

ENVIREO - RECOMMENDATIONS TO EU DECISION-MAKERS

The Livinggreen Project

The Livinggreen project: renovating heritage buildings in a sustainable way

Livinggreen is a European project, funded through the Interreg IV B programme for North-West Europe. It gathers 9 partner organizations and municipalities from 5 EU countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands and the UK). The project, started in 2008, ran until December 2013.

The objective of Livinggreen is to **contribute to the sustainable preservation of European architectural heritage and the housing stock** in general by:

- **Renovating heritage buildings in a sustainable way** to provide concrete examples of what is doable with existing technologies and how to contribute to CO2 neutrality by saving energy, use renewable energy sources, reduce drinking-water use and rely on sustainable building materials, while respecting the cultural and architectural values of the region. Livinggreen's partners led **five renovation projects across North-West Europe** and successfully adapted heritage buildings to modern standards of comfort and sustainability. And showcase that if cultural heritage buildings can be renovated and retrofitted sustainably the whole existing housing stock can be restored and retrofitted sustainably.
- **Demonstrating technologies and providing good practices and show-cases** developed through the renovation projects: once achieved, all five projects were turned into Livinggreen promotional and educational **information centres**, allowing visitors to learn more about sustainable renovation and living and to ask advice for their own renovation projects. Beyond the Livinggreen centres, the outcomes of the renovation projects are also shared with schools, governmental authorities, private organizations and businesses, and the general public throughout North-West Europe.
Livinggreen's website also provides comprehensive information on why and how to set up and run an information centre on living green.
- **Training actors and sharing the know-how** in sustainable renovation practices: for instance, based on their experience, actors involved in the Livinggreen projects (e.g. architects, craftsmen) shared "tips and tricks" with workers willing to renovate buildings sustainably.
- **Creating and disseminating useful tools, along with sustainability products and services** for the renovation sector: Livinggreen partners notably issued a **manual** providing homeowners with practical knowledge on how to renovate one's home in a sustainable way, and showing that sustainable renovation of older buildings is not only possible but can create highly energy- efficient homes while also preserving the cultural and architectural heritage of the building.

Recommendations to EU decision-makers

1. Bridging the gap between knowledge about sustainable renovation and taking action

Livinggreen centres demonstrate and make accessible technologies, eco building materials and methods, which are available for sustainable renovation. Aiming at transferring unbiased and non-commercially driven knowledge to citizens, organisations and businesses, and providing a pool of services which facilitate the act of renovation, Livinggreen centres should play a leading role in the sustainable transformation of the existing building stock.

Livinggreen partners encourage the European Commission to actively promote the development of information centres throughout Europe. Livinggreen partners would be keen to help in this process by providing concrete guidelines and recommendations for the creation of such centers, the most effective methods for a transfer of knowledge and know-how, along with a return of experience for interested parties.

2. Structure the sustainable construction at EU level

Education and formation of stakeholders, all along the value chain, is a key step to mainstream sustainable construction. In the framework of EU sustainable renovation projects, actors are trained and educated to help them deliver the best possible results. However, despite a constant need of 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.

Livinggreen 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.

3. Make the right materials known and available

The mainstreaming of sustainable buildings should rely on policy measures related to construction products, in order to inform the users of the environmental impact of the products they buy and foster the spread of eco-building materials and products (for instance, in Do-It-Yourself markets).

Livinggreen partners welcome the initiative of the European Commission on the development of Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules and call for their rapid and full implementation. In parallel, Livinggreen partners encourage the European Commission to create economic incentives for construction materials wholesalers and retailers to favour eco-products.

4. Greening EU procurement rules

European tendering rules seem to create hurdles to sustainable construction at national and local level. Too often, quantitative aspects prevail (and notably price criteria) in the choice of service provider, this at the expense of more qualitative factors. Yet, making use of local actors and local materials *de facto* decreases GHG emissions and is thus fundamental to reduce the environmental impact of the construction phase.

Livinggreen partners welcome the European initiative on Green Public Procurement (GPP), and would be keen to be involved in the process related to its development. Livinggreen partners would notably be able to provide tools to remove the barriers to the take-up of GPP identified by the European Commission. Moreover, Livinggreen partners ask the European Commission to encourage EU Member States as well as local authorities to implement and use the European GPP rules.