

COVID-19 and Climate crises

– a new reality to focus on the European Green Deal

Last year the main focus was on improving the energy performance of buildings. Reducing the use of fossil fuels and the direct and indirect CO₂ emission of buildings caused by heating, cooling and ventilating and at the same time improving or safeguarding the indoor environmental quality.

And yes, for those looking at the overall environmental impact of buildings, the overall reduction of the environmental footprint of buildings their systems and use by inclusion of issues like: durability, upgradability, ability to repair and Re-Use, ability to re-manufacture, recyclability, recoverability, and the use of recycled materials.

Health of the world population is currently of greater concern. All attention of our actions is focussed on preventing further spread, controlling the effect of the COVID-19 virus and how to overcome the economic impact of this epidemic. It is now the challenge to combine actions to improve the Energy Performance of Buildings (EPB) and the Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) as uptake of all energy saving and CO₂ reduction programs as planned before. The danger for the Climate crisis will not go away because we have to focus on safeguarding our health.

What does this mean for the professional HVAC community? We have to act, safeguard a healthy indoor environment. An indoor environment where the infection risk is minimal due to the correct use of ventilation and air conditioning systems. A first priority is to have a safe indoor environment in workplaces, office buildings, schools, nursing homes, hotels, etc. In most areas people slowly return from their homes to those places where more persons are working together with the now usual hygiene measures and at a lower density. The REHVA Task Force on COVID-19 prepared guidance on how to operate and use building services to prevent

the spread of COVID-19, see: www.rehva.eu/activities/covid-19-guidance.

The REHVA TF should also look to the future, by answering questions on the design, renovation and maintenance of airborne virus proof building service systems. All Air systems where air is used not only for ventilation but also for energy transfer and by consequence require a considerable recirculation rate are not a strong European design practice. They are not energy efficient and do not offer the possibility to stop central recirculation. Renovation of these systems will serve the EPB and IEQ at the same time.

We need to develop proposals that enable the transition to remain on course in the short and longer term. Implementing the European Green Deal is the best way to green recovery, recovery measures should boost demand and encourage investment. We need a trampoline for renewed activity. Implementation of the national climate agreements provides an investment impulse of billions of euros in the economy. That money does not go to the import of fossil fuels, but to labor-intensive companies in the Europe.

The new reality brought about by the COVID-19 health crisis has reinforced the need to align the climate goals of the European Green Deal with the much-needed economic recovery efforts to build a more resilient, robust and sustainable EU economy. ■



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