TACD

TRANS ATLANTIC CONSUMER DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE TRANSATLANTIQUE DES CONSOMMATEURS

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Resolution on Housing and Energy

Buildings worldwide account for 40% of global energy consumption[1], with the residential subsector accounting for a significant proportion of this percentage. A great quantity of energy is wasted every year because of a lack of insulation and ventilation systems, non-adapted or insufficient heating and cooling systems and lighting. Unfortunately, new building constructions and renovation of old buildings at least in the EU are insufficiently promoted to tackle the problem.

To tap the huge potential of energy savings presented by the building sector, great efforts are needed by governments, industry and consumers alike. Removing barriers to cost-effective efficiency investments will mean that consumers who benefit from energy efficiency measures can lower their energy bills (which is particularly important as energy prices rise), will reduce greenhouse gases, and help reduce the costs of new generation and transmission.

TACD recommendations to the EU and US governments:

Standards:

1. **Governments should set energy performance targets for existing buildings and provide incentives and support for consumers and businesses to reach improved energy efficiency standards** – Governments should aim to improve the energy performance standards of existing buildings to the best achievable energy performance level but without imposing excessive costs on consumers, particularly in the short-term, and ensuring that consumer barriers of up-front cost and their advice and information needs are addressed.
2. **Governments should set ambitious minimum energy performance requirements for new public, residential and commercial buildings and houses** - These energy performance standards should comply and be regularly aligned with the best available technical energy performance level.
3. **For governmental and commercial buildings, governments ought to promote independently certified environmental management systems that address energy performance among other environmental aspects.** However, we have strong reservations regarding environmental management systems in general. Such systems often lack transparency or ambition. Environmental/energy management systems should therefore be based on the principle of continuous improvement of environmental performance, mandatory indicators and real performance benchmarks. They should be certified and the progress monitored by an independent third-party.

[1] World Business Council for Sustainable Development, June 2009

http://www.wbcsd.org/DocRoot/WvNIJhLQBmClKuj0eN0h/91719_EEBReport_WEB.pdf

The display of energy performance certificates on buildings could be an important measure to be promoted in order to raise awareness of the general public and lead by example.

4. **Governments should complement the minimum energy performance requirements for buildings with mandatory requirements for the energy efficiency of products related to buildings and housing.** In particular, as the overall energy efficiency of buildings highly depends on the heating and cooling systems installed, product specific minimum requirements should be set for space heating, the provision of hot water and room air conditioning. Moreover, other products used in buildings and houses such as appliances (washing machines, refrigerators, dishwashers, etc), electronics and both domestic and office lighting need to be made more energy efficient. In the EU, several eco-design measures addressing the energy efficiency of energy-using products have been adopted or are under development, measures on energy efficient lighting in homes and office buildings have been agreed and measures for products that do not use energy directly but have a potential impact on energy efficiency such as windows and window frames may be adopted in the future. The EU standards set should be ambitious and forward-looking, backed by testing standards that reflect real-life use and monitored and enforced effectively by Governments and their agencies. The United States should continue to update its mandatory efficiency standards, require independent verification and testing, and expand efficiency standards to additional electronics.
5. **Governments should ensure that building regulations are properly implemented –** Further efforts are needed to ensure that public, residential and commercial buildings and houses are compliant with current regulations.
6. **Governments should encourage the tightening of internationally agreed standards for the energy efficiency performance of products**
7. **Governments should set ambitious, binding and short and long term targets for green public procurement in the area of buildings and constructions.**

Labeling:

8. **Governments should ensure the provision of clear and reliable information about the energy efficiency of products** – In the US, the approach should build upon the US Energy Star program, which should be strengthened In the EU, the mandatory energy labeling scheme for appliances has been a great success. It has made it easy for consumers to identify the most energy efficient products and helped drive the market towards more energy-efficient products hence having a positive impact on the overall consumption of households and offices. The label displayed classes from A-G ('A' being the most energy efficient class) but has been redesigned to a format that consumers will find more confusing[2]. New labels must be based upon consumer research and as they are introduced their effectiveness should be monitored by assessment of their effect on consumer purchasing patterns. They should be supported by ambitious and forward looking eco-design standards and effective enforcement regimes.
9. **Governments should ensure the provision of clear and reliable information about the energy efficiency of construction materials**

[2] Joint statement from ANEC, BEUC, BRC, EEB, FCD, WWF: When is an A not an A?

Funding:

10. **Governments should provide incentives that align the interests of tenants and landlords in order to ensure that energy efficiency measures are adopted by rental properties.** Providing outreach and incentives to residential and commercial landlords are important to leverage private investment in efficiency and overcome principal-agent barriers to adoption.
11. **Governments should ensure that provisions for low-income consumers are considered** – low-income consumers should not be prevented from moving towards more efficient housing because of the potentially higher up-front costs. Weatherization/weather-proofing, insulation and efficiency programs should include multiple strategies for reaching consumers of all income levels. For example, landlord incentives and pay as you save programs are more effective in helping low-income consumers, while programs like promotional rebates work better for higher income consumers.
12. **Governments should promote investments in infrastructure aimed at improving building performances - Investments in district heating and cooling could be key to reduce GHG emissions especially in urban areas.**
13. **Governments should incentivize the use of thermal mass to significantly reduce heating and cooling demand in new buildings.** Combining thermal mass, appropriate insulation, ventilation and passive solar design can significantly reduce heating demand, resulting in long-term low energy bills and maintenance costs.

Health Impacts:

14. **Governments should ensure that all energy-saving initiatives in the housing sector do not jeopardise a healthy indoor environment with sufficient levels of ventilation**