

This edition of the newsletter will deal with the following:

1. The vote of the European Parliament (EP) on the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD)
2. Higher rents for green buildings
3. "Your Europe-Business" Portal
4. Ecodesign Directive
5. Call for proposals
6. Reduced rates of VAT
7. Professional Qualifications

1. The Vote of the EP on the EPBD

The vote took place on 23 April in the plenary session of the EP. It approved the Commission's proposals for the recast of the EPBD as amended by the Industry, Research and Energy Committee of the EP (see CEPI.eu#35). The EP also called upon Member States to set percentages for a minimum share of existing buildings to be energy neutral in 2015 and 2020. It urged the Commission to propose new financial instruments to support efficiency improvements by 20 June 2010.

The current Czech presidency of the EU is due to present a progress report on the recast for the Energy Council in June. It is intended that agreement be reached on the proposal by the end of 2009, under the Swedish presidency.

2. Higher Rents for Green Buildings

The RICS has published a research report which analyses the financial performance of green office buildings in the USA. The results suggest that such buildings are now attracting higher rents than non-green buildings of the same size, location and function. The report also states that upgrading such buildings to "green" standards results in an increase in the capital value of around 16%.

A copy of the report "Doing Well by Doing Good" can be downloaded from http://www.rics.org/Knowledgezone/Researchandreports/doingwell_300309_research.htm

3. "Your Europe-Business" Portal

A new business portal has been established to give entrepreneurs easy access to information on doing business in other EU Member States. This is part of the implementation of the Small Business Act. As well as answering questions on matters such as registering a company, permits needed to sell products, taxes and labour law in different European countries, it also gives direct access to e-government services and online administrative procedures in the EU Member States. All information is available in English and in the official language of any chosen country.

"Your Europe-Business" is available online at <http://europa.eu/youreurope/business>.

4. Ecodesign Directive

The EP has also approved (on 24 April) the extension of the scope of Directive 2005/32/EC on eco-design to include not only energy-using items, such as hairdryers, computers, televisions and fridges, but also energy-related products. This will mean that the Directive will affect energy-related products such as shower heads, windows, construction products and insulation materials. It does not introduce directly binding eco-design requirements for products, but defines the conditions and criteria for setting such requirements.

However, the European Commission will only review the effectiveness of the Directive in 2012, so will present a revised working plan for the Ecodesign Directive in 2011.

5. Call for proposals

A call for proposals under the European Commission's Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) programme has been published. The closing date is **25 June 2009**. Information is available at <http://ec.europa/intelligentenergy> .

The IEE programme will fund projects in areas such as capacity building, spreading of know-how, exchanges of experience, policy input, awareness raising, education and training. Actions must have:

- clear objectives, high impact, European added value;
- at least 3 partner organisations from 3 different eligible countries;
- maximum funding period of 3 years;
- budget usually between €0.5 – 2.5 million.

The priority areas identified include energy efficiency and rational use of resources, which includes proposals related to energy-efficient buildings and products. They also include new and renewable energy sources including proposals related to small-scale renewable energy applications in buildings.

Each Member State has its own IEE national contact for help with information about applications.

6. Reduced rates of VAT

On 5 May EU finance ministers approved a directive that will allow Member States to apply reduced tax rates on housing, restaurant and other local services. The standard rate of VAT in the EU is 15%; from 2010 the rate charged may be cut to 5% on the agreed list of services. The current VAT Directive (2006/112/EC) allows for a temporary 5% rate to be applied to local labour-intensive services, but it expires in 2010.

7. Professional Qualifications

There has been a series of infringement proceedings on recognition of diplomas. On 14 April the European Commission sent Luxembourg a letter of formal notice concerning its failure to communicate measures taken to implement technical adaptations to the Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications further to the accession of Bulgaria and Romania. A reasoned opinion (the second stage of an infringement procedure) has been sent to Germany requesting it to amend its legislation on the recognition of manual therapists' qualifications.

The European Commission has sent a letter of formal notice to Spain requesting information on the measures it has taken to comply with the European Court's judgement of October 2008 which ruled that Spain's legislation on the recognition of air traffic controller qualifications failed to comply with Directives 89/48/EEC and 92/51/EEC on a general system for the recognition of qualifications. A letter of formal notice has also been sent to Greece requesting information on measures taken to comply with a court judgement regarding the recognition of professional qualifications of engineers concerning failure to recognise diplomas awarded under a franchise agreement.