

Interview to Dr. Dimitrios Kotzias, former official of the European Commission, Joint Research Centre, Ispra, Italy



Dr. Dimitrios Kotzias

1) In present-day Europe can “healthy buildings” be described best as dreams or reality?

Positive signals for a better indoor air quality have been coming from science and politics for some years. The industrial sector (manufacturers) has strived to adopt the rules of reference needed for a domestic free market. Moreover, consumers’ awareness about eco-friendly products has risen in the last few years. All this caused the buildings to become more and more healthy.

2) How can we consider the state of the art of research on healthiness of buildings and materials?

In the last ten years the EU has carried out different projects aimed at improving indoor air quality. To this respect, it’s very important to guarantee a good quality for construction materials and develop construction products that are compliant with the CPD –i.e. “Construction Product Directive”– of the European Union.

3) How does the materials manufacturing industry deal with this problem? Does research channel its investments?

Harmonisation processes are currently underway at European level with stakeholders’ participation for the assessment of the impact on health on the basis of the emissions from materials, using the concept of LCI (Low concentration of interest).

All this requires specific investments in order to develop appropriate methodologies in order to create a “labeling” of materials and to monitor indoor air by applying shared criteria and protocols.

4) Considering the lack of a specific regulation governing the market, how can technicians and citizens defend themselves when they have to purchase healthy building products?

Despite the lack of a specific regulation, there are some labeling schemes used by countries such as Germany, Finland, France and Denmark that can help technicians and citizens find eco-friendly products and materials.

5) How important is to carry on projects such as Ecomake?

ECOMAKE marks a step forward in the field of healthy buildings and indoor environments. ECOMAKE’s philosophy is to raise the awareness of citizens and manufacturers in order to achieve a healthy indoor environment.

Therefore, ECOMAKE makes the difference by creating an expert forum involving experts belonging to universities, industry and public authorities to develop a sustainable life concept.

ORGANISATIONAL OFFICE

Piemmeti spa
Via Nicolò Tommaseo,15 - 35131 Padova
tel +39 049 8753730 / fax +39 049 8756113
e-mail: info@piemmetispa.com
www.piemmetispa.com

TECHNICAL OFFICE

Metadistretto veneto della Bioedilizia
Consorzio per lo sviluppo della Bioedilizia
Via Cal di Breda,116 - 31100 Treviso - tel +39 0422 656650
e-mail: progetti@consorzioedilizia.it
www.distrettoedilizia.it

Actions like ECOMAKE are important to

- a) Inform citizens with respect to innovative solutions for a sustainable life and
- b) Provide the market with ideas for an operational platform towards the development of sustainable materials.

ECOMAKE HIGHLIGHTS

Agreement between Federcostruzioni and Itaca leads to EPDItalia

It's an important achievement for the environmental sustainability of construction materials, which are promoted by Ecomake. For the first time Italy saw the creation of a body that allows the manufacturers of construction materials to obtain an environmental certification: this is the meaning of the agreement endorsed by Federcostruzioni and Itaca, which is the Italian Institute for innovation and transparency in tenders and technical body of the *Conferenza delle Regioni* –i.e. the Conference of Italian Regions–. The newly created body will be called EPDItalia and will guarantee the recognition of the whole industrial chain of the construction sector. Such project is open to other public and private bodies interested in the implementation of certification and sustainability criteria consistently with European trends.

Milestone national agreement for environmentally friendly buildings

Protocollo ITACA, which is a reference for the Veneto region and for our certification **Edilbiocerto**, finally has a shared procedure, overcoming the fragmentation caused by regional dissemination. A single document of reference at national level for the energy-environmental certification of buildings: this was the ambitious goal of the protocol signed by ITACA –the Italian Institute for innovation and transparency in tenders– and UNI –the Italian Body for Unification–. “This document is the reference point for all those who are interested in the subject. This regulation introduces various innovations, such as an improved commitment towards environmental safeguard and citizens’ health, with a specific attention to sustainability in the utilization of resources during the making of construction products. The new regulation follows the European norms ruling the matter, starting from the **EU 305/2011** regulation, which can prove useful for the whole Italian economy. This agreement will have to bring to a real “rule” supervising the production cycle and protecting end consumers, benefiting the entire country”.

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