

Technical Assistance in Recovery Plans: the wealth-enabler for buildings

Op-ed by Adrian JOYCE, Renovate Europe Campaign Director

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Building a green and sustainable economy means spending a lot of money. There isn't a shortage of climate cash with the Recovery Fund - the real challenge will be spending it fast, and properly! Thankfully, there is help available for renovation through Technical Assistance - and the Commission's RECOVER Taskforce has just made it easier for Member States to include it in their Recovery Plans.

'Want to retrofit hundreds of thousands of buildings but don't know where to start? Need help setting up project workflows? Then you NEED technical assistance. Available now from all good European Commission directorates.'

The EU does not often run advertisements or infomercials like the entirely fictional one in the previous paragraph. Maybe it should.

In the coming years, hundreds of billions of euros will be on offer, especially through the EU's Recovery Fund.

But as is always the case with EU funds, blank cheques are not simply handed out. Project pitches have to be made, necessary hoops have to be jumped through and proper due diligence done. And with the Recovery Funds in particular, the money will have to be committed fast – by 2023 latest.

Therein often lies the problem. **For energy renovation in particular, EU Member States have been leaving money on the table, simply because they are ill-equipped to apply for it properly.**

We risk a situation where money from the Recovery Fund goes to waste, despite the 'Renovation Wave' being identified as Flagship Programme by Commission.

This might be because of a lack of expertise in different ministries, a lack of experience in applying for money in certain sectors or even linguistic barriers. Technical Assistance essentially coaches project applicants in how best to realise their ambitions.

As the old parable goes: **"give a man to fish and he'll eat for a day; teach him to fish and he'll eat for a lifetime."**

That's exactly what Technical Assistance is: a wealth-enabler for buildings.

Scale of the challenge

Given the scale of the challenge set by the EU's energy efficiency, renewables and overall emissions targets, Technical Assistance is going to be a necessary outlay for project planners.

Decarbonising the economy is going to be a work in progress up to and beyond 2050, when the EU plans to be absorbing as many emissions as it produces. Hitting the net-zero goal will mean spending hundreds of billions of euros - and spending them well - every year.

The most pressing opportunity comes in the form of the pandemic Recovery Fund plans, which governments have to submit to the Commission by end of April in order to tap into €750 billion in grants and loans.

Those plans will have to be well-formulated to unlock the money, especially the loans – and particularly given the tough politicking that erupted between Member States when the Recovery Fund was being negotiated. The level of scrutiny will be high.

The **Czech National Recovery Plan** is among the good examples that other countries should aim to replicate, as its draft document **allocates a significant chunk of money to Technical Assistance for building renovations**.

New opportunity in Recovery Plans

In a bid to encourage others to follow suit, the Commission's special RECOVER Taskforce has just made it **easier for Member States** to do just that: they can now create **specific budget lines just for Technical Assistance in their Recovery Plans, without needing to provide details upfront** on exactly how the money will be used (this can come at a later stage).

It comes late in the day as the National Recovery Plans should be submitted by end of April, but it's not too late for Member States to act on this by modifying their budgets and including a specific line for Technical Assistance for buildings in their Recovery Budgets.

Member States only have a few weeks to get their Recovery Fund requests in.

It is an investment that is worth making, as without support, there is little chance that all the money on offer will actually make it into the renovation projects so sorely needed by society.

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About the Renovate Europe Campaign:

Renovate Europe is a political communications campaign with the ambition to reduce the energy demand of the EU building stock by 80% by 2050 through legislation and ambitious renovation programmes. Accelerating the rate of renovation is a key tool in the fight against climate change, and will deliver major benefits for people, their quality of life, and the economy. www.renovate-europe.eu

#PrioritisePeople

#AccelerateRenovation

#Renovate2Recover

REC Partners (April 2021)

There are currently 47 partner companies and associations actively engaged in the work of the REC, of which 18 National Partners active in the Member States.

