



European
Commission

TEST LEVEL(S)

NEWSLETTER

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LEVEL(S): A COMMUNITY OF MORE THAN 130 BUILDING PROJECTS IN 21 NATIONS

In April 2018, the European Commission officially opened the two-year testing phase for Level(s) to organisations looking to be part of Europe's shift towards circular and lifecycle thinking.

The aim of the testing phase is to support stakeholders across the construction and real estate value chain, from investors, to developers, designers and manufacturers; in testing the Level(s) indicators on their building projects. The feedback from the testing phase will inform the final version of the Level(s) framework - to be launched in spring 2020.

THE LEVEL(S) TEST CONFERENCE

The December conference on the testing of Level(s) was a huge success, hosting over 150

organisations and evidencing the huge political and industry support Level(s) has gathered. Speeches were made by Commissioner Karmenu Vella, DG Environment Deputy Director-General Joanna Drake, DG Growth Director Gwenole Cozigou, and senior speakers from governments, investors, developers, engineers, architects and manufacturers - showing Level(s) is really bringing together the full sector value-chain. All the conference speeches and presentations can be viewed on the [conference website](#).

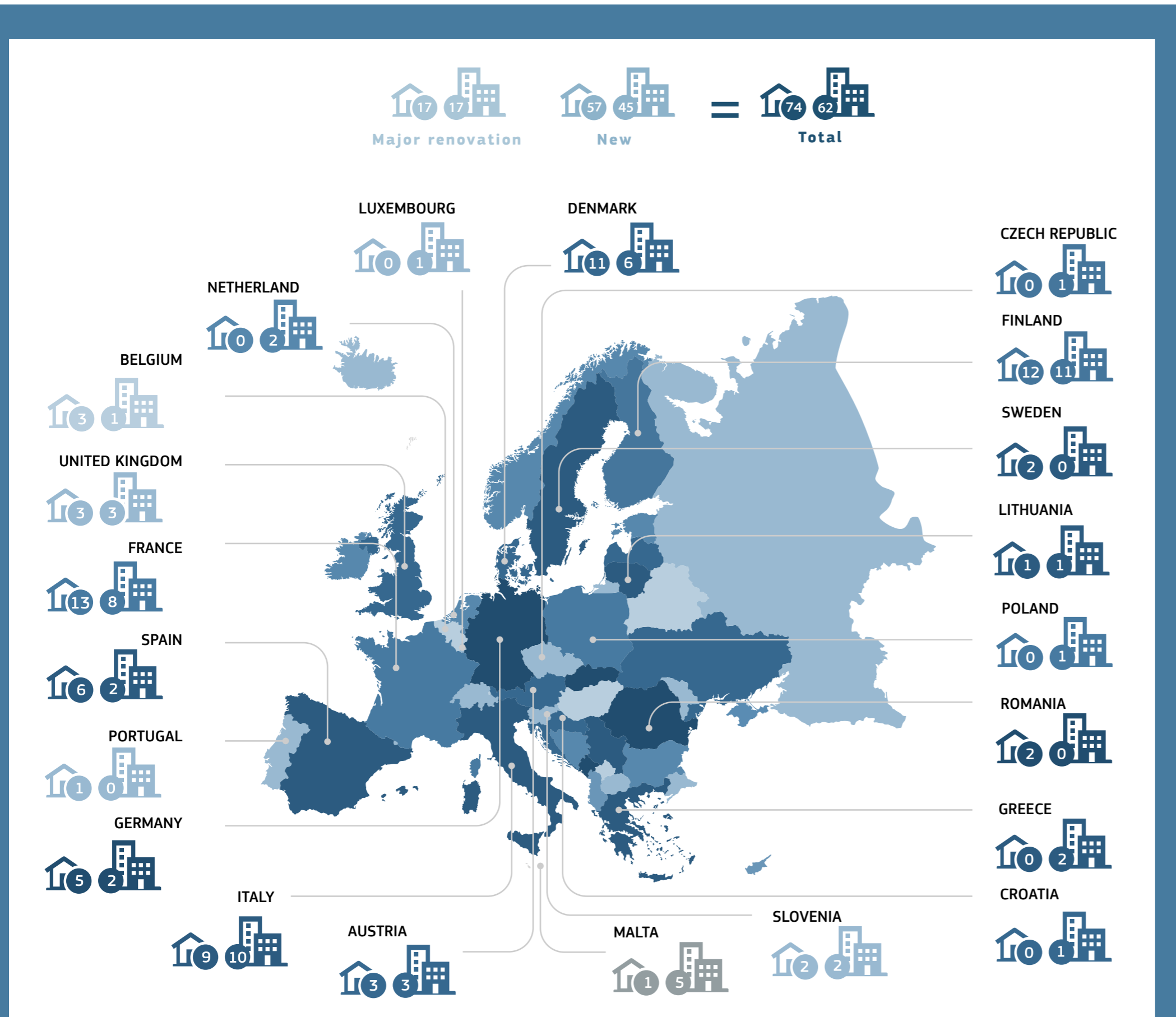
A conference report including case studies from the test phase will be published shortly on the [Level\(s\) website](#).

