Meeting of the IMC Task Force on Energy Renovation in Mediterranean Buildings

October 3rd, 2022 – Online

10.00-13.00 CET

MINUTES

Opening remarks

Elodie Nunes, Executive Secretary of the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission (CPMR – IMC), opens the Task Force meeting by explaining that its main objective is to discuss the implementation of the MED Joint Action Plan on Energy Renovation Buildings (MED ERB JAP) aiming at promoting a common action plan for integrated strategies and concrete actions for the Energy Renovation of public Buildings (ERB) in the Mediterranean.

As a follow-up to the last meeting held in January 2020, the first session is intended to discuss and highlight the latest work of the regions and to identify potential future opportunities for collaboration in the implementation of the MED ERB JAP and in relation to current initiatives and policies.

In parallel with this, during the second session of the meeting, members are also invited to discuss the future of the Task Force by sharing their state of play/interest in relation to the proposal put forward by the Secretariat of Housing and Social Inclusion of the Generalitat de Catalunya to extend the work undertaken by the Task Force on Decarbonising Public and Private Housing.

To introduce the Task Force meeting, Carles Sala, Secretary of Housing and Social Inclusion of the Generalitat de Catalunya, focuses attention on the key current challenges faced both at the European and the global level, with the aim of stressing the importance of relaunching the work and activities of the Task Force. Indeed, challenges such as the shortage of energy, the climate crisis, and the war in Ukraine, beyond severely affecting the energy market and increasing the cost of energy for citizens, have made crystal clear that the European Energy Model suffers from a structural deficit that needs to be corrected, namely its heavy (external) dependency on fossil energies. In this framework, he underlines the importance of developing common actions to improve the energy efficiency of both buildings and housing stock, as they could reduce the economic and environmental costs of energy and, at the same time, they could contribute to the fight against energy poverty, residential exclusion, climate change and dependency on fossil energies.
Further, in order to better introduce the following sessions, Flora Leroy, CPMR-IMC Project and Policy Officer, provides the participants with some background information about the origins and the activities of the Task Force, including an update on the latest activities feeding it up to now. She recalls that the Task Force on Energy Renovation in Mediterranean Buildings was launched in 2016 and, since then, it has been driving the Mediterranean regions in the framework of Multi-Level Governance to design and implement a MED ERB Joint Action Plan. Indeed, one of the goals of the last Task Force meeting on January 21st, 2020, was precisely to promote the wide implementation and diffusion of the ERB Joint Action Plan which was created under the Interreg MED SHERPA project. Overall, she recalls that the MED ERB JAP was designed as a common framework for integrated strategies for the Energy Renovation of Public Buildings (ERPB) in the Mediterranean area through the capitalisation of common experiences, tools and methodologies and the definition of an integrated investment plan on ERB. To that end, 5 strategic axes have been identified (i.e. Governance, Training and Knowledge, Technical Assistance and Information Systems, Networking, and Funding) and for each of them, potential key operative transnational actions have been identified. In this context, one of the objectives of this meeting is to take stock of the projects or actions that have contributed to their implementation, such as:

- **EN-TRACK** project for the implementation of the key operative Transnational Action 3.A, which concerns the development of new tools to promote ERB projects.
- **IMPULSE PLUS** project for the implementation of the key operative Transnational Action 3.B, which concerns the integrating tools developed so far in the EU project to promote ERB projects.
- **Interreg MED Efficient Buildings Community** project for the implementation of the key operative Transnational Action 1.A, which concerns the support, promotion, and development of a multilevel governance system.

Additionally, also the Region of Crete, also involved in the SHERPA project as a partner, which continues to be particularly involved in the energy renovation of its buildings, is invited to report and share its experience with the participants.

**Session I: Update on the implementation of the MED Joint Action Plan on Energy Renovation Buildings**

With the purpose of updating the Task Force members on the implementation of the MED ERB Joint Action Plan, the first session of this meeting is kickstarted by Stoyan Danov, from the International Centre for Numerical Methods in Engineering (CIMNE), who presents a brief overview of the EN TRACK project. To begin with, he points out that the main goal of EN-TRACK is to enable the massive and continuous gathering of data concerning energy performance and energy efficiency investments, in order to create a platform (i.e., a Common Data Model) capable of combining data from a variety of data sources. Indeed, the key need is to ensure harmonization and consistent classification of the different data that are being gathered (energy data, characteristics of the buildings, and financial data) to enable interoperability and automated data collection. In this view, he stresses the high relevance of EN-TRACK for Local and Regional Authorities (LRAs), as the system constitutes a single place for storing data and monitoring the performance of their public building stock, supporting reporting and decision-making related to climate action commitments, and avoiding the need for LRAs to create their own technical infrastructure. He concludes by pointing out that EN-TRACK and CIMNE are open to establishing a MoU with MED regions for the use of the solution, and they are also opened to collaborating in the upcoming calls of the Interreg Euro-MED programme.

