG ENER**, presented the current legislation addressing indoor environmental quality followed by an overview of the current state of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) and its priorities: renovation, decarbonization, modernization, and system integration. The directive aims for zero emissions in new buildings by 2030 and a zero-emission building stock by 2050. Key provisions focused on Minimum Energy Performance Standards (MEPS) for existing buildings, emphasizing EPC class upgrades by certain deadlines. Moreover, the regulations stipulate Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) requirements after substantial renovation endeavours, underscoring the significance of air quality in refurbished spaces. Despite being urged to adopt a more ambitious stance on IAQ, Silvia highlighted that the Commission is exerting its full negotiation power to maintain the existing provisions. Discussions raised concerns about the shortage of skilled workers in the construction sector, estimating a need for additional trained professionals

by 2030. Is our workforce sufficient and sufficiently skilled for the fitfor55 targets? The EU has allocated substantial funding through various channels and programs, including the European Social Fund+ (ESF+), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM), and Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs), to develop green skills. The strategy outlined for workforce development emphasized enhancing skills through education, cross-sector collaboration, talent attraction, financial incentives, and aligning skill development with funding and procurement. Moreover, all directives play a pivotal role in nurturing skill development, starting with the EPBD and extending to the EED and RED. In summary, the strategy to address the evolving workforce requirements encompasses enhancing skills through education alignment, fostering collaboration across various sectors and governance levels, attracting talent to stimulate clean energy demand, providing financial incentives coupled with strategic communication, and intertwining skill development with funding and procurement mechanisms.

Following Silvia's presentation, **Jarek Kurnitski, as the REHVA TRC chairperson**, delved into the intricacies of Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) within the revised Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) from 2002 to 2023. He emphasized the complexity of IEQ requirements and the ongoing trilogue discussions aiming to introduce new standards for monitoring and measuring IEQ. REHVA's technical guidance has influenced Member States in these negotiations, focusing on clarifying IEQ substance, differentiating between regulatory aspects and technical guidance. While the EPBD prioritizes IEQ in new constructions and major renovations, challenges remain, particularly in addressing IEQ concerns in renovation standards, specifically regarding ventilation requirements in residential buildings. The proposed revisions aim to include IEQ aspects comprehensively, considering factors like temperature, humidity, ventilation rate, and contaminants, looking ahead to updating guidance documents aligned with EPBD revisions. Looking ahead, upon the release of the final wording, REHVA aims to update its guidance document. This update will encompass the implementation of national standards concerning thermal comfort and indoor air quality/ventilation requirements in line with the EPBD revisions.



Catalin Lungu, REHVA President, **Sylvia Rezessy**, Policy Officer, Unit B3, Buildings and Products, DG ENER, **Jarek Kurnitski**, Chairperson, Technology & Research Committee, REHVA.

Session 2: Reshaping Education & Training: Navigating IEQ & Digitalization

Amandine De Coster-Lacourt from CINEA introduced the BUILD UP Skills initiative, launched in 2011 with significant EU funding and 94 projects since its inception. The initiative focuses on analysing skills gaps, developing tailored training schemes, and enhancing skills uptake in the construction sector. It collaborates with stakeholders to create National Skills Strategies for 2030, aiming to identify and address workforce gaps. Amandine highlighted subsequent initiatives like BIMplement, NETUBIEP, NS4nZEBs, and RepowerEdU, emphasizing the need for targeted upskilling interventions, particularly in small businesses. Implementation of training at construction sites and integrating skills into procurement processes show promise in addressing skill shortages. Scaling successful initiatives to a national level is the next crucial step in advancing the construction industry's skill landscape.

Livio Mazzarella, REHVA Vice-president, continue the discussion with the importance of Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) and sustainability pillars in renovation efforts. IEQ encompasses multiple facets such as ventilation, thermal comfort, air quality, safety measures, and more to ensure healthier and safer indoor environments. Renovation practices now focus on three essential sustainability pillars: environmental, economic, and social, aligning with IEQ principles for healthier spaces. The European Green Deal, initiated to combat climate change and promote economic growth, emphasizes cleaner energy technologies, energy-efficient buildings, and the need for future-proof jobs and skills aligned with ecological transition. In the European Year of Skills 2023, there's a strong emphasis on upskilling and reskilling opportunities, aligning with the Pact for Skills initiated by the European Commission. The HVAC industry requires professionals to update their skills, including proficiency in hourly simulation techniques, energy efficiency contracts, digital skills, and soft skills for effective collaboration. Moreover, the role of Sustainable HVAC Systems in Smart Buildings was highlighted, necessitating adaptive control mechanisms and energy-efficient components. REHVA is actively involved in supporting the implementation of energy directives, addressing qualification gaps, and developing EU-wide HVAC training courses to meet the evolving needs of professionals in the construction industry.

