

Efficiency is smart: proving the value of smart buildings as long-term investments for all

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As Member States look to apply the SRI to plan upgrades of their building stock, regional differences in regulation and markets hinder the roll out and stress inequalities. SRI2MARKET proposes specific public funding schemes for smart readiness upgrades in buildings.

When the energy supply faces severe constraints and threatens to come short for the demand, European eyes turn to the buildings where we live and work: how much energy do they waste? How can we make them more efficient? While technical answers steadily build up, the financial challenge insists on staying still: who (and how) will finance digitalization in buildings?

The attractiveness of Energy Efficiency investments has proven to vary among geographies and markets. Despite the European-wide roll out of the Smart Readiness Indicator (SRI) – an instrument that supports the assessment of how close a building comes to being energy smart and how it can be further upgraded – adoption has been happening at different paces. SRI2MARKET will thus support member states in implementing SRI in their national regulations and markets so that all stakeholders - from building owners to investors - see the benefits of making their buildings smart ready.

“Transitioning to smarter buildings means better comfort and well-being for users, energy savings for consumers, and a more flexible demand for the energy system. The Smart Readiness Indicator (SRI) is a powerful instrument to support the digital and smart transition of the EU building stock – helping building owners and users reap the benefits of digital and smart technologies – and every effort needs to be made to support its roll-out. In this scope, SRI2MARKET can make a key contribution, addressing some key areas of actions: guidance on implementing the SRI framework in Member States, financing and business models, support tools, and awareness raising. SRI2MARKET is therefore very illustrative of how EU programs can effectively support the implementation of energy policies on the ground for the benefits of all citizens”, says Sylvain Robert (CINEA).

The project will use lessons learned by countries that are well advanced in rolling out SRI to support countries still beginning their test phases and/or struggling to encourage smart upgrades. The effort should accelerate the adoption of the indicator and facilitate the design of policies that inspire action among those that are not early

movers.

Within the next three years, SRI2MARKET will propose new public funding schemes to finance smart readiness upgrades in buildings; it will provide training to EPC assessors on the SRI to encourage investment and will clarify the calculation method of the indicator. It will also develop and disseminate recommendations to guide building owners in selecting the automation capabilities that best fit their buildings.

Six member states will engage in SRI2MARKET. Contributions will depend on their present status of SRI roll out:

Member States with ongoing test phases: Austria and France

Ongoing test phases provide valuable lessons to SRI working groups. SRI2MARKET will showcase these lessons, so that other Member States can plan their own SRI rollout accordingly.

"Energy Flexibility is a key asset in the smart building future, and Austria aims for a remarkably high share of renewable energy in the overall energy system by utilizing this energy flexibility. Thus, smart readiness will help this energy flexibility to achieve a breakthrough within the building market. Furthermore, SRI2Market will derive all the aspects and requirements to be successful in doing so. Launching the SRI with the lessons learned from Austria and France will bring it faster to a nationally applied level," explains Armin Knotzer (AEE - Institute for Sustainable Technologies).

Member States with active interest in the SRI: Portugal and Spain

SRI2MARKET will initiate stakeholder dialogues and provide a series of tools and use cases, acting as a catalyst for accelerating the relevant policy decisions.

"We want to make our buildings smart, ready, and "Fit for 55". SRI2MARKET will bring SRI from overall policy level to specific buildings, people, and relevant actors - and then back to policy with increased power", says João Cleto (ADENE).

Member States where SRI2MARKET can lay the groundwork for policy makers to decide how to proceed with the SRI: Croatia and Cyprus

SRI2MARKET will engage national policy and market stakeholders in these countries to create interest in the SRI and in the opportunities that may emerge from it. These Member States will also help SRI2MARKET verify the replicability of SRI methods and tools.

"SRI2MARKET will help in testing SRI methodology, finding its limits and strengths. Hopefully, the work done will pave the road for uptake in building digitalization and smartness," explains Marko Bišćan (Energy Institute Hrvoje Požar). For Soulla Karra (Cyprus Energy Agency), *"SRI presents opportunities for policymakers to improve the knowledge and capabilities of Cyprus regarding the introduction of the SRI in their national regulation. The SRI2MARKET project can be a driving force for the policymakers and the market, to give the opportunity to the building sector, especially for public buildings, to be models of intelligence for the built environment"*.

"If most cars can tell exactly how much energy we're using, why can't our houses do the same?" The SRI methodology rates the smart readiness of buildings (or building units) for their capability to perform three key functionalities: (a) optimize energy efficiency and general in-use performance, (b) adapt their operation to the needs of the occupants, and (c) adapt their operation according to signals from the grid (to provide demand response services).

A comprehensive assessment of the European building stock in what relates to smart readiness supports the design of intervention plans and priorities, thus accelerating the transition to a more efficient EU energy system. The exchange of experiences among member states also speeds up learning for those who start later.

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