In anticipation of this, please see what Lutron, one of the testers, is communicating on their market:

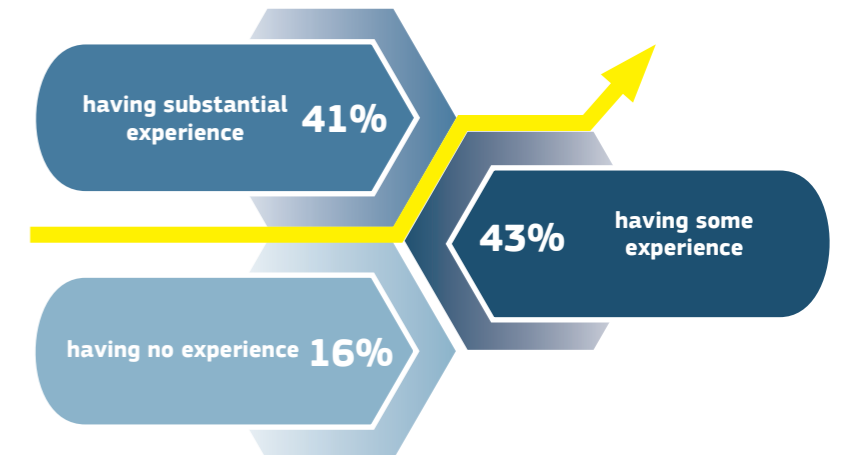
[Press release](#) and article in [Electrical Times](#).

LEVEL(S): OVERVIEW OF THE TESTING PHASE

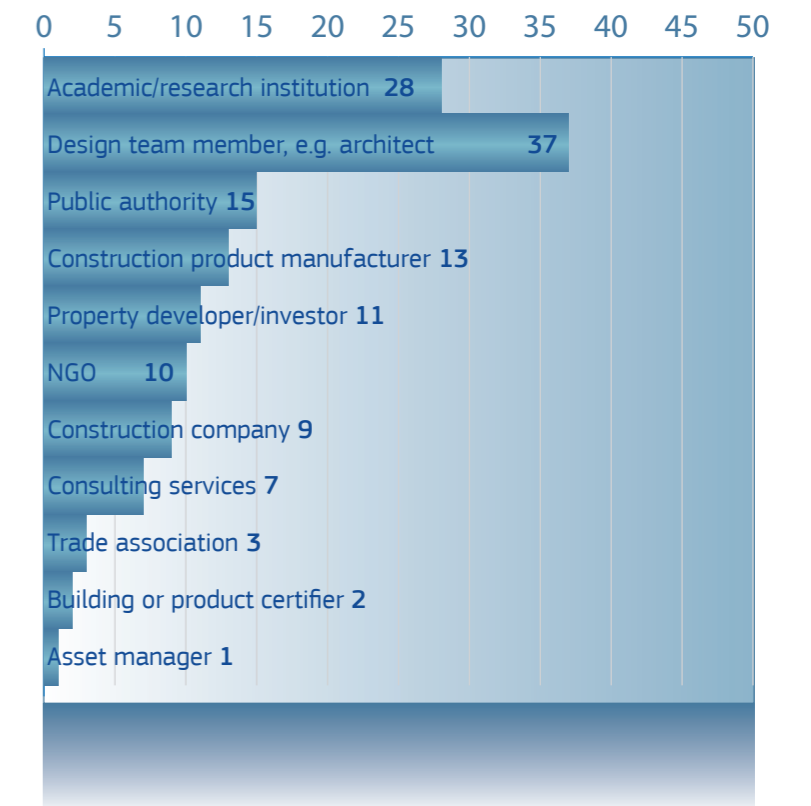
Of the projects testing Level(s), 74 are residential and 62 are non-residential - which provides important balance in terms of the community shaping Level(s).



