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Review of the implementation of the programme of work 2014-2015

Sustainable housing and real estate market

Conclusions and recommendations of the UNECE Expert Consultation on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The seventy-fifth session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management in October 2014 endorsed a proposal by the Committee Bureau for the establishment of an informal expert group to develop building standards (ECE/HBP/2014/4).

In March 2015, the secretariats of the Committee on Housing and Land Management and the Committee on Sustainable Energy conducted a survey of member States. A report, "Building standards and building regulations in the UNECE region" (Informal Note 4), was then prepared based on this survey, and the data was used in the Expert Consultation on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings, which was organized by the secretariats of these two UNECE Committees and held on 20 and 21 April 2015.

This document contains conclusions of the expert consultation meeting and recommendations for the future activities of the Committee on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings. The main recommendation of the expert group is to establish a UNECE interdivisional Task Force on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings.

The Committee is invited to endorse recommendations of the expert consultation meeting.



I. Introduction

1. According to the survey “Challenges and priorities in Housing and Land Management in the UNECE Region” (ECE/HBP/2013/2), some of the key challenges faced by member States are: an inefficient use of energy in the residential sector; limited access to affordable, quality and healthy housing in the market; lack of easy access for disabled and aged persons due to physical barriers; and risks to residential buildings from natural and human-generated disasters, including the impacts of a changing climate and earthquakes.

2. Building on the outcomes of this study and discussions at the seventy-third and seventy-fourth Committee sessions on future work priorities, the Committee developed the “Strategy for sustainable housing and land management in the ECE region for the period 2014-2020”. The strategy was adopted at the Ministerial Meeting on Housing and Land Management in October 2013.¹

3. According to the strategy, the Committee shall organize its activities through, among other means, the harmonization of methods and definitions at regional and international levels, and shall support the development of common terms, language definitions and standards. The strategy specifically mentions standards related to barrier-free, good-quality, healthy and secure housing and utility services (objectives D and E). Such standards, if widely used across the UNECE region, would contribute to addressing the main housing challenges.

4. To support the implementation of the strategy, the seventy-fifth session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management in October 2014 endorsed a proposal by the Committee Bureau for the establishment of an informal expert group to develop building standards (ECE/HBP/2014/4).² The Bureau proposal outlined the following thematic priorities for the work of the expert group: (a) energy efficiency of buildings, including manufacturing of building materials and energy performance requirements; (b) social responsibility in the private sector for disaster risk reduction and risk management; (c) construction codes for healthy and barrier-free housing; and (d) land registration and smart cities.

5. In March 2015, the secretariats of the Committee on Housing and Land Management and the Committee on Sustainable Energy conducted a survey of member States. The survey focused on the first proposed priority - energy efficiency of buildings. Based on the study, a report was prepared on “Building standards and building regulations in the UNECE region” (Informal Note 4). The data of the report on the survey results was used in the discussions at the Expert Consultation on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings, which was organized by the secretariats of the above two Committees and held on 20 and 21 April 2015.³

6. This document contains conclusions of the expert consultation meeting and recommendations for future activities of the Committee on energy efficiency standards in buildings.

¹ <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/sust.hsng.strategy.pdf>

² http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2014/ECE_HBP_2014_4.en.pdf

³ http://www.unece.org/housing/expertconsultation_ee1.html#/

II. Summary of discussions and conclusions of the Expert Consultation on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings

7. The objectives of the meeting were:
- To obtain better understanding of current international activities and needs of governments and stakeholders on standards on energy efficiency in buildings
 - To discuss the main priorities of UNECE member States and major stakeholders in energy efficiency in buildings
 - To formulate possible further steps for the work of the UNECE on standards on energy efficiency in buildings.
8. The UNECE Executive Secretary, Mr. Christian Friis Bach, welcomed the meeting participants and underlined the strategic importance for the UNECE of working on standards. Directors of three UNECE divisions - Forests, Land and Housing; Sustainable Energy; and Economic Cooperation and Trade - informed meeting participants on relevant activities on standards in their divisions.
9. The expert meeting included a panel discussion, which focused on existing frameworks and opportunities of normative instruments for energy efficiency standards for buildings. The following experts presented: Tim Farrell (Copenhagen Centre on Energy Efficiency, and Chair of the UNECE Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency), Marc LaFrance (International Energy Agency), Dan Staniaszek (Buildings Performance Institute Europe), Anna Rossi (International Organization for Standardization) and Panama Bartholomy (Investor Confidence Project Europe).
10. The overall conclusion of the panel was that a number of highly respected organizations are working on a multitude of activities related to energy efficiency, standards and buildings at the international level. For example, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has been developing and tracking the implementation of energy efficiency in buildings standards successfully for several years. A more coordinated approach among standardization bodies, countries, international organizations and the private sector could be beneficial for all, and could determine future work to address gaps. The panel recommended to more actively disseminate information to member States and relevant organizations and experts.
11. Further, Ms. Doris Andoni (Albania), informed on preliminary results of the survey on building standards.⁴ According to the survey results, the UNECE in its activities on energy efficiency standards in buildings should focus on:
- Mapping existing energy efficiency standards in buildings
 - Developing best practice guidance on inspection and enforcement of regulations
 - Setting up a database and network of experts, and
 - Establishing partnerships with different international bodies and professional organizations.
13. In thematic terms, the highest priority area, according to the respondents, is thermal performance of buildings and building components, especially of existing buildings, followed by energy efficient construction materials and minimum habitable standards for healthy and safe living.

⁴ The full survey report is available at <http://www.unece.org/housing/publications.html>

14. Participants of the expert group meeting formulated the following conclusions. Standards for energy efficiency in buildings are very important and can potentially have a strong impact on the energy efficiency situation in the UNECE region. However, standards are not the only normative instrument available to countries to improve energy efficiency in buildings.
15. Standards are most effective when applied as part of a set of instruments and measures aimed at promoting energy efficiency in buildings, such as the identification and dissemination of best practices.
16. The meeting participants recommended to the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management, the Committee on Sustainable Energy and its group of experts on energy efficiency to establish a joint Task Force on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings with the participation of experts from the aforementioned Committees and working parties to ensure a cross-sectoral and cross-divisional integrated approach to addressing energy efficiency codes and building standards.
17. It was proposed that activities of the Task Force to be established could include:
- Mapping energy efficiency standards for buildings and preparing gap analyses
 - Preparing guidance materials
 - Promoting partnerships
 - Establishing an expert network
 - Developing and organizing training programmes, and
 - Elaborating national and regional profiles on building standards.
18. The thematic priorities of the Task Force activities could be:
- Thermal performance of buildings and building components, especially of existing buildings
 - Energy efficient construction materials, and
 - Minimum habitable standards for healthy and safe living with regards to energy efficiency.
19. The Committee is invited to discuss and endorse the proposal of establishing a Task Force on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings.
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