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Session II: Policies

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Mr Chairman, ministers, organisers of this important conference, ladies and gentlemen.

The board I represent is an expert agency supporting the Swedish government, counties and municipalities in Sweden in matters of housing, building and physical and spatial planning.

In my address to you I want to point out **four** areas of urgency concerning housing and sustainability. I also would like to make some **proposals** in connection with those four areas. Before I do so I want to sum up and say, once and for all, that information and voluntary agreements between industry (in this case the housing sector) and society have proven to be expedient ways of reaching political goals. That is also the fundamental idea behind Agenda 21 – namely - we share all responsibility (not just society) for the future and for our common environment.

In the first place I would like to emphasise:

1. The main environmental problems concerning housing are to be found in the existing stock of buildings. Due to economical, cultural and other reasons, about 90 % of the stock will still exist after the next generation period (25 years). The building sector uses about 40 % of the total energy used by society, and not only that, the building sector contains problematical substances (PCB, lead, mercury, cadmium, PVC etc.) Residential areas, even from the modernistic period (1960 – 1970), are in urgent need of refurbishment. If renovations are made in ignorance of the threats from materials such as those mentioned, it could almost result in an environmental catastrophe.

Proposal:

A collection of examples demonstrating recycling of certain materials and treatment of other more problematical materials found in connection with refurbishment would be of great interest and value.

2. The average use of energy (for heating, hot water, household electricity) in the existing stock of dwellings in Sweden is approximately 230 kWh per sq.metre. A new dwelling erected according to our national building code, occupied by a normal average household, uses about 110 kWh per sq.metre. A dwelling in a block of flats erected on land sold by the municipality (for instance Malmö and Stockholm), usually with stiffer requirement agreements in connection with the sale of land, uses less than 80kWh per sq.metre.

In my opinion, there are two main ways of reducing environmental impact of energy use within the existing building stock:

1. Make efforts in order to conserve energy by, a) improved energy performance of the building, and b) better “energy behaviour” in the household.
2. Reduce use of fossil energy.

The better the energy performance of buildings, the greater the impact from the energy-behaviour of the household. It is possible today to construct buildings that need no other energy supply for heating than household electricity (from refrigerators and other devices) and energy from human bodies, **if** (and that is a big “if”) you behave according to certain rules. Research shows, however, that by uninformed behaviour, it is possible to destroy the good conditions already existing in the erected building. Energy performance of buildings and human behaviour from tenants has to go together like a horse and carriage, if you want full efficiency of the building and from investments. In new blocks of dwellings it has been shown however that, depending on structure of individual households, habits and behaviour, energy use can vary by as much as 300 % between two similar dwellings.

Proposal:

We often hear of the concept of “the economic man”. How to be an “ecological man” in your home could be an interesting information task for the housing company or municipality and even for The Union. Awareness of behaviour is seemingly of greater importance than previously imagined. An information campaign would be of interest in our efforts to fulfil the political obligations of the Kyoto Protocol. Directions for use must always follow a newly erected or a renovated building.

3. In most countries declaration of content in most products is a matter of course. Buildings and dwellings are however not very often described in the same detail as, for example, cat food. Yet we spend more than 14 hours a day in our dwellings and about eight hours at work or school. The Union’s Directive on energy performance of buildings (underway within The Union) raises at the same times the question and possibilities of other inspections, declarations and certifications. For instance of other qualities in buildings such as material, emissions, radon, noise level, consumption of natural resources (other than energy), waste disposal management, indoor environment, outdoor neighbourhood environment, etc. The actual directive will come into force on 31 December 2003, at the latest. Perhaps the time is ripe for labelling more than energy-performance in dwellings?

Proposal:

A general framework, in addition to energy performance demands, could be of interest in promoting declarations of the other conditions mentioned above. To start with, it could be voluntary, but it would probably develop automatically as it promotes competitiveness, especially as the declaration has to be put visible for everyone.

4. A reduction in household size in Europe as a whole (more small households) makes population density lower in 30 – 40 year-old housing-areas. The transportation sector uses, like the building sector, about 40% of energy in our society. Wrongly located new housing-areas, according to public transport, services and shops, working-places, schools etc generate car transportation. New residential buildings ought to be located, if possible, adjacent to the existing built environment. It will require better service, better use of investments in existing infrastructure, decreased transportation, avoidance of exploiting unaffected areas and investment in creating environments that give people the possibility of a rich and stimulating life where daily travelling can be reduced. Other possible areas for development are those having been used for industries, institutions, harbours etc.

An attitude to the already built environment as mentioned previously is described in different documents from The Union. It started with “The Green Book on Urban Environment” more

than ten years ago. Yet the principles have still not had complete effect. Problems with polluted land can be one reason; land cost in central parts of cities can be another.

Proposal:

A collection of examples of best practice demonstrating how to use the already built urban environment could inspire local authorities, housing companies etc. Precisely drawn-up calculi, agreements, plans, building permits and housing costs in practice would accompany the examples. Such materials could be used very effectively for benchmarking.

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentleman, I think we have to carry on towards sustainable housing by drawing attention to best practice, by publishing useable information and why not (in the event *sustainable housing*) by awarding prizes and even plaques to be put upon buildings etc.

Thank you for your attention!

Fredrik von Platen