The experience with sustainable building rating tools or lifecycle assessment varies between the organisations testing Level(s)



The type of organisations leading Level(s) testing projects moreover varies across the construction and real estate value chain.



COMING EVENTS

- GreenBuild, Amsterdam. This session, on the 19 March, will discuss how Level(s) ties into certification schemes and vice versa. [See program here](#).
- DG Environment and the World Green Building Council will host a high level policy conference event on Level(s) at Green Week on 16 May. More information on this session will be uploaded shortly [here](#).
- The World Green Building Council will host an invite only Brussels workshop on Level(s) and addressing embodied CO₂ emissions on 3 May. For further details, contact: europe@worldgbc.org

LEVEL(S) AT PREVIOUS EVENTS

- World Corrosion Congress EUROCORR 2018, in September, in Krakow, Poland. An interview with Josefina Lindblom from the European Commission was published in [Materialy Budowlane](#), monthly, no 11/2018 and at [the end of this newsletter](#).
- The Slovenian Green Building Council organised its 3rd sustainable conference in September in Ljubljana. Check out a [short video](#) in Slovenian and English.
- The Irish Green Building Council organised a Level(s) workshop in October, where Level(s) and how it could be applied at the Irish market was discussed with local building professionals.
- Plan national bâtiment durable, in France, organised the 7th Congrès National du Bâtiment Durable, in Lyon in October. Listen to [an interview](#) in French on Level(s).
- Low carbon roadmap seminar, organised by the Concrete Initiative at the European Parliament in Brussels in October. [See article](#).
- The Initiative “Growth in Transition” in Vienna, Austria, in November.
- COP24 in Katowice, Poland in December:
 - The symposium on Building Action, organised by the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction.
 - The seminar “Towards a low-carbon and energy-efficient built environment to reach the Paris Agreement”, organised by Cembureau.

SUSTAINABLE FINANCE

We want to make you aware of the ongoing work on an emerging EU sustainable finance taxonomy – i.e. a list of economic activities that are considered as environmentally sustainable, designed to be used by investors. An invitation for feedback has been launched.

The deadline for comments is 22 February 2019. Here is the link to the feedback form:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/sustainable-finance-taxonomy_en

Please scroll down to “Feedback – 1st round climate mitigation activities” and/or “Feedback – Usability of the Taxonomy” and click to enter EU Survey. In the “Activities” page, tick one or both of “F Construction and L Real estate activities”. For reference, see also the full downloadable version of the documentation (see pp. 101-108 for buildings).

