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## All new buildings to be zero energy from 2019 say MEPs

**All buildings built after 31 December 2018 will have to produce as much energy as they consume on-site, says the European Parliament, amending the 2002 Energy Performance of Buildings Directive. MEPs also call for more public investments in energy-efficient buildings. The legislative report was adopted by 549 votes in favour, 51 votes against and 26 abstentions.**

By 31 December 2018 at the latest EU Member States must ensure that all newly-constructed buildings produce as much energy as they consume on-site - e.g. via solar panels or heat pumps, says a report drawn up by Silvia-Adriana **Ticău** (PES, RO). The Commission proposal did not include any specific target dates for zero-energy buildings.

Parliament also wants Member States to set intermediate national targets for existing buildings, i.e. to fix minimum percentages of buildings that should be zero energy by 2015 and by 2020 respectively.

MEPs define zero-energy buildings as buildings "where, as a result of the very high level of energy efficiency of the building, the overall annual primary energy consumption is equal to or less than the energy production from renewable energy sources on site". By the end of 2010, the Commission should establish a detailed common European definition of "net zero energy buildings", states the amended directive.

### Step up financial support for improving energy efficiency of buildings

Parliament added new provisions to the text which require Member States to draw up national action plans by mid-2011 setting out financial instruments for improving the energy efficiency of buildings, such as low-interest loans, fiscal rebates on income or property taxes or requiring energy suppliers to offer financial assistance to consumers.

Moreover, the Commission should by 30 June 2010 propose additional EU financial instruments such as:

- a "significant increase" of the share of European Regional Development Fund money available for energy-efficiency,
- establishing, by 2014, an Energy Efficiency Fund financed by the Community budget, the European Investment Bank and Member States, to promote private and public investment in projects increasing the energy efficiency of buildings, and
- VAT reductions for goods and services related to energy efficiency and renewable energy in buildings.

### Upgrade energy performance of existing buildings

A building's energy performance will have to be upgraded to meet at least minimum energy performance requirements whenever it undergoes major renovation or building components and technical building systems (such as windows, boilers or air conditioning systems) are replaced, says the amended text.

# Press release

MEPs define a "major renovation" as a refurbishment of more than 25% of the building's surface or where the total costs of the renovation are higher than 20% of the building's value.

The minimum energy performance requirements are to be set by the Member States, says the directive. However, the Commission will have to establish a common methodology for calculating the energy performance of buildings by 31 March 2010, add MEPs.

## **Holiday homes must meet minimum energy performance standards, too**

Member States should set minimum energy performance standards for holiday homes used less than four months a year, too, say MEPs, deleting a proposed exemption for such houses.

However, the following are excluded from the directive's energy efficiency requirements: small houses (with a floor area of less than 50m<sup>2</sup>), buildings for religious activities, temporary buildings used for less than 18 months, workshops and agricultural buildings with low energy demand and protected historic buildings where an energy-efficiency measure would "unacceptably alter their character".

## **Smart meters**

MEPs want "smart" meters to be installed in all new buildings and all buildings undergoing a major renovation. Smart meters measure both how much and at what time of day energy is consumed - a system which could, for example, allow customers to benefit from lower night-time tariffs.

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