

Economic Commission for Europe
Committee on Housing and Land Management

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Sustainable Housing

**Good practices for energy efficient housing in the
UNECE region. Concept note**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This note contains the outline for the preparation of a Casebook on “Good practices for energy efficient housing in the UNECE region” (working title). This publication will build on UNECE work in the field of energy efficiency in the housing sector and, in particular, support the implementation of the Action Plan for energy-efficient housing in the UNECE region (ECE/HBP/164) by providing concrete examples and cases from the region that illustrate how actions outlined in the Plan could be implemented.

The Bureau of the Committee has endorsed a draft concept note during its meeting held on 2 and 3 July 2012. Information gathered through the discussions at the Committee session will provide guidance and useful background for the preparation of this study, should the Committee approve this proposed activity.

Following the Committee’s discussion and endorsement, the study will be finalized and completed by the secretariat in order to be presented at the seventy-fourth session of the Committee.

I. Introduction

1. Energy efficiency is one of the key solutions to address the energy crisis; the effects of climate change, the promotion of adequate shelter and sustainable urbanization. Increasing energy efficiency in housing provides multiple benefits, as it:

- Contributes to climate change mitigation through the reduction of emissions;
- Reduces energy bills and energy poverty and increases energy security through an overall reduced level of energy consumption;
- Supports the regeneration of the built environment through retrofitting and refurbishment of large, deteriorated housing stocks in countries with economies in transition and, hence, improves overall living standards; and
- Facilitates a green transformation of the economy through the creation and promotion of green jobs.

2. Energy efficiency in housing and in cities targets a broad field of urban tasks, including the built environment, transport, and industrial sectors, as well as people's behaviour, economic development, and international co-operation, to name just a few.

3. The promoters and possible promoters of energy efficiency are varied. They range from private households to industry, from local governments to NGOs. Their means span from awareness campaigns and democratic processes to legislation, bylaws and/or restrictions. The global goal in all of these endeavours remains simple. In a society that is increasingly dependent on energy and is vulnerable to its crises and limitations, a close view has to be given to the ways energy is both used and produced. With an eye on future generations and the growing impact of our lifestyles on the natural foundation of our world, the international community has defined actions to limit the sources of climate relevant emissions and has given them a top priority.

4. Despite the advantages of energy-efficient housing, many countries in the UNECE region are caught in an energy inefficiency trap because they have comparably low levels of energy efficiency and are unable to change their respective status due to a lack of funds, experience, technology, motivation, information and capacity.

5. Since 2008, the Committee has been working on increasing the energy efficiency of the housing sector in the region. The study "Green Homes: Towards Energy-Efficient Housing in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Region" (ECE/HBP/159) illustrates the multiple environmental, economic and social benefits arising from a transition towards energy-efficient housing. It outlines the required institutional changes and provides some basic principles for successful policies. To assist member States in improving the sustainability of their housing sectors, the Committee has developed a concrete, comprehensive and integrated "Action Plan for energy-efficient housing in the UNECE region" (ECE/HBP/168). Through training courses and national action plans, the Committee advises Governments on how to implement the Action Plan with the main objective being to help countries set up the legal and financial institutional framework for more energy-efficient homes.

6. For example, UNECE published the first "National Action Plan of Montenegro for energy efficiency measures in the residential sector" in March 2012 with concrete recommendations targeted to that country's specific conditions.

II. A Casebook of Good Practices

7. To support the implementation of the over 170 actions included in the Action Plan (ECE/HBP/168) at a national level, the need was identified for concrete examples to illustrate best practices based on energy efficient residential buildings from across the region. These cases and examples will be compiled in a casebook on energy efficiency in housing.

8. The proposed report has a practical national approach: It should be a reliable source on what is and has already been working in the field of energy efficiency on a community level and beyond. Such a casebook would emphasize the viability of energy-efficient housing, trigger interest and increase the national stakeholders' acceptability in this field to, eventually, create demand for energy-efficient retrofitting and construction of new energy-efficient residential buildings.

9. The preparation of this publication is a joint partnership endeavour between the UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit (HLM), UN-HABITAT (Housing Unit of the Housing and Slum Upgrading Branch, Urban Energy Section and RTDC-office in Russia in charge of CIS countries- and Best Practices Programme), the UN-HABITAT Best Practices Centre for Central and Eastern Europe and the City of Vienna.

10. The Casebook will give a first-hand and trustworthy insight into projects that have been pursued and evaluated in recent years. Additional examples will be identified through a desk review of other good practice databases and partner networks. Moreover, a questionnaire will be sent to partners and networks to identify additional good practices from all UNECE sub-regions for consideration in the Casebook. This will also include documenting new case studies from Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asia as well as South-East European countries.

11. The desk review and questionnaire will be the first step towards an action-oriented strategy to help implement energy efficient technologies and strategies with the support of the international community and concerned partners from the region.

12. The proposed structure of the Casebook as well as the Best Practices case studies will be reviewed by different experts and partners to ensure the adaptability and relevance of the Casebook for countries in the region. It is proposed to integrate such review sessions into the regional training workshops on energy-efficient and affordable housing planned for 2013. The workshops will draw on the participating experts to review and agree on the proposed outline and case studies as well as present additional case studies to be included in the casebook. In addition, it is planned to hold one expert group meeting to peer-review the final draft of the Casebook.

13. The publication will follow the thematic structure of the "Action Plan for energy-efficient housing in the UNECE region" and will be produced in English and Russian.

14. The designated target audience is policy makers and practitioners involved in developing, managing and promoting energy efficient housing in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. The case studies in the report will also be of interest for policy makers and practitioners in Western Europe.