In case of questions: ec-teg-sf@ec.europa.eu

Level(s) – europejski system oceny środowiskowej budynków

DOI: 10.15199/33.2018.11.12

Komisja Europejska (DG Environment + Joint Research Center JRC) opracowała nowe narzędzie dla zrównoważonego budownictwa nazwane Level(s) – poziomy. Ma ono umożliwić uproszczoną (niekomercyjną) ocenę budynków biurowych i mieszkalnych w kontekście spełnienia przez nie kryteriów zrównoważonego budownictwa. Projekt modelu przechodzi obecnie trzyletni okres testowy, w którym bierze udział ok. 80 podmiotów ze wszystkich krajów UE. Proponowane wskaźniki oceny budynków (m.in. LCA, LCC, etc.) nie są rewolucyjne, znane z prac normalizacyjnych CEN TC 350 ds. zrównoważonego budownictwa [1] oraz obecne w komercyjnych metodach oceny budynków [2]. Wskaźniki oceny nawiązują do polityki środowiskowej, odpadowej i energetycznej Komisji Europejskiej. Dotyczą m.in. wpływu budynku na zmiany klimatyczne (ekwiwalentne CO₂), zużycia wody i energii, jakości powietrza wewnętrznego oraz efektywności wykorzystania zasobów naturalnych w cyklu życia budynku.

Projekt Level(s) ma być ważnym krokiem w kierunku zwiększenia w Europie liczby budynków o wysokim standardzie efektywności środowiskowej. W przypadku pomyślnych wyników testów KE będzie mogła wesprzeć wdrożenie systemu ocen środowiskowych budynku w Europie, np. przygotowując odpowiednią Dyrektywę ds. charakterystyki środowiskowej budynku lub wpływając na państwa członkowskie, aby uwzględniły promowane wskaźniki w przepisach budowlanych.

Nadrzędnym celem Level(s) jest zapewnienie wspólnego języka do analiz zrównoważonego budownictwa, opartego na normach. Powinien on umożliwiać podejmowanie działań na poziomie budynku, które mogą wyraźnie przyczynić się do osiągnięcia szerszych celów europejskiej i krajowej polityki w dziedzinie środowiska i efektywności energetycznej. **Level(s) nie jest nowym systemem certyfikacji, lecz sposobem komunikacji, czyli raportowania wyników oceny do szerokiego wykorzystania w budownictwie.** Komisja Europejska ma nadzieję na popularyzację tego dość prostego narzędzia. We wrześniu br., podczas Światowej Konferencji Eurocorr w Krakowie, przeprowadziłem wywiad z **Josefiną Lindblom**, wysokiej rangi pracownikiem Generalnej Dyrekcji ds. Środowiska w Komisji UE. Rozmowa dotyczyła wdrożenia oraz promowania przez Komisję Europejską dobrowolnego systemu oceny efektywności środowiskowej budynków.

Literatura

[1] Piasecki Michał. 2018. „Zrównoważone budownictwo w pracach normalizacyjnych CEN i ISO w 2017 r.”. *Materiały Budowlane* 547 (3): 82 – 83. DOI: 10.15199/33.2018.03.33.

[2] Piasecki Michał. 2010. „Metoda oceny budynku pod kątem zrównoważonego rozwoju”. *Materiały Budowlane* 453 (5): 34 – 36.

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Level(s) – building sustainability performance

Michał Piasecki (MP) Head of Thermal Physics, Acoustics and Environment Department of Institut Techniki Budowlanej, interviews Josefin Lindblom, a policy officer at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Environment, on the implementation the Level(s), the Commission's voluntary scheme for reporting the sustainability of buildings. Level(s), a ground-breaking building sustainability tool, is currently going through a two-year test period. By measuring indicators such as climate change impact, water and energy use, indoor air quality and resource efficiency across the entire lifecycle of buildings, the Level(s) project is designed to be a significant step in making buildings more sustainable by generating the data needed to understand their environmental impact.

Michał Piasecki: *Let's start with the most important question – what is Level(s)?*

Josefina Lindblom: It's an EU-wide tool for assessing the environmental performance of buildings. Level(s) provides

an easy starting point to introduce sustainability into your work. Within the framework, each indicator is designed to link the individual building's impact with the priorities for sustainability at

the European level. This focuses the Level(s) user on a manageable number of essential concepts and indicators at building level, which taken together can help the EU and its Member States achieve environmental policy goals.

