

Dr Ciaran Byrne, Director of National Retrofit, SEAI
Energy Performance in Buildings Directive
Opening address to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Local Government and
Heritage
28 April 2022

Chairperson and Housing, Local Government and Heritage Committee members, thank you for the invitation to attend the meeting today to discuss COM (2021) 802 DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the energy performance of buildings (recast).

I am joined today by my colleagues:

- Ms Dara Stewart, Programme Manager, EPBD / BER Operations, SEAI
- Ms Orla Coyle, Programme Manager, Project Support, SEAI
- Mr Chris Hughes, EPBD / BER Development, SEAI

Background to SEAI

SEAI is Ireland's national sustainable energy authority. We work with householders, businesses, communities and government to create a cleaner energy future. SEAI is funded by the Government of Ireland, through its parent Department, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) and the Department of Transport. In 2022 our budget allocation is more than €440 million.

The SEAI provides expert advice to drive positive change through our analysis, modelling, and support for policymaking. We enable direct action through our design and delivery of grant and incentive programmes, and through our capacity-building processes with citizens, communities, and private and public sector organisations. In pursuit of our mandate, we collaborate closely with a wide range of stakeholders including government departments and state agencies.

EU Energy Performance in Buildings Directive and subsequent recast directives

The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) was first published in 2002 and is the main legislative instrument to promote building energy performance. The EPBD, which has gone through a number of iterations over the years, sets out requirements for:

- A building energy calculation methodology – minimum standards for new buildings and works to existing buildings (Part L of Building Regulations)
- Energy Performance Certificates (Building Energy Ratings)
- Nearly Zero Energy Buildings, and
- A registration and accreditation system for assessors.

Together these requirements have resulted in a positive change of trends in the energy performance of buildings, including a 70% improvement in the energy performance of new domestic buildings, and a 60% improvement in the energy performance of new non-domestic buildings compared to 2005.

SEAI membership of EU Concerted Action

The Concerted Action EPBD is a joint initiative between EU Member States and the European Commission to enhance the sharing of information and experiences from the national adoption and implementation of this important European legislation. It is organised around meetings between national teams, regularly bringing together over 120 participants from 29 countries.

SEAI is a member of the Concerted Action management team, and is the central team manager responsible for work on Nearly Zero Energy Buildings. Ireland is a leader amongst its European peers in terms of its implementation of the EPBD, with the early introduction of the electronic Building Energy Rating (BER) register and advertising guidelines replicated in other member states. SEAI is also represented on the IEA Energy in Buildings and Communities programme which includes sitting on the Building Energy Codes Working Group and the Horizon 2020 Clean Energy Transition Strategic Energy Technologies (SET) Plan for Energy Efficiency Buildings.

SEAI as Designated Issuing Authority for Building Energy Rating

SEAI administers the BER system in accordance with the European Union Energy Performance of Buildings Regulations 2012. SEAI's statutory functions include:

- registering assessors to carry out assessments
- issuing directions in relation to how assessments are to be carried out by assessors and how certificates are to be issued
- specifying the procedures, methodologies and software to be followed by assessors when carrying out assessments
- maintaining the national register and assessors register

As Issuing Authority, SEAI has delivered the systems and processes for administering the BER system including registered assessors, published BERs, and mandatory advertising guidelines for property dealings. SEAI completed a significant update to the BER advisory report for dwellings which became available in June 2021. The updated report provides a personalised roadmap for homeowners on how to upgrade their home to a target of a B2 energy rating or better. This is a key instrument to help achieve the ambitious home energy upgrade targets in the Climate Action Plan. The BER is a requirement for many of SEAI's grants schemes.

Delivered so far on non-BER activities

To further support the implementation of the EPBD SEAI has delivered the following:

- Supported the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage (DHLGH) in the roll out of the building regulations for new and existing buildings, the development and publication of calculation methodology, and supporting the development of cost optimal studies.
- Supported DECC in the publication of the Long-Term Renovation Strategy

- Mobilised investment in renovation through our grant schemes, the introduction of packaged solutions, and the development of the recently launched One-Stop-Shop
- Provided financial and technical support in the development of national standards, including NSAI Standards for Energy Retrofit of Dwellings and Heat Pumps, and DHLGH Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings based on the learnings from our grant schemes.
- Supporting DHLGH in informing large building owners on their requirements for Building Automation and Control Systems and EVs.
- Future proofing for the forthcoming recast directive through our RD&D programme, which has supported projects in monitoring the performance of technologies in buildings, investigating operational performance of buildings, research on the embodied carbon of buildings, and the piloting of the Building Renovation Passport.

Direction of travel

Since its introduction in 2002, the directive has evolved, and changes to it have been affected at a national level through the EPBD Implementation Group, a collaboration between SEAI, DHLGH and DECC. The proposed EPBD revision, published in December 2021, has a twofold objective - contribute to reducing buildings' GHG emissions and final energy consumption by 2030, and provide a long-term vision for buildings and ensure an adequate contribution to achieving climate neutrality in 2050. The European Commission are targeting that the Community's building stock will be zero emissions by 2050.

SEAI are working with our Departmental colleagues in preparation for the proposed changes to the Directive. These may include the following high-level requirements:

- All new buildings are to be zero emission from 2027 for public buildings, and 2030 for all others
- The whole lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions will be calculated for all new, large buildings from 2030
- Minimum energy standards for all buildings
- Availability of Building Renovation Passports and Smart Readiness Indicator for buildings
- Re-classification of the BER

Conclusion

Our thanks to DECC and DHLGH colleagues for their continued support and close collaboration. I welcome discussion with the Committee, and my colleagues and I are happy to answer any questions you may wish to raise.