Buildings account for 40 percent of the EU’s final energy demand. If they are to have nearly zero-energy performance levels, we must ensure that architects and engineers, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, bricklayers and other on-site workers have the right skills to attain this.

The BUILD UP Skills initiative was launched in 2011 with funding from the Intelligent Energy Europe programme. If the EU's 2020 energy targets are to be met, according to its findings, more than three million builders and installers must acquire the skills to retro-fit or to build new nearly zero-energy buildings.

“The idea is to train the workforce to meet the challenges posed by energy efficiency and renewable energy,” says Zoé Wildiers, Project Advisor at the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME), the European Commission body running the initiative.

The first goal - now achieved - was to ask the 28 Member States plus Norway and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to map out their building workforce and qualification programmes, as well as establish national roadmaps setting out their training needs.

Mapping out the sector
“It was like taking a snapshot of each national situation,” says Ms Wildiers, “which also gave us the opportunity to bring together, sometimes for the first time, representatives of the building, training and energy sectors.” More than 1 800 organisations were involved, tackling such challenges as the sector’s high proportion of low-skilled workers, worker migration, an ageing workforce and the grey economy.

BUILD UP Skills is now putting these roadmaps into practice, again with the support of the Intelligent Energy Europe programme, with 21 countries having so far designed EU-funded projects for new or upgraded training schemes. Four new projects are to be launched in 2015. EU-wide exchange events for sharing good practices are a key element of the initiative.


Picture: Construction worker looking at blueprints. ©iStock - stocknroll

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