Position of the Czech Green Building Council and partner organizations on the Czech EU Presidency 2022

Since its formation, the Czech Green Building Council has been promoting the vision that investments in high-quality sustainable buildings not only contribute to solving the challenges of climate change, but also have a positive economic impact. The current geopolitical situation highlights this fact even more. The energy transition needs to be urgently addressed and material and energy security ensured. But the commitments under the Green Deal and the Paris Agreement on decarbonisation and global warming cannot be ignored. Green building must be an important part of addressing these challenges. **We appeal to the government to take the opportunity and during the time when the Czech Republic will hold the Presidency of the European Union, the importance and benefits of investment in green buildings have become one of the main topics.**

Already two years ago, in connection with the coronavirus pandemic, problems began, which were exacerbated by the war conflict in Ukraine. Supply chains have been disrupted and building materials are becoming enormously more expensive, and in short supply. Everyone is experiencing a jump in energy prices. Even more serious, however, is the Czech Republic's dependence on gas supplies from Russia, which is an unreliable partner and uses gas supplies as a means of blackmailing Ukrainian allies.

It is becoming clear that it is necessary to accelerate the transition to other energy sources to strengthen energy security. Buildings play a crucial role in securing it. Buildings in the Czech Republic consume up to 36% of total energy consumption, two-thirds of which is accounted for by heating, where natural gas imported from Russia has a significant representation. Statistics show that up to 400,000 renovated buildings will save about 350 million m3 of gas, thanks to reduced energy consumption for heating. Investment in renovation should thus be at the heart of all support and subsidy programmes.

The doubling or tripling of the renovation rate, which is accentuated in the new Fit for 55 package of European legislation, goes hand in hand with the reduction of greenhouse gases towards higher energy self-sufficiency. In the Czech Republic, the average age of residential buildings is 50 years. It is assumed that 80% of the existing building stock will still be there in 30 years, i.e. still in 2050, for which the commitments contained in the Paris Agreement are set. Reducing the energy performance of existing buildings is therefore one of the priorities.

Every 20 to 30 years, the building undergoes a reconstruction. By 2050, owners will have one major or more partial renovations, whether owners of single-family homes, corporate or state buildings. However, it is necessary to ensure that renovations are carried out efficiently and build on each other. This is also the direction in which the European Commission's proposals are heading. It is necessary to focus on renovations, promote their high standard and maximally help all owners in their implementation. That is, to remove legislative barriers, provide advice and offer opportunities for their financing.

Of course, energy security must also be considered when building new buildings, although they must already meet certain standards, which are gradually being tightened. **The Czech Green Building Council has long been promoting the construction of green buildings that are not only energy efficient, but also have a high-quality indoor environment, economically manage water, use the principles of circular economy and sustainable materials.**

Prices of building materials break historical records, moreover, some of them are almost not available. This will level out over time, but prices will not return to their original level. Materials in the construction industry are gradually running out. The solution to ensure material safety is a circular economy and greater use of recycles. There is a need to raise awareness of the sustainability of materials and their recycling, to promote certification schemes that require information on the recycled share and the supply chain.

Buildings should be designed in such a way that the materials are used sustainably, their service life is as long as possible, the structural elements can be recycled and at the end of their life the building can be demolished in accordance with circular principles. It is also necessary to view it as an integral part of the entire energy network, not only as an energy-intensive appliance, but also as a producer and energy.

The transition to sustainable construction is one of the essential conditions for achieving carbon neutrality. With more than 120 countries accounting for over 70% of global GDP, they have pledged to achieve this goal by 2050. About40% of total final energy consumption is needed in buildings. The construction sector accounts for up to 38 percent of global CO 2 emissions. Approximately ten percent of these emissions are released before construction begins, i.e. during the production and transportation of building materials, and during the construction process itself. The remainder, 28 percent of emissions, is generated during the operation of buildings.

Should the situation in the construction sector not improve dramatically, CO_2 emissions will continue to increase. The global building stock is expected to possibly double by 2050. Decarbonising buildings is one of the most cost-effective ways to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change we are now witnessing. Environmental friendliness and consideration for the environment, the investor and the user is already standard, especially in many commercial buildings.

With the growing emphasis on the complexity and broader context of construction, operation and removal of buildings comes the need to address the impacts of human activity in the construction industry. This includes the issue of the impact of buildings on the amount of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere and the possibilities of their minimization leading to the complete elimination of emissions. The goal is obvious - the carbon balance over the entire life cycle of buildings should be zero. It is necessary to establish a path that will lead to this goal.

In this respect, too, the Czech Green Building Council has something to contribute. Recently the CZGBC started preparing a Zero Carbon Road Map for buildings along the lines of many other countries that want to approach carbon neutrality in a similar way. **The purpose of the roadmap is to present a strategic view of the direction of the construction industry and buildings towards sustainability and carbon neutrality. A vision of carbon neutrality will be presented, which corresponds to and builds on the existing Vision Zero of the Czech Green Building Council.**

The promotion of the vision of the Czech Green Building Council during the Czech Eu Presidency is supported by nearly 90 member companies in the field of green construction, which together generate sales of over CZK 100 billion and employ 30,000 people. **The Czech Green Building Council is the only organization in the Czech Republic that comprehensively deals with the sustainability of buildings and has a rich information and personnel background. We offer all this to the government at our disposal to jointly cope with the challenges that today's times bring.**