

Non-compliant EPCs and building works should not jeopardise EPBD goals



PETER WOUTERS

Coordinator of QUALICHeCK
INIVE, Belgium

Building's Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) are expected to correctly inform prospective buyers and tenants, to encourage them to invest in energy efficiency in buildings. Progressively, this should lead to a positive relationship between a property's energy rating and its market value. This trend seems to be confirmed by several economic analyses showing, in specific contexts, actual impact in market value of a one-letter improvement of the EPC rating of a building compared to an equivalent building. However, this emerging market transformation should not be jeopardised by discrediting EPC ratings with insufficient quality assurance measures.

There are reasons to be concerned about poor quality EPCs. In fact, the 10 field studies on samples of 25+ buildings in 9 countries, performed within the Intelligent Energy Europe QUALICHeCK project and summarised in this special issue of the REHVA journal, confirm significant non-compliance issues in many countries. In addition, the Concerted Action on the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive reveals that few Member States have a reasonably accurate picture of compliance rates with energy performance requirements based on actual verifications. The 2016 book of the Concerted Action (<http://www.epbd-ca.eu/ca-outcomes/2011-2015>) contains a lot of interesting information for each member country, as well as with respect to the overall status of implementation.

As for the quality of building works, besides the huge economic impact of non-compliance in this field, non-compliance also puts at risk the directive's goals, as achieving NZEB levels requires upgraded skills and

increased attention at design, call for tender, execution and hand-over stages.

So what should we do?

The QUALICHeCK consortium identified 3 fundamental aspects to structure an approach to effective compliance: 1) define clear rules to comply with for issuing EPCs and undertaking building works; 2) define clear rules to handle non-compliance; 3) define concrete actions for handling non-compliance. These 3 aspects are detailed in two draft source books summarised in this special issue of the REHVA journal that include practical examples, as well as hints and pitfalls to avoid, addressing specific questions that may arise when developing compliance frameworks.

Easy access to input data through trustworthy sources is also crucial both for issuing and for checking EPCs. The solar shading or the cool roof products database presented in this issue are interesting initiatives answering this need.

As compliance frameworks are not viable without societal support, we are happy to see a growing interest for quality and compliance issues through our activities (international conferences, technical workshops and webinars, as well as the national roadshows and consultation platforms in the 9 countries represented in the QUALICHeCK consortium). Of course, transforming the market towards effective compliance is very challenging, but it also offers perspectives to significantly improve the quality of buildings not only on paper, but also in reality. ■