

OECD/IEA JOINT WORKSHOP ON THE DESIGN OF SUSTAINABLE BUILDING POLICIES: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTED PAPERS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The policy dimension is essential in the discussion of sustainable buildings.

The construction, use and demolition of buildings have considerable impact on the natural and built environment. In recent years, experts in the building sector have become increasingly aware of the importance of sustainability, and many technical developments have improved the environmental characteristics of buildings. In light of this trend, several workshops and conferences have been organised to exchange information and discuss how to tackle the issue. However, most efforts to date have focused on technical issues and limited time has been spent on the discussion of policy issues. While the development of new technologies is fundamental to changing building activities, this should be coupled with an analysis of appropriate policy design. The policy dimension is particularly important for the building sector because the sector's nature is such that policies often need to be very different in nature from those for other sectors.

The OECD /IEA workshop on the Design of Sustainable Building Policies.

Against this background, the OECD/IEA Joint Workshop on the Design of Sustainable Building Policies was held in Paris on 28-29 June 2001. The objective of the workshop was to obtain insights for policy design and provide suggestions and guidance to policy makers and experts on government policies to address the environmental impact of the building sector. The workshop also provided a forum to facilitate the exchange of information on experiences in OECD countries, and to discuss key issues such as the barriers to effective policies and the choice of policy instruments.

More emphasis needs to be placed on non-regulatory instruments and...

This publication contains a summary of the discussions, the workshop conclusions and the papers presented. The workshop found that building regulations that have long played a central role in the energy efficiency improvement of buildings have an impact on only a small proportion of *newly-built* constructions. Governments need to place more emphasis on economic instruments and information tools in sustainable building policies. In particular:

- Governments need to pay special attention to the development of policy instruments for *existing* buildings since these have great energy saving potential.
- Governments need to ensure that the standards set in building regulations are flexible so that they do not obstruct the diffusion of new and more efficient technologies.
- The lack of information on the demand side is one of the main barriers to improving energy efficiency. Information tools, such as environmental labelling of buildings, have great potential for increasing the energy efficiency in both new and existing buildings, and for both commercial and residential buildings.
- An energy tax may be effective for the improvement of energy efficiency if stakeholders are convinced that the tax will be maintained in the long term.
- A capital subsidy for energy efficiency measures can bring some results. However, such subsidies can usually have an impact on only a limited number of buildings due to fiscal constraints.
- A landfill tax and regulatory instruments on waste, such as a ban on landfill, can effectively reduce the amount of construction and demolition waste that goes to final disposal, but these do not necessarily encourage substitution of primary materials

...policies that affect existing buildings as well as new ones.

Landfill taxes and regulatory instruments

THE OECD ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

can be effective in reducing waste...

...but they do not necessarily encourage substitution of primary materials with secondary materials.

Environmental labelling schemes are effective in achieving a healthier indoor environment.

Further evaluation of present policy instruments is necessary.

with secondary materials. Other instruments need to be coupled with these instruments to encourage such a substitution.

- Lack of information is one of the main barriers to the development of a secondary materials market. Information tools such as a waste information exchange, material certificates, etc. can help.
- In order to improve resource efficiency in the building industry, it is important to explore measures targeted at upstream stages to encourage the building industry to close the product cycle loop and take the ecological dimension into consideration in product design. Furthermore, policies at the upstream stage, the demolition stage and downstream stage should be effectively co-ordinated to create synergies.
- The causal mechanism of indoor air pollution is complex, so that it is often technically difficult to control the indoor air quality with regulatory instruments alone.
- Environmental labelling schemes of buildings or building materials can be effective in achieving a healthier indoor air environment.
- Governments need to monitor the environmental performance of buildings to better understand the effectiveness of policy instruments and receive guidance for future improvements.
- No single instrument can solve all these problems, and governments need to take a holistic approach by integrating various instruments into an effective policy package.
- Governments should help develop the demand for more environmentally friendly buildings through their procurement policies.
- With close collaboration between experts on policy design and technical experts, increased evaluation of policy instruments is necessary to obtain more empirical evidence on the effectiveness and efficiency of these instruments.

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