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LEnSE

Methodology Development towards a Label for Environmental,
Social and Economic Buildings

SSP Thematic Priority 8.1 Policy-oriented research

D3.6 Report of First Trans-national Expert workshop (1st TEW)

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First Trans-national Expert Workshop (1st TEW):

'Scope of issue and structure and format of the methodology'

14th November 2006

CDMA building – European Commission - Brussels

1. Introduction

The workshop was opened by Mr. Johan van Dessel with welcome statements and a description on the workshop programme.

2. Presentations

2.1. Presentations from LEnSE Partners

After a short round the table introduction of all participants presentations from some of the LEnSE partners were given to introduce the LEnSE project in general as well as to inform on the goal and the status of the project.

- Mrs Katrien Putzeys, Belgian Building Research Institute (BBRI)
Overview on LEnSE
- Mr David O'Rorke, Imperial College
Identification and Assortment of Sustainability Issues
- Mr Tim Bevan, Building Research Establishment (BRE)
Development of a Sustainability Assessment Methodology
- Mr Oliver Kornadt, Bauphysikbüro Kornadt & Partner
Communication in LEnSE: Results on National Stakeholder Meetings

2.2. Keynote speeches

Keynote speeches were given by

- Mr. Wolfram Trinius, Ingenieurbüro Dr.-Ing. Trinius, Germany
CEN TC350 Sustainability of Construction Works - A view on sustainability assessment
- Bernard Wallyn, Flemish Company for Social Housing, Belgium
Sustainable Social Housing in Flanders
- Bouwe Taverne, Rabo Real Estate, Netherlands
The Triple P as Guidance to Sustainable Cities and Villages

These presentations formed the background for key questions asked in the following part of the workshop. A copy of all presentation can be found in Annex.

3. Round table panel discussion

The discussion was moderated by Mrs Claire Lowe and Mr Oliver Kornadt.

3.1 Key questions asked to the experts

On the following three topics key questions was asked to the experts and answers and comments was discussed around the table.

3.1.1 CEN/TC350 – Experts views on using CEN results for LEnSE and vice versa

- It was mentioned that there is a basic difference between CEN and LEnSE. CEN standards are only dealing with quantitative issues, where LEnSE also takes qualitative issues into account. By that LEnSE could run into typical difficult problems with a criteria based approach (Trinius). Further one the target groups of CEN and LEnSE seems to be very different and in general one has to consider different stakeholders' perspectives, e.g. architects aspect vs. user aspects (Taverne).
- Especially for architects it is important to have practically useable interfaces/methods. Architectural community is shy of standardisation. Architects want to think free of standards. Tie in the CEN issues in to calculation methods behind LEnSE, but make the front-end more user friendly, i.e. use of LEnSE as a design tool to optimise the design in terms of sustainability, early in the design process and as easy as possible to use (Joyce).
- A close link between CEN and LEnSE would be helpful for both sides. The method for quantification in LEnSE is not with the same approach as adopted in CEN and technical performance and service life planning aspects missing from current LEnSE documentation. Never the less future CEN items/frameworks could rely on the evaluation/outputs from projects such as LEnSE (Trinius).

3.1.2 Social Housing, new and existing buildings

- Mr. Wallyn suggested that social housing is sustainable housing. And sustainability is the highest need of a society. LEnSE should focus on new and existing buildings.
- Especially in existing buildings sector there is an opportunity to innovate. There is also a great need for proper tools in this area including external, infrastructure, and regeneration issues (Wallyn). Many of the existing buildings are below the standards. Nowadays, 80% of an architect's work is dealing with existing buildings. More work is needed on existing buildings and regeneration projects. "Sustainable communities" will become important in the future (Joyce).
- Today new buildings will become old buildings in future (van Hulten). Focusing on old buildings requires a lot more information (e.g. use of hazardous materials – not having any information on façade decorations may lead to not allowing certain insulation solution). As a result, the same assessment tool for new and existing buildings might disadvantage the existing building stock. It may be difficult to compare existing and new buildings by using the same scale (Blum).

- The same criteria are used to compare new and existing buildings (here methodology), but the way you measure it may be different, or the benchmarks could be different (van Hulst). For this project the methodology is from importance. The methodology should be the same for new and existing buildings. In the testing phase, LEnSE project will work with new buildings but identify at the same time where the situation is different for existing buildings. It was a decision from LEnSE project team to focus on new building to keep the workload realistic (Putzeys).

