

How to raise the number of nZEBs in Europe? Experts provide their insights into probing questions

December 29 2015

DIRECTION's second replication workshop took place in September, organised by Eurac in Bolzano, Italy. This is one of three workshops aimed at maximising replicability potential as the project enters its final months.

Architect Alessandro Stroligo started working as project architect in Italian and international projects at Chapman Taylor London in 2001. After Chapman Taylor opened an office in Milan, he moved to Italy in 2003. Now, he works on several projects both in Italy and abroad following all phases of architectural planning, from concept design to the construction site. He became project director, and in 2008, associate director. He is in charge of architectural planning quality and sustainability. Since January 2015, he has served as director of the Milan office.

Here, he discusses opportunities for increasing the number of net-zero energy buildings (nZEBs) in Europe.

Do you think there is a real market for nZEBs in Europe in the short term?

In the last few years, awareness about the importance of preserving the planet's resources has gradually increased. People pay more attention to reducing energy consumption and waste emissions. Despite their

importance, these issues are not being addressed through forward-looking policy making. Policy should not only support, but also subsidise all the sectors. As a result, the nZEB market is growing, but not as much as it could.

Which governmental initiatives (regulation, public funding, etc.) could ensure the growth of the nZEBs market, making nZEBs more appealing to public and private developers and end users? Or does the private sector need to take the lead? Why?

The costs a private citizen has to bear in the short term for this kind of building are still too high and not attractive enough for the sector. Consequently, few choose this path. Government intervention is essential to addressing entrepreneurial choices in the right way, both in the public and private sectors. A rational legislation, but above all, incentives aimed at reducing taxes on less polluting buildings would be beneficial.

Cultural awareness would make the real difference, but it has to be based on correct information. Individuals switching off the lights when not needed would also a step in the right direction. It is an ethical and civic duty towards future generations.

Do you believe your company would benefit from a higher market share of nZEBs compared to traditional buildings?

Our group, Chapman Taylor, has been working in the field of sustainable architecture and nZEBs for many years. Surely, being in this market is an asset, because making this kind of building will become essential in the future. In addition, contributing to sustainability and to the quality of

the environment while raising awareness among our customers is one of our main objectives.

How could the design of nZEBs be integrated into public tendering processes?

Subsidies for this kind of project are essential to achieving more efficient buildings. Energy efficient planning should be integrated from the very first phases of concept design. It may mean putting more money up front, but this will bring benefits further down the line. Public authorities should incentivise smart integrated planning, which takes into account not only energy issues but also economic costs and benefits, functional and aesthetic issues. It should also certify that sustainability, production and quality criteria of raw materials are being respected.

Integrated design process of nZEBs with SMEs and craftsmen—is it possible? How?

Every top-quality building made to last is only possible with the collaboration between all the subjects involved. Every player, however small they may be, contributes to the making of the building and is an essential piece for its success. Making nZEBs in collaboration with SME and craftsmen is not only possible, but unavoidable and it should be supported and incentivised by both the public authorities and the professionals/consultants involved in the planning.

Provided by DIRECTION

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