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Press release on the start of the MountEE project

SUSTAINABLE BUILDING IN EUROPE'S MOUNTAIN MUNICIPALITIES

The house of the 21st century is nice and cool in summer, nice and warm in winter, hardly uses energy and – being built of local wood – stimulates the regional economy. The MountEE project explores ways in which municipalities in Europe's mountain areas can create such a building culture. Seven partners in European mountain areas work together, learn together and jointly improve their strategies and construction methods.

Worldwide, the construction, use and renovation of houses accounts for about half the energy consumption. In Europe, heating rooms and water accounts for most of the energy used in housing. Fuel and gas are the most frequently used energy sources. Therefore construction and renovation have a large energy reduction potential.

The technology is generally available. What is often lacking: realistic strategies and applied knowledge. Mountain regions in Sweden, the Pyrenees and the Alps want to achieve this in the framework of the project «MountEE – sustainable building in mountain regions». Their objective is to improve their building and renovation strategies, moving towards energy efficiency, increased use of renewable energies and greater sustainability in general. They are supported by experts from Austrian *Land Vorarlberg*, a pioneer with regard to sustainable construction.

A challenge for mountain municipalities

In accordance with the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) of the European Union, all new constructions and buildings undergoing major renovation will have to meet the Nearly Net Zero Energy Building (NZEB) standard by 2018. For many municipalities the transition to NZEB standard is a major challenge. Especially in mountain regions they often lack know-how, experience and funding. Some face additional challenges such as extreme climate, low accessibility, small size, low population density and brain drain.

At the international level know-how, experience and strategies are reviewed and exchanged. With the support of the Vorarlberg energy institute and the Association Umweltverband Vorarlberg, the partners prepare customized strategies for the regions of Norrbotten and Dalarna in Sweden, Friule in Italy and Rhône-Alpes and Pyrenees in France. In every participating region a number of public buildings are built or renovated sustainably to serve as models for process management and demonstration projects for energy efficiency and the use of renewable energies in mountains areas.

Strengthening regional networks

MountEE wants to use existing know-how about the development of regional strategies and about financial instruments to support ongoing construction projects. To ensure that the project is locally embedded and that the experience gained is not lost, key actors such as political decision-makers, the building industry, government or financial institutions are involved in the activities. Cooperation in regional working groups ensures that the know-how gained continues to be used after the project ends. In addition, Vorarlberg will develop tools for optimal buildings management during MountEE's three years running time and adapt them to the needs of partners in other mountain regions.

MountEE is being supported by the European Union within the program «Intelligent Energy – Europe» (IEE) for three years. IEE offers a helping hand to organisations willing to improve energy sustainability. Launched in 2003 by the European Commission, the programme is part of a broad push to create an energy-intelligent future for us all. It supports EU energy efficiency and renewable energy policies, with a view to reaching the EU 2020 targets: 20% cut in greenhouse gas emissions, 20% improvement in energy efficiency and 20% of renewables in EU energy consumption.

Additional information and pictures in printable format are available at:

www.mountee.eu/infoservice/press

Contact:

Wolfgang Pfefferkorn, Project Manager MountEE, CIPRA International

Carole Piton, Project Assistant MountEE, CIPRA International, +423 237 53 05

info@mountee.eu

MountEE – Sustainable public buildings

In accordance with the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive of the European Union (EPBD), all new constructions and existing buildings undergoing major renovation will have to meet 2018 Net Nearly Zero Energy Building standards (NZEB) by 2018. For many municipalities, especially in mountain regions, the transition to NZEB is a major challenge. The MountEE project supports municipalities in three European mountain areas – Sweden, Alps and Pyrenees – in achieving the NZEB objectives, and will help to transform them into front runners. In six regions, 25 public buildings will be built or renovated sustainably and energy-efficiently.

www.mountee.eu – <http://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent>