



UEPC SUSTAINABILITY CHARTER

CORE PRINCIPLES

This Charter sets out the UEPC's * (European Union of Developers and House Builders) commitment to playing its full part in ensuring sustainable development in the 21st century – in particular by reducing carbon emissions from future development.

Although the bulk of carbon emissions relating to the built environment come from existing buildings – and will continue to do so for many years -, Europe's economic growth and projected increase in households and population will both result in a significant addition to the stock of the residential and commercial built environment from now on.

UEPC therefore recognises the imperative need to take account of the threat of climate change by promoting the adoption of improved standards of environmental performance in new construction.

* UEPC represents more than 30,000 developing and house building companies, affiliated with its 13 member federations. Directly or indirectly the activities of these developers and house builders represent 10% of gross national product and employment in Europe. Together, they annually build and develop several millions m² of offices and shopping centres as well as more than 1.000,000 new homes.

UNION EUROPEENNE DES PROMOTEURS-CONSTRUCTEURS (AISBL)
EUROPEAN UNION OF DEVELOPERS AND HOUSE BUILDERS (INPA)
EUROPÄISCHE UNION DER FREIEN WOHNUNGSUNTERNEHMEN (IVoG)

AUSTRIA – BELGIUM – FRANCE – GERMANY – IRELAND – ITALY – THE NETHERLANDS – POLAND – PORTUGAL – ROMANIA - SPAIN – TURKEY – UNITED KINGDOM

The foremost global climate change challenge is to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂). This Charter therefore focuses on how the members of the UEPC will work, amongst others, with governments to achieve reductions in the carbon footprint of the future built environment. Over time, we recognise the need to consider whole life cycle issues from the design stage to demolition, including reductions in the emissions arising from construction product manufacture. Our initial focus is, however, on the carbon efficiency of the use of the home once constructed.

UEPC also believes it is vital to ensure that the real potential for synergies between action on new construction and action relating to the existing built environment are realised. It would be artificial - and possibly counterproductive - to a successful response to the threat of climate change to ignore these opportunities.

Equally, our vision in this Charter is founded on the internationally accepted principle that sustainable development entails three core elements: environmental, social and economic. Development cannot be sustainable without respecting these three elements and sustainable development is that which meets the needs of today's population without compromising or undermining the environment, social cohesion or economic viability for future generations. For something to be sustainable, it must therefore be so equally from the social, environmental and economic perspective. This principle should fully inform our approach to the future built environment.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

The key to successful action in promoting sustainable development of the future built environment lies in understanding the chief policy challenges and at what level and with which actors they can best be tackled.

Main policy challenges

The main policy challenges are:

- Ensuring a clear strategy for the evolution of building performance standards based on realistic timescales for achieving improvements
- Understanding the interactions between action on carbon emissions reduction and other objectives relating to sustainability based on its three peers: environmental, social and economic.
- Recognising the major commercial risks and financial costs that quick and radical action on reducing carbon emissions in the built environment entails and developing strategies for managing and sharing these between partners
- Properly integrating policy on carbon efficient built environment development with relevant national and EU energy policy objectives
- Ensuring that all policy proposals take full account of the need to consider consumer requirements and behaviour
- Minimising the risks that new technologies and construction methods may pose to the lifespan and maintenance of new buildings given the assurance required by mortgage lenders on such matters
- Providing fiscal, legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks that promote innovation
- Ensuring the supply chain has the opportunity to gear up to any requirements that may be agreed
- Respecting and facilitating the many solutions that are likely to be needed in different areas across Europe taking into account their geographical, geological, climatic, technological capacity and other differences
- Meeting skills and qualification needs that will arise from new requirements, products and standards.
- Maximising the overall effectiveness of action by ensuring action relating to new development takes full account of linkages with action relating to the existing built environment
- Ensuring the results achieved are similar for all regions of Europe and that the measures taken for this purpose are based on a common core approach, adapted to meet the specific circumstances, needs and capacity of the regions concerned
- Taking account of relevant standards and best practices already developed in European and non-European countries.

The UEPC will participate actively in discussions on all these challenges and will also put forward its own proposals for successful action.

