

Topic I Sustainable Housing and Construction in Europe

Enhancing private home owners' motivation towards energy efficient refurbishment

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Proposal for a presentation

In Germany, about 75% of the end energy use of private households is used for space heating and hot water preparation. Improving the energy efficiency of the building stock thus becomes a key lever to cut down greenhouse gas emissions in the residential sector. Single and duplex homes have a share of about 45% of the German building stock. Thus, private home owners are a major actor group for energy efficiency strategies.

Within the last years, a broad range of appropriate and economically viable technologies for energy efficient refurbishment has become available. Moreover, the German government launched political directives and ambitious programmes addressing energetic refurbishment, focusing primarily on financial incentives and on market transparency. Despite these attempts, the energy efficiency of the building stock is increasing only slowly, and is still far below the target of an annual refurbishment rate of 2,5% of all apartments.

In particular, many private home owners appear to be reluctant to energy efficient refurbishment. Economic aspects play a salient role in the context of the refurbishment of buildings. However, this does not imply that refurbishment decisions of private home owners can be understood according to a simple model of rational and utility maximising action. A refurbishment decision occurs in a context which is characterised by imperfect and asymmetric information, hidden costs and risks, being also shaped by cognitive frameworks, attitudes, life style orientations and the social situation. From this point of view, it can be argued that the reluctance to energy efficient modernisation is not primarily due to a missing access to capital, but is rather an outcome of insufficient information and motivation. Thus, the understanding of the complex interplay of economic, social and socio-cultural factors shaping the refurbishment decision of private home owners becomes an issue of crucial concern.

Against this background, the contribution presents first results from an empirical investigation, exploring the impact of cognitive frameworks, attitudes, life style orientations and the social situation on home owners' refurbishment decisions. Based on these empirical findings implications for climate policy instruments and strategies tackling with the motivational barriers of home owners will be outlined, giving particular emphasis to issues of information and communication.

The contribution draws on an ongoing research project on strategies to enhance the motivation of private home owners towards energy efficient refurbishment (*„Energieeffiziente Modernisierung im Gebäudebestand bei Ein- und Zweifamilienhäusern - Aktivierung und Kompetenzstärkung von Eigenheimbesitzern“*) funded within the Social-ecological Research (SÖF) programme of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The research project is carried out in cooperation with the German federal energy agency (dena) and other institutions in the field of energy consultancy.