3.1.3 Economic aspects

- Introduction question: Would LEnSE be used to make financial related decisions for investment in new/existing real estate? (Kornadt)
- It is necessary for investment to understand current and future value of the building. Therefore all kinds of assessment methods are useful for understanding the value of buildings. These methods are used along with existing economic measures on value to make decisions (Taverne).
- WWF teamed up with large investors (e.g. Halifax group) to show that such institutes are interested in environmental/sustainable performance. Green mortgages are linked to Code for Sustainable Homes. Products are linked to eco-labelling schemes, i.e. our product will earn x points under CSB/LEnSE. But, there needs to be a clear standard to benchmark against (Wheeler).
- Another example is the HypoBank e.g. is/was a supporter of a label (Immo-pass), their advertising is: "Buying a house without a pass is like buying a car without a catalyser". But their label is not successful on the market. Quality management can be seen as part of label. A good quality might become an important issue for insurers (Blum).
- The label should be linked to people which are making a choice. A main question is: What is interesting is a tool to compare buildings, e.g. an existing building may need a lot of investments. Can you then still consider it as sustainable? (Szeke).
- Some were surprised by one slide of Oliver's presentation, which has shown a result of one question of the questionnaires filled out after the national stakeholders meeting. The slide shows that added value is considered as a very low important issue for a sustainability rating of buildings. A comparable label is needed to promote sustainable construction to inform the un-informed. Economic issues are badly needed to drive sustainability. The user cannot judge sustainability as he is influenced by emotions (Joyce).
- Economic aspect is important, but across the whole life cycle of the building (Roulet). It is necessary to see if there is a peak within the life cycle of economic aspects (Trinius). Evaluating risk is a powerful tool to influence investors.
- For the mainstream market eco-labelling is not important, only for a niche market (Taverne).

3.2 Open discussion

During the open discussion the following topics was discussed after a launch of the topic by Mrs Claire Lowe or Mr Oliver Kornadt.

3.2.1 Acceptance of a label for sustainable buildings

- It was mentioned that it is most important to differentiate between the label and the methodology. The label should be easy to understand. Labels often face risk of guiding in the wrong direction. Quantification should be of a central part of any label system (Trinius).
- Labels should be a communication instrument and indisputable as well as transparent. As sustainability cannot be cached solely on quantitative approach; there is a need to include some elements of qualitative assessment (Taverne).
- Labelling approach provides information on many levels for various stakeholders. The label is for people; therefore it must be understandable for them.
- Acceptance of label to whom? It is important to drive awareness of labels amongst the end user/customer. It is necessary for any label to be successful to become a well known label, i.e. knowledge amongst the consumer. E.g. fair-trade-logo is well known, so LEnSE could learn from that (Wheeler). To rise awareness and work with drivers to build on existing, well-known labels/initiatives. E.g. Eco-bau came together with well-known Minergie to Eco-Minergie. Now Eco is well known (Roulet).
- A most important aspect is a credible label at different levels. It needs to be a complete system so it remains credible over time (Joyce).
- There is an uncertainty about the overlapping of social, economic and environmental themes. One stakeholder may view one issue as more important than the other (Szeker).
- A compulsory system does not work as well as voluntary (Taverne). Compulsory standards in some countries are drivers for lower performance and corruption - cultural differences across the EU has to be taken into account (Joyce).

3.2.2 Kind of Label?

- A credible label is required, credible for all different levels (Joyce). Methodology has to be aware of being able to use for people (van Hulten).
- A major question is: What is more important social, economic or ecologic? Is it useful to have one label for each? (Szeker).
- The label should speak the language of the customer/user. The label is for buildings and the people want the following: 1. Rapid information e.g. by a quick easy understandable symbol, 2. Additional more detailed information. A simple label will not be sufficient; therefore step 2 is additionally important (Blum).
- The work with the label should not take longer than one or two days. (Peupartier)
- The label should be flexible. It should be made applicable for different kind of buildings (Taverne).
- All buildings are linked to other surroundings (i.e. transport facilities). If the surrounding is changing, the label of the building will change too. A label with A, B, ... G is just a temporally issue (Joyce).