The main actors

Some key partners with which the UEPC will wish to work include:

- The European Commission, Council and Parliament
- National and regional governments
- Bodies representing construction product manufacturers, suppliers and installers
- Architects, designers and surveyors
- The suppliers of natural raw materials such as timber
- Consumer bodies, including representatives of tenants
- Energy suppliers, including renewables and micro-generation providers
- Certification and standards bodies
- Research institutes and programmes

UEPC'S VISION FOR SUCCESSFUL ACTION

In making its commitment to play a full part in ensuring sustainable development in the 21st century, the UEPC has adopted its own vision of how it can work successfully with other parties on the issues it considers need to be addressed collectively by the parties.

UEPC strongly believes that realisation of its vision depends on effective partnership with the other actors mainly involved. Our vision is therefore founded on the principle of partnership to deliver integrated solutions to the challenges we face.

We set out our vision below in the form of a UEPC partnership manifesto on carbon reduction.

The UEPC partnership manifesto on carbon reduction

As its contribution to the partnership, the UEPC pledges to:

- Work constructively with the European institutions and other key partners to promote sustainable development of the built environment that makes an appropriate and sustainable contribution to the global effort to tackle climate change
- Concentrate initially in this regard on how built environment developers can most effectively contribute to reducing future carbon emissions
- Disseminate information on innovation among the membership of its national member Federations and to external partners
- Pro-actively identify and pursue opportunities for synergies with the important need for action to reduce the much greater carbon footprint of the existing built environment
- Identify and communicate to decision-makers key policy issues at the European level that may affect the ability of developers to achieve potential carbon reductions
- Make proposals for fiscal, legislative and policy changes where necessary in order to achieve desired objectives
- Identify requirements for new European performance standards, certification arrangements, research programmes and skills initiatives where necessary – always respecting the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity
- Ensure complementarity between action at the European, national and local levels through the active engagement of its national member associations
- In particular, co-operate closely with suppliers to ensure that proposed actions and products are themselves practical, deliverable and sustainable, take account of consumer requirements and minimise risks to the lifespan and maintenance of buildings
- Seek solutions that are compatible with the achievement of national requirements for additional new development, particularly of housing, in order to meet Member States' social and economic objectives in a sustainable manner

In the spirit of partnership, the UEPC in return seeks the commitment of the European institutions and other key partners to:

- The development of a truly integrated strategic policy framework for the achievement of carbon reductions from the built environment as a whole – covering existing and new build, residential and non-residential development
- Energy policies and regulations that facilitate investment in technically and commercially efficient means of providing the additional low or zero carbon energy supply capacity required to meet the needs of new residential development in future
- Development in good time of any necessary European standards for products and building performance
- Adoption of a strategy involving a clear timescale for a practical set of steps for any necessary future European standards to improve building performance, so enabling the supply chain and developers to gear up successfully to delivery of progressively higher performance levels
- Respect in determining the scope and need for action at the European level for the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity – particularly in regard to building performance standards, accreditation systems, research programmes and skills initiatives
- Effective certification arrangements for the development of new products and processes to help reduce the carbon footprint of the built environment
- Avoidance of technologically prescriptive policies as these might hinder effective innovation and wider action to reduce regulation wherever possible so as to empower innovation
- Consistency between policy formulation on action to tackle the carbon footprint of the built environment and all other inter-related aspects of European policy
- Involvement of the consumer voice and consideration of consumer requirements to ensure that policy-making and action work successfully with the grain of the population's wider aspirations and achieve consumer acceptance.
- Consideration of a star rating labelling system for carbon performance for products and buildings.
- Active consideration of possible fiscal incentives that may be necessary to ensure the timely achievement of reduced carbon emissions from the built environment - including of a reduced rate of VAT for buildings in which products and construction methods achieving particular levels of carbon reduction have been used – as well as of such products themselves
- Review existing EU research programmes to consider whether there are priority requirements relating to carbon reduction in the built environment that need to be included or given greater emphasis and resource
- Review of the scope of the Structural Funds to support private sector action in reducing the carbon footprint of the built environment.

The UEPC seeks active discussion with the European institutions and other key partners on this manifesto with a view to adopting an agreed platform for collective action.

We now actively invite partners to sign up to this manifesto and its objectives.

24 April 2008