



In partnership with:



## Our recommendations on sustainable building in the European Union

### What is Envireo?

[Envireo](#) is a Strategic Initiative Cluster dedicated to mainstream sustainable building practices across North West Europe. It aims at developing synergies between 4 European Interreg IV B projects ([Livinggreen](#), [Regain](#), [Cap'em](#) and [SusStation](#)), with partners from 6 European countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, the UK). All four Envireo's projects have worked and led either renovation or construction schemes, in various sectors: industrial buildings, eco-construction, heritage buildings and railway stations.

With the mutual objectives to **improve conditions for reducing energy consumption in buildings**, and hence CO2 and other greenhouse gas emissions, the projects have achieved to:

- **Provide concrete examples** of what is doable with existing technologies and materials: concrete pilot projects were developed in specific sectors, highlighting the benefits of eco-materials and sustainable construction for users and the fast return on investments one could get from a sustainable scheme.
- **Inform and train actors** on why and how to turn towards sustainable construction: during the construction phase of the projects, experience-sharing sessions were organized between the craftsmen and workers involved in the process, to exchange on good practices but also on “tips and tricks”. Once achieved, the pilot projects were made accessible to the general public, providing all interested stakeholders with learning material on eco-materials and sustainable construction.
- **Create and disseminate tools** to help all stakeholders (e.g. architects, craftsmen, homeowners, local authorities...) make un-biased choices when it comes to sustainable building and grant them access to pool of services which facilitate the act of renovation (Livinggreen centres and manual), allow them to rely on sound information for construction products (CAP'EM COMPASS), and in the evaluation, the planning and design – as well as the construction and operation – of sustainable buildings (Assessment Tool).

# Our recommendations towards the European Union

## Recommendation 1 – Build on European experience and promote access to information

### Why?

The European Union has set ambitious targets to reduce GHG emissions. The construction sector being a major contributor to EU greenhouse gas emissions, it seems key to promote sustainable buildings and life cycle thinking in this area. Yet, lack of transparency and the difficulty to find reliable data on sustainable processes, technologies and materials has proven to be a major obstacle to the mainstreaming of sustainable construction.

By demonstrating what is doable in this field, making information and good practices accessible, and allowing visitors to learn more about eco-materials and sustainable construction, **Envireo's projects contribute to the development of sustainable building and life cycle analysis and to their mainstreaming.** The experience gathered by Envireo's partners at EU level should benefit to all stakeholders involved, or willing to launch, either a similar project or any sustainable construction project. Beyond the specific cases studied, Envireo's output could indeed be used for other infrastructures or urban development projects, leading to a better efficiency and increasing the chances of success for project leaders.

Furthermore, the first step towards a harmonized and coherent framework at European level in the field of sustainable building and eco-materials is also to encourage all actors to move in the same direction, through the use of common methodologies and tools.

### How?

- Envireo's partners encourage the European Commission to actively **promote the existing pilot sites in the field of sustainable building as concrete examples and sources of information for actors of the sector** as well as Member States and local authorities. Envireo's partners are committed to providing all interested stakeholders with information, good practices and return of experience.
- Envireo's partners call for the European Commission to inform the actors of the construction sectors of the existence of **assessment tools** and **information centres** and to encourage them to make use of these tools. Envireo's tools would not only help actors, but would also allow them to integrate a life cycle thinking in their projects.

## Recommendation 2 – Pave the way towards sustainable building

### Why?

Identified as a priority, sustainable building has received a particular attention by the European Commission, which was highlighted by the launch of many related initiatives, be it through specific regulatory acts such as the Energy Efficiency Directive, the Construction Product Regulation or the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive but also through broader strategies, such as the Lead Market Initiative, the **Product Environmental Footprint** or the **Green Public Procurement**. However, the European Commission itself has identified hurdles blocking the full implementation and use of these initiatives in European Members States.

**Envireo's outputs could contribute to remove these barriers and lead to an improvement of EU initiatives**, to allow them to reflect as accurately as possible the realities on the ground and thus lead ground actors to seize them widely. The European Union could benefit from a return of experience from the field actors, and use it to increase further the efficiency of its existing framework.

In the meantime, Envireo's partners have observed the reluctance of investors to turn towards sustainable building. Despite the major benefits they provide, not only for the end-user, but more globally also for the environment, sustainable buildings are still considered burdensome and risky by investors and professionals from the sector. *Ad hoc* financial mechanisms and instruments, either directly financing sustainable buildings projects or encouraging investors to turn towards sustainability should be put into place, along with actions to reduce administrative constraints related to the construction and audit of sustainable buildings.

### How?

- Envireo's partners **strongly welcome the European Commission's initiatives in the field of sustainable construction**, and **call for their full implementation and use**. Envireo's partners would be **keen to be involved in their assessment and in the process** related to their development and remain at the disposal of the European Commission, Member States and local authorities, to provide input from the ground.
- Envireo calls for the inclusion in the procurement procedures related to construction projects of the possibility to use **short supply chains** and, when possible, **local eco-materials** and **local craftsmen**.
- Envireo calls for a **stronger European financial support** of the low carbon economy, and especially for the construction sector. Criteria favouring the funding of sustainable building projects and a **binding objective for the use of eco-materials** in new buildings and renovation projects could be defined at European level. Envireo's partners also suggest to the European Union to develop financial mechanisms allowing investors to move towards sustainable buildings and eco-materials, along with economic incentives for construction materials wholesalers and retailers to favour eco-products.
- In the meantime, Envireo calls for the European Commission to launch a debate on **how to reduce the administrative burdens** related to the sector, in order to allow the development of this promising market.

### Recommendation 3 – Create a true level-playing field for sustainable construction

### Why?

The sustainable building market requires a level-playing field, to ensure the equal quality of its products and services and thus create among users the trust that is essential for its consolidation. The European Union constitutes the relevant framework and has the necessary prerogatives to create this level-playing field.

Education and training of stakeholders, all along the value chain, and the reference to a common index seem to be key steps to create this level-playing field.

In the framework of EU sustainable construction projects, actors are trained and educated to help them deliver the best possible results. However, despite a constant need for training, education processes tend to stop at the end of the projects, due to a lack of funding for educators. Creating an EU regime for the sector of sustainable construction, including a compulsory education programme to update the knowledge of the building sector on a regular basis, would not only ensure the continuity of education processes, but would also allow the development of a related market for educators and thus make the education processes independent of EU funds.

### How?

- Envireo's partners call for the creation of an *ad hoc* regime for the sector of sustainable construction, including a **compulsory education programme at EU level, delivering a "Sustainable Certificate"**, aimed at actors and companies involved in sustainable construction or renovation.
- Envireo asks for the **creation of a European Cost-Performance-Comfort index** for buildings, allowing all actors to refer to a common instrument. Envireo's partners would be keen to contribute to the development of such an index.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ENVIREO: [WWW.ENVIREO.EU](http://WWW.ENVIREO.EU)

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March 2014.