



ONE-STOP-SHOPS FOR SUSTAINABLE RENOVATION

A KEY TOOL TO INFORM, MOTIVATE, ASSIST & SUPPORT

February 2021

The fragmentation of the renovation value chain acts as a substantial access barrier to sustainable retrofitting. Indeed, many property owners perceive in particular energy renovations as complex and risky, among others, due to unpredictable factors, which can influence the works' length and costs. We thus **welcome the explicit reference to one-stop-shops (OSSs) in the Renovation Wave strategy**, as they are a promising voluntary tool. Indeed, by acting as a single contact point for sustainable renovation, thanks to a user-oriented approach, OSS are one of the solutions to address the complexity and challenges of renovation works.

OSSs have already been part of the "*Clean energy for all Europeans*" Communication, which encouraged the development of local facilities providing information, technical assistance, financial advice and support, as well as the monitoring of energy savings after completion of the works.¹ Within this frame, OSSs were also included in the amended Directive 2018/844/EU on the energy performance of buildings (EPBD)², which called on the Member States to make use of them to support households in their renovation efforts.

In line with the above policy objectives, OSSs should in principle ensure a full range service path: from the design of the whole renovation and the creation of an ad hoc financial plan to the coordination of the process and the provision of – or the facilitation of access to – adequate and affordable funding or financing schemes. However, so far OSSs on sustainable renovation across the EU neither constitute a

¹ Annex, 'Accelerating clean energy in buildings' to the Communication on Clean Energy For All Europeans, COM(2016) 860 final, Annex I.

² Article 2a(3): "To support the mobilisation of investments into the renovation needed to achieve the goals referred to in paragraph 1, Member States shall facilitate access to appropriate mechanisms for: (e) accessible and transparent advisory tools, such as one-stop-shops for consumers and energy advisory services, on relevant energy efficiency renovations and financing instruments"; Article 20(2): "Member States shall provide the information through accessible and transparent advisory tools such as renovation advice and one-stop-shops."

uniform service package nor a standardised approach. Instead, they too often focus exclusively on some specific aspects such as awareness-raising or the coordination of market actors (e.g. auditors, installers, technicians).

Although all kinds of OSSs play an important role in supporting and fostering sustainable renovation, our construction SMEs and property owners are convinced that pivotal focus should be given to those operating to help consumers throughout the whole renovation journey, from the initial to the final workplan, including the financing. Besides ensuring well-informed and evidence-based decisions, “full service” OSSs would not only facilitate the retrofit process by accompanying and unburdening the consumers, but also enhance business opportunities for local contractors and companies, while paving the way towards a more sustainable built environment for all.

A central problem in the roll-out of OSSs across Europe is the complex and diverse framework in which they have to operate. Despite the positive examples running in some European regions and cities,³ the OSS approach still faces some major obstacles to its wider deployment and long-term sustainment, e.g. related to local and regional regulatory differences, legal requirements and required performance indicators.

In addition to this, due to the characteristics of their business model, it is important to see OSSs in a larger framework, namely as enablers for a sustainable built environment instead of focusing on their economic short-term viability as independent entities. Indeed, OSSs are particularly resource and capital intensive, due to investment needs in robust IT tools, development and marketing skills, technical competences and trainings, as well as the long duration of renovation projects, especially for multiapartment buildings. Therefore, most existing OSSs are rightly supported by substantial public intervention, e.g. through subsidies to the owners or to the service provider itself, the set-up of a public or public-private enterprise, or the management of project calls to establish a delegated public service.

Indeed, households’ propensity and financial ability to pay for the initial counselling/orientation phase is reportedly very low,⁴ especially when they are potentially interested in renovating but not yet committed to undertake the process. A mere reliance on charges applied for the services to the final beneficiaries cannot, thereupon, be the solution. Clear and definite criteria for the use of public resources in this specific market segment are necessary, notably with respect to EU state aid rules. The effective achievement of objectives of general economic and social development could be ensured in this way, while fair competition would be preserved so as to guarantee sufficient attractiveness and viability for private sector investments.

In light of the arguments exposed above and with a view to foster and upscale the OSS approach, notably by making it a sustainable business model, UIPI and EBC would like to put forward the following proposals:



Encourage funding of comprehensive/all-inclusive OSSs, which can unlock the full potential of sustainable renovation in the private residential sector by accompanying owners throughout the whole retrofit process, including counselling, technical advice and financial support;



Ensure that first-level advice, namely the information given to consumers at a stage when the renovation project is still very uncertain, **is free of charge**. Online platforms run by local authorities, which provide information on existing OSS to interested owners, could be a tangible example;

³ <https://e3p.jrc.ec.europa.eu/publications/one-stop-shops-energy-renovations-buildings>.

⁴ As highlighted by the findings of the H2020 [INNOVATE project](#).



Through EU support, **foster the OSS model in order to develop context-specific approaches** to reach the different segments of the building and housing sectors;



Sufficient flexibility must be ensured to **allow consumers to choose their most trusted and qualified professionals** should they decide to rely on the OSS in their renovation journey;



Involve relevant stakeholders in the development and management of OSSs to ensure that the tools are targeted to market needs and expectations, to increase the level of trust and to strengthen adequate communication and support (e.g. by involving property owners, consumers' associations as well as qualified and representative construction enterprise associations);



With a view to ensure legal certainty, **provide consistent EU-wide guidance on how local and regional authorities can act** in compliance with European state aid rules in order to ensure proportionate compensation (e.g. with respect to the definition of the public service obligations entrusted to OSSs);



In the context of the revision of the EU VAT legislation, **broaden the application of reduced VAT rates to also encompass consultancy and advice services** aimed at improving the sustainability of buildings, such as those performed by OSSs;



Encourage Member States to make use of the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) to set up and manage effective OSS models at local and regional level, for instance by earmarking, in their national recovery plans, part of the funding from the Recovery and Resilience Facility for this purpose;



Promote and streamline the financial support and technical assistance (e.g. ELENA facility) provided by the European Investment Bank to actors wishing to establish an OSS by **facilitating the blending of European Structural and Investment Funds with EIB loans**.

Overall, the long-term vision required for the establishment and efficient management of an OSS demands a robust political commitment to support citizens and companies in their efforts to make the green transition a reality. Europe-wide strategies need to go hand in hand with adequate and available funding and financing opportunities with the aim to materially turn the political will into concrete societal action.



General Context

This position is part of an ongoing working relationship between the International Union of Property Owners (UIPI) and the European Builders Confederation (EBC) regarding the topic of One-Stop-Shops for sustainable renovation, originally launched in 2020.



About EBC

Established in 1990, the **European Builders Confederation (EBC)** is a European professional organisation representing national construction employer associations of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. EBC is a member and partner of SMEunited, the European association of SMEs, and Small Business Standards (SBS), the European association representing SMEs in standardisation. The construction sector is of vital importance to the European economy. With 3.4 million enterprises and a total direct workforce of 18 million, the construction sector contributes at around 9% to the GDP of the European Union. 99.9% of the European construction sector is composed of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Website: www.ebc-construction.eu



About UIPI

The **International Union of Property Owners (UIPI)**, the largest pan-European non-profit association of both homeowners and private landlords. UIPI comprises 30 organisations from 28 countries which, jointly, represent more than 5 million private property owners and around 25 million dwellings all over Europe. The interests of the sector we represent correspond to the concerns and needs of a substantial part of the European population. As shown by Eurostat, almost the 70% of EU citizens are owner-occupiers, whereas almost another 20% of the population is housed in the private rented sector. Website: www.uipi.com