MP: *Is there any consolidated practical information about the Level(s) and intended use?*

JL: Most of the material is available in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Polish on the Level(s) website. There is also a „Guide to Europe's New Reporting Framework for Sustainable Buildings”, which sets the scene

for sustainable buildings and Level(s) in a short and concise format.

MP: *What is in your opinion the expected future of Level(s) in Europe?*

JL: Much depends on political appetite but once we have a revised version after the test period, we need to come up with strong incentives to use it. But right now we are in a test period, with over 130 pioneering organisations that have committed to test the scheme. That feedback will be an important element in our future planning.

MP: *What kind of commitment is expected of the organizations participating in the test stage? Which kind of feedback is expected?*

JL: Testers need to send information on the indicators they worked with via a completed reporting spreadsheet (the common reporting format), and to give feedback about the general experience of working with the framework via a survey. We will be looking in more detail at some of the projects that have volunteered later on, and at that point we might ask for more detailed project technical documentation to help the Commission's research arm (the JRC, or Joint Research Centre) verify how the Level(s) guidance has been used.

MP: *How about the potential success rate of this approach, we know from history that many such initiatives have been lost and only some commercial systems still operate on the market?*

JL: Realistically, we are hoping for a gradual success, a step-by-step process. That's what happened with energy efficiency in Europe – it went from voluntary to incentives to mandatory as part of a long process. That didn't happen overnight. Level(s) may be the same. And of course it will also depend on the momentum generated by Member States and building stakeholders. Practical support through the creation of open-source calculation tools, accessible databases to compare information and extensive training will help mainstream the initiative.

MP: *What is the actual Member State response?*



Josefina Lindblom

JL: Many Member States already appreciate the value of a Level(s) assessment of their buildings. I see a lot of Member States attracted to the initiative because they want to assess their buildings as well as possible, and Level(s) saves them a huge amount of time, money and effort. I think the extent to which indicators will be used in national regulation will depend on issues such as geography, culture or climate with some countries focusing more on water, energy use or indoor air quality for example.

MP: *What are the factors that can give the advantage of Level(s) over the existing commercial systems?*

JL: At present, less than 1% of all buildings are sustainability assessed, mostly office buildings, and the Commission believes this should be scaled up dramatically and also appeal to the mass market. That is why Level(s) is designed to „mainstream” information about the sustainability of a building in an easily accessible form, not just for office buildings but for residential buildings as well. We aren't trying to compete with existing systems, but rather to provide a common language that existing initiatives and certification systems can tap into.

MP: *So, is Level(s) a simplified certification system?*

JL: It's a reporting tool, not a certification system. There are no European benchmarks attached to it, and hence no different labels indicating different le-

vels such as A, B, C. But we do encourage Member States and even individual organisations to set benchmarks or targets on their side, to drive change and improvement.

MP: *How does the system relate to the life cycle costs?*

JL: The understanding of the cost benefits of sustainable buildings through Level(s) indicators is another vital opportunity. If you are able to use fewer resources throughout the full lifecycle of a building, you are likely to have a reduced cost at the end of that lifecycle, even if you had higher capital costs at the beginning. Initially, expenses may be higher but as you learn to work in new ways in a building consortium, costs go down. So while there might be an up-front cost, a more sustainable, greener building does not have to be more costly once you know how to do it. Importantly, something has been created that is substantially better than what we are seeing now. And good building sustainability has the direct financial implications. In parts of Europe, buildings that are not sustainable become obsolete or suffer excessive gaps between leasing tenancies. And issues such as good indoor air quality or sustainable use of water or energy add value.

MP: *What are your personal impressions?*

JL: Everywhere I go, professionals believe that building sustainability will eventually be part of the future regulation landscape. So, if you want to be on top of this as a company or organisation, Level(s) is a good tool to start with. It's a simple entry point into a complicated area.

MP: *What would you like to say at the end of interview for future Level(s) users?*

JL: We are seeing a huge change in the way people look at building sustainability today compared to a decade ago. It is definitely more mainstream. People realise it is the future and I hope Level(s) plays a pioneering role in shaping that future. You can find out all about on the website, at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/buildings.htm>.

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