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Press Release

Energy efficiency projects in construction successful despite economic crisis

A change in strategy can result in project success in tough economic times, as a conference on renewable energy and energy efficiency projects in the construction industry has shown. Twenty-two coordinators for CONCERTO projects subsidised by the EU came to the Brussels conference to share their experiences.

The Irish Republic has been one of the countries most hard-hit by the financial crisis; "SERVE has been a success during the deepest crisis Ireland has ever experienced," said Seamus Hoyne from the Limerick Institute of Technology in summarising his project experiences, and the results do indeed speak for themselves – 400 buildings renovated and 50 energy-efficient buildings built from scratch. This project took a departure from the normal course by involving residents, 90 percent of whom actually owned the renovated buildings; the savings to be generated from the investment clinched the argument during the crisis.

There was a change of plan in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain, with 100 new houses originally to be built as part of a new-build project; then the crisis hit, causing a change in focus to renovating existing buildings from the Fifties and Sixties according to Iver Jan Leren from the PIME'S CONCERTO project.

Reto M. Hummelshøj from the ECO-City CONCERTO project demonstrated how fast renovation projects can break even for housing associations and local authorities – all of eleven years on average in a follow-up on projects completed in Helsingborg, Sweden, and Helsingør in Denmark. Renovation and new-build projects alike saw CO₂ emission reductions amounting to 28 percent; the project has long since been completed, and increased efficiency would make these reduction rates difficult to match in the present, according to Hummelshøj.

One thing that Emil ter Horst learned from the cRRrescendo CONCERTO project was that preparation is so much more important in renovation than in new-build projects – "There are a lot more stakeholders you have to include in a renovation project than when you're constructing new buildings," an observation echoed by Sylvain Koch-Mathian from the RENAISSANCE CONCERTO project. Lessons learned by project partners in Lyon have even found their way into the new French Energy Regulation for the construction industry, according to Koch-Mathian.

The CONCERTO projects also showed that rethinking technologies along with procedures could bring dividends, with a CHP plant in Milton Keynes, UK, serving as one such example; "This technology hasn't yet gained much traction in Britain, but our project has shown that CHP does work well, boosting its credibility," said



ter Horst. Combinations of technologies, integration and monitoring are disciplines that offer an excellent opportunity for project partners to learn from one another, according to Károly Matolcsy from the Hungarian Research Institute EMI and PIME'S project manager.

The general consensus from the conference was that the evidence from many countries had shown the need for flexibility in renovation and new-build projects in what can be difficult conditions.

CONCERTO website: www.concerto.eu

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CONCERTO Premium:

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