

Third parties play a key role to making buildings energy efficient

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In a strategic plan for the municipality, the town council of Valladolid , in Spain, has given top priority to the renovation of its heritage buildings to achieve nearly zero energy districts. In one of its neighbourhoods, called Cuatro de Marzo, such renovation has already started to happen. It has been pioneered by the company for land and housing, called VIVA—Sociedad Municipal de Suelo y Vivienda— and owned by the Valladolid municipality. It operates within the European project R2CITIES, whose aim is to develop and demonstrate strategies for designing and constructing nearly zero energy districts.

César Alonso manager at VIVA in Valladolid, speaks to youris.com about the importance of taking into account residents' opinion and of involving so-called Energy Service Companies in financing the process.

What are the advantages of building energy efficient buildings?

All regulations concerning incentives and initiatives to do with the renovation of buildings include the idea of [energy efficiency](#). Both the Valladolid town council and VIVA want to be first in the queue to get European funding to implement these changes.

These are not only beneficial to the residents, who are directly involved, but also to the city as a whole. The main priority of the project is energy efficiency. But we are also concerned with renovating the buildings in

terms of access, as requested by residents. This is necessary because we are dealing with buildings from the 50s and 60s, which were built in a way which is now considered obsolete. We are also providing [financial assistance](#) to residents for such renovation.

What approach have you adopted?

The project has both a theoretical and a practical part. The main aim of the theoretical part involves developing a guidance document. It will be used as a tool to analyse the specific challenges and the different options available when renovating a neighbourhood to make it energy efficient. This document relies on examples of various cities characterised by diverse climates and specificities.

The practical part is the development of a series of implementation measures, based on all the different energy efficiency options. In the case of Valladolid, these choices are made by VIVA. The process starts by getting the main beneficiaries involved —namely, these are the residents and owners of the buildings.

How do you involve the residents?

The direct participation of the residents is the most important part of the whole process. Prior to offering grants to the residents, we asked them about their three main concerns. The answers were: what do I have to do to become energy efficient? How much is it going to cost? And how much financial assistance will I get? Then, we had meetings with all the residents of the neighbourhood to explain the philosophy of the project and to try and get them involved.

They choose from between different renovation packages. The simplest involves the addition of a thermal insulation envelope around the whole

building. The most comprehensive includes the same envelope combined with the replacement of individual gas boilers by a biomass boiler, which serves at least a hundred residences, as well as the installation of a lift.

What is the role of Energy Service Companies, or ESCOs, in the process?

The ESCOs play a vital role because they provide residents with a way of financing the initiative. This approach is particularly valuable in neighbourhoods, like Cuatro de Marzo, where it is actually the residents who make the decisions. The ESCOs give them the incentive and the assistance needed to transform the heating network and to make the change from individual boilers to collective biomass boilers. The ESCOs can finance this work in a way that the residents, who are making savings on their energy bills thanks to this work, can make comfortable repayments on these loans.

Do you think that the involvement of the ESCOs play a key role in this type of initiative?

It is not going to be an easy task. But if we manage to persuade the residents of 10 buildings to get rid of their individual boilers and install a biomass boiler, then the idea of this initiative will spread across the neighbourhood. We will be on the road to energy efficiency when [residents](#), who have already made this change, explain to their neighbours that they are now paying much less in energy bills.

Provided by Youris.com

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