The session moves forward with Vera Valero Escribano, from the Valencia Institute of Building (IVE) who illustrates the IMPULSE PLUS project and its main results. She firstly points out that the project follows on from IMPULSE project, through which IVE developed a methodology and some associated tools to help public...
administrations in the development of energy renovation plans for Public Buildings (PB) stock. Against this backdrop, the IMPULSE PLUS allowed the transfer of the IMPULSE Renovation plans and tools and its Financial schemes evaluation tools. As to the approach followed, the first activities were linked to paving the way for transferring; the next step was about fine-tuning these tools for transferring; then, they provided hands-on training on how to use the tools and methodology through international online training, including at the regional and local scales; finally, the last activities concerned the effective take up of the transferred outputs. Consequently, the overall results stemming from the IMPULSE PLUS project is a guided map for transfer, i.e., a tool through which IVE guides new territories interested in applying this methodology to capitalize the results already developed.

Maria Apostolaki, environmental engineer of the Department of Climate Change and Energy Planning of the Crete Region, shares with the participants the experience of the Crete Region in the energy renovation of its buildings stock. Particularly, after highlighting that in Crete the first regional plan for adaptation and climate change was completed and approved, she focuses on the state of play with respect to both regional buildings and municipal buildings. As for the former, the central administration building of the Region of Crete and the buildings of the technical services and the health services of Chania Regional Unit have been deeply renovated and upgraded; further, a new building that is an example of bioclimatic architecture and energy efficiency, is currently under construction. As for the latter, she points out that Cretan municipalities utilize national funding programs (e.g. TRITSIS, FILODIMOS) to proceed with energy renovation of their building stock, and that in the current Regional Operational Programme, 25 million euros are allocated for the upgrading of public buildings. Lastly, she also makes reference to the national programme EXIKONOMO, through which many private buildings and residencies in Crete have been renovated and become more energy efficient. Moreover, as regards the ongoing projects and initiatives, she points out that through the ELENA (European Local Energy Assistance) mechanism of the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Crete Region is studying the energy upgrade of the most energy-consuming buildings, with the aim to implement projects with the optimal use of the available financing mechanisms. Additionally, the Region is collaborating with the Hellenic Mediterranean University that developed a dynamic Database with data and information on the energy performance of the regional and municipal public building stock. Finally, several efforts are being deployed to engage all stakeholders and citizens in the energy transition of the island, by supporting the establishment of energy communities in Crete, which leads to collective and citizen-driven energy projects with social and development benefits. To conclude, as regards the guides and tools, she points out that the Crete Region is using the steps and stages of the MED ERB JAP as a basic guide, aiming at increasing energy performance and promoting the use of renewables.

Eleni Chatzigeorgiou, from the Center for Renewable Energy Sources (CRES), focuses her remarks on the “Capitalisation of tools and methodologies for the increase of efficient buildings in the Mediterranean”. Most notably, she describes the main tools produced by the modular projects of the Efficient Buildings Community project, which have been classified into different axes. The first axis gathers the tools that help in the analysis of the current situation of the public building stock (e.g. IMPULSE typologies excel-based platforms, Prioritee-DST, TEESCHOOLS web tool). The second axis gathers the tools that help in the prioritization of buildings and renovation scenarios (e.g. TEESCHOOLS BAT, IMPULSE KPIs’ processor). Then, she also makes reference to projects that produced repositories of good practices like ENERJ, SHERPA, and NewFinance web platforms. Finally, for the economic performance, she mentions a set of tools, like SISMA SET TOOL, STEPPING EPC Simulation tool, TEESCHOOLS web tool, Prioritee DST that produced relevant tools for calculating the related cost performance indicators for energy renovation. In essence, the tools support the development of an integrated energy renovation plan of buildings at the local level, on the basis of different stages: the analysis of the current public building stock; the prioritization of buildings’ energy renovation scenarios; the financial analysis of projects; the analysis of funding mechanisms; the administrative procedures; and finally the implementation of the investment plan. She stresses that the overall goal is to
promote as much as possible the results and the methodologies achieved on the MED projects and to achieve the targets of the MED ERB JAP by capitalizing on further local authorities and regions. She concludes by bringing to the attention of the participants, other projects related to energy renovation in buildings implemented beyond the Med area (e.g., BENEFIT, CARISMED), including some key projects related to residential buildings (e.g., re-MODULES, Green pilot urban neighborhood).

