Welcome to the first newsletter for the ‘OPEN HOUSE’ project. The aim of this Seventh Framework project is to develop and implement a common, transparent, European building assessment methodology.

This newsletter introduces the preliminary OPEN HOUSE methodology which has been created through the hard work of more than 50 experts from 20 organisations representing 10 EU countries and Switzerland.

**Get involved!**

Openness and transparency are principals of the OPEN HOUSE project. You can find more information about the latest project results, share your point of view in the discussion forum and contribute to the development and evaluation of the first pan-European system of sustainable building assessment by visiting the OPEN HOUSE project web site: www.openhouse-fp7.eu

To start this collaboration, please let us know your opinion about the OPEN HOUSE project by filling the questionnaire which can be downloaded from our web site.

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Please direct any questions to the Project Manager: Daniel Hiniesto. daniel.hiniesto.munoztorre@acciona.com

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**OPEN HOUSE ‘Benchmarking and mainstreaming building sustainability across the EU based on transparency and openness (open source and availability) from model to implementation’**

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Starting date: 1st February 2010 
Project duration: 3 years 
Coordinator: Acciona Infraestructuras, s.a.

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Project is partly financed by the EU.
Background

While numerous sustainability assessment methods do exist within Europe and in other parts of the world, most of these are proprietary. To many users, the methodologies used are ‘black boxes’, providing an environmental rating, but not full clarity on the methodologies used. Furthermore, there are significant differences in the approaches of these tools, even within Europe. This fragmentation may result in competing commercial interests to gradually dilute the sustainability approach taken.

OPEN HOUSE approach

OPEN HOUSE is set up to be transparent; the assessment methodology is openly available. The project endorses a common effort towards the definition of a common and open, concept and assessment method of building sustainability at a European level. The aim is to build upon an EU wide, transparent and collective discussion and contribute to current activities on standardisation of assessment methodologies at a European level.

The OPEN HOUSE methodology has been based on a number of the indicators used in the established systems in Europe, including BREEAM, LEED, DGNB, HQE, and several international and European standards and directives, for example CEN/TC/350 and ISO TC59/SC17. These were reviewed and refined.

OPEN HOUSE methodology

As a second generation system, the OPEN HOUSE methodology provides a holistic evaluation considering the life cycle of a building and covering all relevant fields of sustainability. OPEN HOUSE indicators are multi-dimensional, encompassing environmental, economic, socio-cultural / functional quality, technical, process and location quality, as shown in Figure 2. Each topic is broken down into several indicators grouped within individual subject areas.
A total of 56 indicators, in turn divided into more sub-indicators, have been developed so far. 30 of these are classified as ‘core indicators’, for which a detailed assessment is required. Some of the indicators are still under discussion but these will be completed following feedback from the pilot assessment and contributions from different building stakeholders via awareness and dissemination activities.

The complete list of the OPEN HOUSE indicators is given in Figure 3.

![Figure 3: OPEN HOUSE indicators](image)

**OPEN HOUSE assessment process**

OPEN HOUSE can be implemented at two levels: ‘Basic and Quick’ and ‘Complete Assessment’. The ‘Basic and Quick’ assessment is aimed at giving an initial idea of building’s potential rating and can be done to improve the outcome of the subsequent assessment. Full documentation of the indicators is not required. The quick assessment is expected to be done in one or two weeks. The ‘Complete Assessment’ requires full documentation of the ‘core indicators’ and would take a longer period of time, depending on the information available.

The OPEN HOUSE methodology is described in detail in the preliminary version of the OPEN HOUSE Assessment Guideline (AG), which will be published in March 2012. This manual describes the purpose of the individual indicators, the assessment methods and scoring process (calculation and rating), the referred resources, and the required documentation. After gaining some experience during the pilot assessment of case studies, this guideline will be further refined. It will also incorporate the outcomes from the SuPerBuildings project ([www.superbuildings.eu](http://www.superbuildings.eu)) which OPEN HOUSE is actively collaborating with.

**Pilot assessment of 68 buildings across Europe**

A broad testing and validation campaign of the methodology has been recently launched addressing 35 European countries. 68 real case studies throughout Europe have been selected for this purpose. This testing will allow design of the methodology to be further adapted and refined for use at a pan-European level. In order to facilitate the comparison among the different case studies, the same building type has
been selected in the countries addressed; new office buildings (less than 10 years old) and office buildings at design stage.

In the 11 countries participating in the consortium, the ‘Complete Assessment’ will be executed (22 buildings) by the OPEN HOUSE partners. The ‘Basic & Quick’ assessment will be used for other case studies outside the consortium (46 buildings) by experienced consultants from several different countries. Some of the buildings which are being assessed are presented in Figure 4.

![Figure 4: OPEN HOUSE assessment case studies](image)

An important aim of this pilot phase is to collect feedback of all involved stakeholders in a systematic way. In this process, the different national regulations, requirements and standards relating to the various OPEN HOUSE indicators will be made visible, and incorporated in future revisions of the methodology. At this point, the various indicators have not been weighted against each other. A first draft of the weighting is intended to be made following the information and feedback from the pilot assessments.

![Figure 5: OPEN HOUSE training](image)

OPEN HOUSE Training Course (December 12th and 13th, 2011) was organized for the OH assessor: consortium members, awarded tenderers and subcontractors who will be involved in the pilot assessments. 60 participants from 25 European countries attended the course. The objective of the training was to explain the OH assessment process, to present the OPEN HOUSE online platform and to give details of the OPEN HOUSE categories, indicators and how to get additional information and assistance from the OPEN HOUSE consortium.

Meet us in the following forthcoming events:


We want your input!

Visit the OPEN HOUSE project web site [http://www.openhouse-fp7.eu](http://www.openhouse-fp7.eu) and register on the OPEN HOUSE Platform. You can find more information about the latest project results, share your point of view within the discussion forum and contribute to the development and evaluation of the first pan-European system of sustainable building assessment. To start this collaboration, let us know your opinion about the OPEN HOUSE project by filling the questionnaire on our web site!