Spyros Mathioudakis, Policy Officer at the European Builder Confederation (EBC), presented EBC's vision, focusing on reshaping renovation skills for a digital-IEQ shift. EBC exclusively represents crafts, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises within the construction sector at the EU level. Its primary objectives include advocating for the needs of these entities in European legislative processes, emphasizing the role of skills in the construction sector, establishing a unified regulatory system, incorporating relevant provisions into EU laws, supporting skill enhancement, promoting the sector's attractiveness through communication campaigns, facilitating dialogue between SMEs and training organizations, and encouraging the exchange of successful practices in dual vocational training.

Laure Itard, Project Coordinator at Brains4Buildings, highlighted "The Brains4Buildings Dutch Initiative." The four-year project, in collaboration with TKI Building & Technology, unites 40 partners, including various industry stakeholders, under the initiative. Its primary focus is to leverage data from Smart Meters, Building Management Systems, and the Internet of Things. The project aims to develop methods that reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions while

improving comfort levels and adapting to user preferences and behaviours within building environments.

Smart Readiness Indicator (SRI) Observatory "launch before lunch"

Sylvain Robert, Project Adviser at CINEA – LIFE Climate & Energy Unit, introduced the Smart Readiness Indicator (SRI). He explained the history of the SRI and outlined the main technical and policy milestones spanning from the EPBD and related regulations. He gave a glimpse of the current status of the scheme implementation, with non-committal test phases being performed in 8 Member States. The role of the European funded projects, markedly under the LIFE programme, in supporting the market uptake of the scheme was outlined.

Pablo Carnero, Technical and EU Project Officer at REHVA, introduced the SRI Observatory, as an outcome of the LIFE Smart Square project. He went over the main content of this online site to stay up to date on the latest SRI policy developments at the EU level, to track and compare national implementation status, and to find out about the most relevant research developments in the field of building smartness.



Session 3: Funding the Future: Decarbonisation & IEQ Meets Digital and the Skills Shortfall

Federica Sabbati, Secretary General at the European Heating Industry (EHI), addressed the skills shortage in the heating and installer sectors, outlining strategies for short-term and medium-to-long-term solutions. In the short term, the focus involves reskilling existing installers, expanding training facilities, and providing financial support during vocational training. For the medium-to-long-term, efforts aim to attract young talent to these sectors through international apprenticeship programs and harmonized accreditation requirements. To support the REPowerEU target of installing 30 million hydronic heat pumps by 2030, proposed actions include developing common technical standards, expanding training topics, and initiating various efforts to attract new workers, including legal migration schemes and youth-focused campaigns.

Csaba de Csiky, Chairman at EnerSave Capital and SEFA Founding Member, discussed the importance of standardization in financing the building transition, highlighting three key aspects: legal contractual frameworks, energy parameters for sustainable buildings, and data standardization. Emphasizing the pivotal role of finance, Csaba underscored the significance of standardized contracts in facilitating trade of Sustainable Energy Assets, accelerating deal closures, and fostering market growth in energy efficiency. The shift towards an “HVAC as a Service” model in the HVAC sector is considered essential, aiming to explore new client opportunities and standardize services through platforms like ENERGATE. Standardized contracts offer advantages such as contract multiplication, off-balance sheet treatment, and versatile use, while securitization amalgamates ESCO’s receivables, meeting investor requirements and driving market growth in energy efficiency.

Expert Insight: Funding the Leap to Decarbonised, Healthy & Digital Buildings

Johann Zirngibl, REHVA Vice-President, as moderator highlighted the substantial financial requirements, estimated at around 1% of the EU’s GDP annually (approximately 225 – 275 billion euros), for funding the energy transition. These costs are primarily due to the extended payback periods, ranging from 3 to 30 years, associated with building energy renovations. To meet these financial needs, both public and private

funding are essential. Various innovative funding options were proposed, such as leasing, HVAC as a service, pay-as-you-save schemes, and energy performance contracts.

- Ilari Aho, Vice-President Sustainability & Regulatory Affairs, Uponor (EHI/WGBC)
- Mikael Börjesson, Director Competence, Sustainability and External relations, Swegon (Eurovent Association/Eurovent Certita Certification)
- Julie Kjestrup, Head Policy & Thought Leadership, Velux (EuroACE)
- Risto Kosonen, Vice-President, REHVA
- Henk Kranenberg, Senior Manager, Daikin Europe (EPEE, EHPA, Eurovent Association)

The exchanges with the panellists concerned their experience on funding possibilities towards decarbonized, healthy & digital buildings to reduce the initial investment step. The discussion showed that the huge demand is not there for the moment. For many stakeholders, to minimize risk and increase thrust is a key factor. Concerning the financial sector, there are buildings that banks are not willing to give loans because the value of the building is too low and the risk of the investing bank too high. The funding situation also very different in the different building segments: residential, public, and commercial buildings. Innovative funding is successful in larger projects. Key for unlocking the potential of innovative funding schemes is to increase the attractiveness of small and medium scale projects towards the financial institutions. The joint efforts should be in business model innovation rather than technology innovation. ■

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