Political and technical feedback from member regions

Josep Casas, Deputy General Director of Housing (Catalonia), finds it interesting to note that, although all pursuing the same objectives, then, each partner of SHERPA has developed and implemented its own specific approach/strategy for achieving them. In his view, this aspect, by clearly proving that there is not only one way to achieve these objectives, makes the need for the participants to further share and exchange even more compelling.

Mario Saliba, Director of policy development and programmes in the implementation at the Ministry for Gozo (Malta), takes the opportunity to highlight the firm commitment of the government toward the energy renovation of both public and private buildings. Notably, the Ministry of Gozo is currently renovating the whole energy system of the biggest public buildings within the territory, and, furthermore, Gozo Regional Development Authority is focusing its strategy on sustainability. As regards the new opportunities, he believes that funding could play an important role.

Stoyan Danov, from CIMNE, takes the floor to underscore the new opportunities opened up by the EN-TRACK system and its specific features. To begin with, thanks to its flexibility this tool can be adapted for different purposes and for different users. Secondly, it is a sort of facilitator, meaning that it could be used as a connection with other platforms and it has a hierarchical structure that allows different levels of users. Thirdly, he highlights that EN-TRACK is also collaborating with the Energy Efficiency Financial Institution Group (EEFIG) that is the creator of DEEP (De-risking Energy Efficiency Platform) to which EN-TRACK is one of the major contributors. Lastly, he stresses that by using EN-TRACK data will be treated and shared in an anonymized way and that each user will preserve full control over the data put into the system.

Session II: Pave the way for the future

With the aim to discuss the future direction to be given to the Task Force, the second session brings participants to reflect on the proposal presented by Josep Casas, Deputy General Director of Housing of the Government of Catalonia, concerning the possibility to extend the work undertaken by the Task Force on Decarbonising Public and Private Housing. To begin with, he argues that the idea for the Regions to step into this field by joining forces and developing common actions would be very much needed, in view of the current European scenario where although buildings account for 40% of the EU’s final energy consumption, and even though they are responsible for 36% of greenhouse gas emissions, yet, the current rates of building renovation are very low (0.4-1.2% per year depending on the country). In his view, this situation calls on Regional governments to meet these challenges by adopting a more cooperation-based and integrated approach in which housing policies and energy and renovation measures can be wisely and fruitfully combined, and the existing links and synergies between these two policy fields can be usefully exploited. Indeed, he highlights how decarbonising public and private housing would allow for improving buildings’ affordability, quality, and surroundings (in terms of environment, services, and proximity), thereby producing a wider impact and delivering major economic, social and environmental benefits.
In this framework, he points out that the Housing Department of the Government of Catalonia has decided to go down this road by developing a strategy that is based on three main tools, namely the **Territorial Housing Plan** (THP), the **Next Generation Funds**, and the **Law of Districts** (LD). In particular, he notes that the main objective of the THP is to define and quantify the most appropriate housing policy instruments in order to guarantee that all new households will be able to access decent and appropriate housing. The Plan aims to accomplish the objective of the **urban solidarity mandate** in 20 years, while also encompassing a number of specific plans concerning rehabilitation, rural areas, and elderly people. As regards the Next Generation funds, he stresses how the residential refurbishment could be linked to several opportunities stemming from the neighborhood programme, the rehabilitation technical offices, the building programme, the dwellings programme, and the European projects, while pursuing the double objective of reducing the demand and the consumption of non-renewable primary energy. Finally, within the field of urban improvement policies, he highlights that the **Law of Districts** – which entails public intervention in special attention urban areas where there is a concentration of urban regression process, demographic progress, and social and economic deficiencies – could be better linked the objectives of sustainable urban development. Building on these elements, he concludes by stressing the importance for IMC Regions to extend the activities of the TF by working together on decarbonising private and public housing, as this would bring about major benefits in the economic, social, and environmental spheres.

