

## ENVIREO - RECOMMENDATIONS TO EU DECISION-MAKERS

### REGAIN Project (Reducing the Greenhouse Effect through Alternative Industrial Estates Management in North West Europe)

#### **The REGAIN project: the eco-design of the building envelop**

REGAIN (Reducing the Greenhouse Effect through Alternative Industrial Estates Management in North West Europe) is a European project, funded through the Interreg IV B programme for North-West Europe. It gathers 6 partner organizations from 4 EU countries (Belgium, France, the United-Kingdom and Italy). The project, initiated in 2007, will run until February 2015, with a budget of over €11 million.

The objective of REGAIN is to **reduce the environmental impact and promote energy efficiency in industrial buildings, by constructing four pilot buildings**. REGAIN partners put a particular emphasis on:

- **The importance of experience sharing:** considering that the best way of making progress is exchanging experiences at international level, REGAIN partners worked together and shared views on their own progress during the construction of the four pilots. REGAIN partners regularly organized exchange days with all the stakeholders from the building sector, to share good practices... and report encountered problems and mistakes to save people from repeating them in the future.
- **The need to involve all the stakeholders** to ensure the good success of a sustainable building project. REGAIN pilots gathered professionals from all relevant sectors, from architects to end-users, and highlighted the need to raise awareness all along the chain of trades to achieve a sound result. The pilot buildings thus allowed to demonstrate how to overcome issues related not only to designing and constructing but also to managing sustainable buildings, as a sustainable building also imply a responsible behaviour.
- **The viability of sustainable buildings:** the major hurdle to mainstreaming sustainable building in industrial estates remains the additional costs it may imply in the short term, as well the risks investors take regarding the adoption of any innovative materials, technology or process. Indeed, the traditional approach may often seem safer. REGAIN pilots tend *de facto* to reject this perception, highlighting on the one hand the strong benefits of sustainable buildings for users, and on the other, demonstrating that the use of innovative materials and processes can be the key to success.

## **Recommendations to EU decision-makers**

### **1. Match means and ambitions**

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 not only to promote sustainable buildings but also to ensure their development, especially in industrial estates. Despite the major benefits they provide, not only for the end-user, but more globally also for the environment, sustainable industrial buildings are still considered burdensome and risky by investors and professionals from the sector. *Ad hoc* financial mechanisms and instruments, either directly financing sustainable industrial 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.

REGAIN partners call for a stronger European financial support of the low carbon economy, and especially for the construction sector. Criteria favoring the funding of sustainable industrial building projects could be defined at European level. REGAIN partners also suggest to the European Union to develop financial mechanisms allowing investors to move towards sustainable industrial buildings, and to reduce the administrative burdens related to the sector, in order to allow the development of this promising market.

### **2. Pave the way to sustainable industrial buildings**

REGAIN developed four pilot projects on sustainable industrial buildings across Europe. Partners put a particular attention on exchanging good practices and discuss encountered errors, in order to help each other going through the construction process. Such concrete projects should be valued as they completely illustrate how to match the objectives set by the EU legislation, notably regarding the energy performance of buildings.

REGAIN encourages the European Union to communicate on the existing pilot projects related to sustainable industrial buildings, such as the pilot buildings developed under REGAIN. REGAIN partners would be very keen on exchanging with the European Commission on the ways to exploit the experience acquired through the construction processes of the four pilots.

### **3. Tackle the hidden part of the iceberg**

Today, the construction of new industrial buildings approximately accounts for 5% of the activity of the sector, when their renovation represents the remaining 95%. A sustainable policy on industrial buildings should thus focus on renovated buildings, in order to have a significant impact on GHG emissions.

REGAIN partners encourages the European Union to put a particular focus on renovation, both in EU legislations and for funding instruments, especially in the field of industrial buildings.