

Interview with Mr. Paul Hodson of the European Commission



As the Head of the European Commission's energy efficiency unit Mr. Hodson is in a key position to offer valuable insights into how the EU energy policy is being implemented in the construction sector. His unit is in charge of most important pieces of legislation to improve the energy efficiency of European buildings such as the Energy Performance Buildings Directive, Ecodesign of Energy Using Products Directive, the Energy Labelling Directive, and the Energy Efficiency Directive. REHVA Journal was pleased to get an interview from Mr. Hodson.

Questions by Prof. Olli Seppänen, Editor-in Chief, REHVA Journal

What are the most important EU regulations to improve the energy efficiency of buildings and what is their role? How do they integrate to avoid double regulations?

– With buildings being responsible for close to 40% of European energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, all EU regulations addressing energy efficiency impact the building sector, either directly or indirectly.

Paul Hodson is head of the European Commission's energy efficiency unit. He previously worked for the Commission on renewable energy; urban transport; and as a speechwriter.



Before joining the Commission, he was head of transport policy at Manchester City Council and transport policy manager at Reading Borough Council.

He began his career in the Inner Cities Unit of the UK's National Council for Voluntary Organisations. He has a degree in history from Cambridge University and a masters in urban planning from Oxford Polytechnic.

The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD¹) directly targets the energy efficiency of buildings. The main objective of the Directive is to ensure the establishment, at national level, of a comprehensive framework for improving the energy performance of residential and non-residential buildings through the setting of minimum energy performance requirements for new and existing buildings, for technical building systems and for building elements. The Directive ensures transparency by mandating energy performance certificates (EPCs) and their display in public buildings. The EPBD also looks at the future with requirements for nearly zero-energy buildings by the end of the decade.

The Directives on Ecodesign (ED²) and Energy Labelling (ELD³) cover product groups relevant for the energy performance of buildings including heating products, motors, fans and lighting.

While the EPBD requires Member States to set requirements at system level and does not prescribe the level of the requirements (except for the fact that they have to be cost-optimal), the ED and the ELD address specific product groups and, in case of the ED, set specific minimum requirements.

In the future, more Ecodesign requirements will be adopted for products that are part of technical building systems, and possibly also part of the building envelope (e.g. windows). The Commission services will therefore look closely at the interaction of these two pieces of legislation to ensure they are complementary.

The European Parliament and Council recently achieved a political compromise on a new Energy Efficiency Directive (EED), which also contains several measures impacting on buildings.

How does the EED complement the existing directives?

– The EPBD, the ED and the ELD promote energy efficiency on a sectoral and product specific basis. The EED takes a more comprehensive approach to achieving energy efficiency progress across the whole value chain of energy production and consumption.

It also covers some ‘gaps’ that were not addressed by the EPBD. In particular, the EED requires Member States, by April 2014, to establish long-term strategies for mobilising investment in the renovation of the national building stock. These ‘renovation roadmaps’ will become a driver for the improvement of the existing building stock and build upon the requirement of the EPBD for public buildings to have energy performance certificates.

In addition, Member States have to refurbish each year at least 3% of the floor area of buildings owned by central government – or take other measures that have an equivalent impact. This is a step forward from the EPBD which, while having an obligation to set minimum energy performance requirements for existing buildings undergoing major renovation, does not set any renovation targets.

Under the EED Member States have to establish energy efficiency obligations, requiring energy distributors or retailers to achieve a defined quantity of energy savings among their customers by 2020 – or again, to adopt other schemes with the same impact. Many of the measures to be implemented under this requirement will focus on the energy performance of existing buildings.

Finally, the EED will provide an important impetus to the deployment of the most efficient products, for example through the requirement for central government authorities to purchase only the most efficient equipment, meaning the highest classes under the Energy Labelling Directive or the benchmark levels established under the Ecodesign Directive.

How do you assess these pieces of legislation in the light of the EU targets?

Can you record sufficient progress - especially in the light of the economic crisis - to ensure that the energy and climate targets by 2020 and beyond are met?

– From our 2011 analysis it emerged that the EU is not on track to reach its 20% energy efficiency objective in 2020. The EED is a step forward to close this gap and bring us back on track again, although the compromise reached in July is still a few percentage points below the 20% target.

However, much relies on the ambition of the Member States when transposing the Directive into national law. It is therefore too early to answer your question. We have agreed with the Member States to review progress

1 Directive 2010/31/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 on the energy performance of buildings (recast).

2 Directive 2009/125/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 establishing a framework for the setting of Ecodesign requirements for energy-using products.

3 Directive 2010/30/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 on the indication by labelling and standard product information of the consumption of energy and other resources by energy-related products (Text with EEA relevance).

in April 2014 – if necessary accompanied by complementary proposals from the Commission.

What role does the Commission assign to heat pumps in improving the energy efficiency of buildings? Do you have any quantitative assessment on this impact?

– Article 6 of the EPBD requires Member States to ensure that high-efficiency alternative systems, including heat pumps, are considered for new buildings. This means that, before a new construction starts, the technical, environmental and economic feasibility of such systems must have been assessed and taken into account.

Today, the opportunity to implement heat pumps depends largely on this feasibility assessment which is typically undertaken on a case by case basis and a local level. Therefore, it is difficult to make a quantitative assessment of the impact heat pumps will have in the future.

Nevertheless, I am convinced that these systems will become more important, especially in the move towards nearly-zero energy buildings.

Will we see Ecodesign Lot 1 (Boilers) and Lot 2 (Water heaters) to be finalised by the time this journal goes to print? (Sept 21st)

– The proposals for Ecodesign and energy labelling of heaters (including boilers), water heaters and related products have been in World Trade Organisation consultation until August 2012. We have also re-consulted Member State experts on some significant new elements introduced as a result of consideration within the Commission.

As you will be aware, there are a number of industry, consumer and environmental associations involved; these stakeholders have differing views on many aspects of the proposals. As a contribution to finalising the remaining crucial aspect, the energy label of boilers, the Commission will consult a selection of these stakeholders again in early September 2012.

Formal adoption by the Commission and the approval by Member States and the European Parliament will be the next steps. We aim to publish the Ecodesign and energy labelling Regulations for heaters, water heaters and related products in the Official Journal of the European Union in February 2013.

Which measures are planned to ensure compliance with the above named pieces of legislation - i.e. energy efficiency in buildings, real efficiency of declared heat generators.

– For the EPBD recast, the transposition deadline was 9 July 2012. The Commission is checking national provisions notified by the Member States, to see whether they comply with the Directive. If necessary, we will start infringement procedures where this is not the case.

Member States themselves are responsible for ensuring compliance by market actors. In this context, it is important to note that the role and the quality of energy performance certificates and inspection schemes have been strengthened by the EPBD, e.g. by requiring an independent control system at the national level. The Commission services intend to launch a study on the effectiveness of these provisions, in order to increase our knowledge of their practical implementation and of their real impact on consumers' practices.

With respect to compliance with Ecodesign and energy labelling implementation measures, also here the Member States are in the frontline. The 'New Legislative Framework' puts in place a comprehensive system of market surveillance, under which Member States' authorities (including customs) have to ensure adequate compliance checks on the market. The Commission will continue to support national authorities with this task, for example by facilitating joint surveillance actions. I also believe that industry has an important role to play in this context, for example by cooperating with national authorities, by sharing expertise regarding product testing and of course by manufacturing compliant products. Only with joint efforts can we ensure that the rules are properly implemented and complied with. **3E**