To further feed the discussion, **Flora Leroy**, CPMR-IMC Project and Policy Officer, provides the members with background information about the current European policies and initiatives regarding the **decarbonization of housing**. She underscores that the EU is currently working on the**revision of its climate, energy and transport-related legislation** ("Fit for 55 package") in order to align current laws with the 2030 and 2050 ambitions. In this framework, she finds it important to highlight the Extension of the **EU’s Emission Trading System** (ETS) to the building sector. Particularly, the amendment proposed by the Commission would ensure that a new ETS covers all emissions related to fossil fuel combustion of heating in buildings. The proposed rate of allowances should allow for a reduction of emissions of 43% by 2030 in the transport and building sectors together, compared to 2005 levels. Yet, the introduction of a carbon price will be especially large for households that use coal for heating, especially in lower-income countries. To balance this the Commission has put forward a proposal to introduce a **Social Climate Fund** to support households’ finance investments in energy efficiency, heating & cooling systems, etc. Against this background, she points out that the CPMR has already taken a position on this issue and that now it is up to the triilogue between the European Commission, the Parliament and the Council to deliver the final conclusion, then an analysis will probably take place at the CPMR Secretariat level.

As conclusions are expected to come only next year, she considers it important to have a moment of discussion to try to understand what novelties introduced by these two instruments could impact the possibilities for the work of the Task Force. Additionally, she makes reference to the ongoing **revision of the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Directives** (EED &RED) as another important theme that is worth following, and she also refers to the recently approved **ESPON 2030 Cooperation Programme**, because among the first research projects, there is one dealing with the decarbonization of housing which is called “Access to affordable and quality housing for all people” (HOUSFORAL).

**Political and technical feedback from member regions**

**Julie Estal**, EU Policy Officer from the Occitanie Region, takes the opportunity to point out that the Occitanie Region is searching for other European regions/local authorities that have developed innovative strategies/ projects in the field of sustainable housing. The main goal is to realise a study of some of the best initiatives in Europe on the topic of sustainable housing in order to draw inspiration from it. She, therefore, strongly encourages other LRAs potentially interested in participating and sharing their experience to contact them (julie.estal@laregion.fr | Tél.: +33 (0)4 67 22 10 99 / Mob.: +33(0)6 33 01 80 87).
Eleni Chatzigeorgiou, from CRES, seizes the opportunity to describe the current situation in Greece concerning the housing building stock. Particularly, she points out that out of a total of approximately 4 million buildings, 80% of them are residential buildings, and more than 60% of those were built before the 1980s. This means that they are in a state of poor energy efficiency and that only a very small percentage of the residential buildings are built according to the latest energy efficiency regulations. Most importantly, 97% of the buildings in Greece are privately owned, meaning that there is a significant potential to apply policies and measures to decarbonize the residential building stock. To tackle these issues, the National and Energy Climate Plan (2019) foresees that 12-15% of Greek homes should be renovated by 2030. Beyond improving the living conditions of people, the plan envisages an increase of more than 80 billion euros in the domestic added value, the creation of 20,000 full-time jobs, as well as benefits for public health. Further, the plan set a specific target for reducing energy poverty (by 50% by 2025 and by 70% by 2030), as the latest statistics showed that at least 20% of the overall population were unable to heat their homes in recent years, and this raises to even 40% among the most economically vulnerable part of the population. Moreover, in line with article 4 of the EU Energy Efficiency Directive, the Government of Greece adopted its long-term strategy for the renovation of the public and private building stock and its transformation into high-level efficiency low carbon building stock by 2050. In view of the above, she agrees with the proposal put forward by Josep Casas, believing that it would be useful to expand the focus area of the Task Force toward decarbonisation of residential buildings.

Vera Valero Escribano, from IVE, shares two initiatives currently supported by the Ministry of Housing of the Valencia Region together with IVE. Particularly, with the aim of accelerating to the decarbonization of the residential stock in the Valencia region, they developed a network of one-stop-shop offices, which is called Save the Homes that provide citizens with information about the benefits of energy renovation. Secondly, they developed a tool, which is called Renoveu, through which citizens can introduce the location of their building to get relevant information about the characteristics of the buildings, potential energy renovation measures that could be applied, and the amount of grant they can ask for to the regional governments.

Conclusions

Elodie Nunes, Executive Secretary of the Intermediterranean Commission, concluded by thanking the participants for their commitment to the implementation of the MED ERB JAP and provided an overview of the next steps for the Task Force. She informs members that they will receive a questionnaire to define the following activities of the Task Force and to decide whether to accept the proposal to extend the focus of the Task Force to the decarbonization of Housing. She also recalls that the results of the meeting will be reported during the IMC plenary meeting that is organized in the framework of the CPMR General Assembly to be held in Crete on October 27th. Finally, as regards the next meeting of the Task Force, she says that, if possible, it will be held back-to-back to one of the CPMR-IMC statutory meetings, and if not, it will be held online or, hopefully, back-to-back another event on Energy Renovation in buildings.