

Smart Readiness Indicator: pilot project tests on Belgian buildings

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Ingenium has been involved for years now in developing the SRI or Smart Readiness Indicator, which indicates the extent to which a building is ready to offer smart services. An unofficial test phase is currently under way in Belgium under the aegis of Buildwise (former BBRI). The SRI is being applied to specific buildings. The results of this test could be a trigger for governments to start the official test phase imposed at European level. This will be decisive in the government's choice whether or not to couple the SRI to the EPC audit.



To determine how smart a smart building effectively is, an indicator is needed. This indicator charts various things: the capacity of a (part of a) building to adapt its operation to the needs (health, comfort, well-being) of residents/users, to optimize energy efficiency, and to adapt the technical installations to react to signals from the public network (energy flexibility).

The SRI occupies a special place among such indicators, because the European Union has taken the initiative to develop a tool that can serve as a standard for the whole of Europe. VITO was a driving force in the consortium that was set up for this purpose at the request of DG Energy of the European Commission.

The SRI focuses on the intelligent adjustment of the technical installations, both to guarantee maximum comfort and well-being of building users, and to use the available energy efficiently so as to limit consumption. The tool was developed between 2017 and 2020. The output is a standard list of services to be considered (heating, hot water, electricity generation,...) and weighting factors that test the maximum achievable level of each service against the actual level. A part will be common to the entire EU, supplemented with degrees of freedom to be determined by each Member State.

However, because neither Belgium nor its federated states have yet defined the degrees of freedom, the existing standard list is currently being used. For the time being, Europe will also allow the introduction to take place on a voluntary basis. Officialization is only possible after completion of the mandatory test phase, which – as mentioned above – has not yet started for Belgium. However, in the current proposal for the revision of the EPBD, calculation of the SRI may become mandatory for buildings with installations with a capacity greater than 290 kW.

To demonstrate the potential of the SRI, Buildwise recently set up a test group including representatives of engineering firms, contractors, developers of digital energy platforms and the government. Each of the 10 members will complete the tool for 1 (existing) building. They will base this on the plans and rule descriptions, site visits, the data collected by the building management system and the building manager's personal knowledge. Buildwise will then combine all the results and assess the tool. Later this year the results will be published and presented at a Buildwise seminar.

Ingenium is also active in another working group: the 'Maintenance & potential extension of the SRI calculation methodology WG2'. This group, with 15 members from various European countries (including VITO and Buildwise for Belgium), is working on the maintenance and further development and improvement of the SRI. The fixed list of services is examined on a regular basis. Issues that have already been discussed in this working group are:

- Streamlining a common EU approach: what is important to have common and what can be localized?
- Variability of the SRI methodology: regions, building type, building age, etc.
- Impact of pilot results on SRI progression
- Energy recovery for lifts
- Transparent change management process: reflecting on future process in the event of changes in calculation methods
- How to request changes in the SRI: in respect of catalogue of services, of scoring and weighting, of maintenance of EU-wide common part vs country specific.

There are several reasons why Ingenium is taking part in the development and testing of the SRI. As forerunners, we always like to keep a finger on the pulse

of the latest developments in the field of sustainable energy and comfort management in buildings. In the specific case of the SRI, two other issues are involved. First: various developers are developing similar tools and (attempting to) put them on the market. Only a few of them will eventually survive. The SRI seems to us to be a strong contender for the club of survivors, since the European Commission supports the development and wants to introduce this tool in as many countries as possible. Second: we also believe that such an indicator can be interesting for buildings for rent and that the SRI proves its worth as a starting point for innovation in both new construction and renovation. Especially in the office market, labels that measure sustainability, comfort and data quality are gaining in importance. A smart readiness label can be a valuable addition to this.

Want to know more about the SRI? Contact our expert Jasper Meynen via the email address jasper.meynen@ingenium.be or by phone on 050 40 45 30.