3.2.3 Sustainable buildings and market

- The question of introduction: Common opinion is, it is nice to have sustainability but you have to pay for it. People often think: sustainable buildings are expensive. How do sustainable buildings look like? (Kornadt).

- What is the value for the user? The opinion in the Netherlands is: sustainable buildings are influencing other buildings where you recognise “quality” more. And often quality standard vs. sustainability standard. It is most important that life-cycle costs are included (Taverne).
- People are taking standard building and adding sustainability. It would be better if the design team members are influencing each other. This results in the question: At what stage should the label be used? Highest value is reached when it is used within the design stage. And a sustainable building is possible to realise with the same price! (Joyce)

3.2.4 Comparison of environmental, social and economical criteria

- The final label should pull all three aspects together. The levels of the label below show the results in the three pillars. Transparency is important (Joyce).

3.2.5 Consideration of regional and national specialities

- The introduction question: Should there be one label for all countries or different labels for each country? (Kornadt)
- The label must have some method of variation between cultures/regions (Joyce).
- There was the question to what degree do we want to control weighting locally/regionally? This depends on the context of where the label should be applied (Trinius).
- Label could protect a national market (Blum). A regional score is necessary (Peuportier).
- Katrien Putzeys: Harmonized to methodology. Different characteristics respond in label but are limited.

4. Closure

Mr Johan van Dessel thanks again all participants for their coming and especially for their fruitful contributions to the workshop. He emphasised that the comments of the experts will deeply considered in the forthcoming work of the LEnSE project. With an outlook on further LEnSE workshops, Johan van Dessel closed the workshop.

5. Conclusions

Following conclusions can be extracted from the discussion:

- Sustainable construction and the development of a label for sustainable construction is a very important issue.
- LEnSE and CEN/TC350 have different approaches. Never the less it is assumed that the LEnSE project could have an input in the work of CEN/TC350 and vice versa.
- In the development of the methodology different stakeholders' perspectives and backgrounds, e.g. architects, investors, building owners have to be considered.
- Social housing is an important issue, and there is a large overlap between social and sustainable housing.
- LEnSE should focus on new buildings as well as on existing buildings as the market of existing buildings is very large and important.
- The economic aspect is important. Investors and insurers are interested in a label, which refers to a whole lifetime to include sustainability as an additional value to their development. Life circle costs should be included. If a sustainability label is considered in an early design stage, including sustainability will not automatically result in higher building cost.
- The methodology has to take into account different national or regional aspects
- Regarding the acceptance of a label for sustainable buildings it is assumed to have a label which is easy to handle. One symbol should clarify the sustainability of a building. As the label should be transparent, there should be levels below that give more detail information about the performance of a building. The label should consist of three pillars (social, economic and ecological). Information about each topic should be transparent. A result from the label could be a conclusion like A, B, ... G or 1, 2, ...10. This final label should pull all three main aspects together. But in levels below results for each pillar should be clarified.
- The assessment according to a sustainability label should take not longer than 1 or 2 days.

6. Participants

6.1 Experts

Mr Andreas Blum (Germany)
Leibniz-Institute of Ecological and Regional Development

Mr Adrian Joyce (Belgium)
Architects' Council of Europe

Mr Yves Roulet (Switzerland)
Ingénieur en Environnement Etat de Vaud, Département des Infrastructures, Service immeubles, patrimoine et logistique

Mr Domien Szeker (Belgium)
COFINIMMO

Mr Bouwe Taverne (Netherlands)
Manager Maatschappelijk Verantwoord Ondernemen

Mr Wolfram Trinius (Germany)
Ingenieurbüro Dr. Ing. Wolfram Trinius

Mr Bernard Wallyn (Belgium)
Vlaamse Maatschappij voor Sociaal Wonen (Flemish Company for Social Housing)

Ms Joanne Wheeler (United Kingdom)
WWF-UK

6.2 LEnSE partner

Mr Tim Bevan (United Kingdom)
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Belgian Building Research Institute (BBRI)

Mr Freek den Dulk (Netherlands)
Piode – architects and consultants BNA

Mr Petr Hajek (Czech Republic)
Czech Technical University (CVUT)

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