

European building experts inspired by the Danish Refurbishment Award

It is not only in Denmark that renovation plays a growing role in construction, but if we are to become even better in understanding and using the discipline, it's important that the construction industry inspires each other across countries and shows the good examples that can help drive the green transition. Therefore, the Refurbishment Award was highlighted when the European Association of Building Professionals AEEBC met in Copenhagen.

In Denmark, it's well known that renovation often is a more sustainable approach than new construction. Instead of tearing down old building and construct new ones, it's both more energy-optimizing and resource-saving to restore the existing building stock and rethink functions.

That's why renovation was an important item on the agenda when AEEBC, the European association for building professionals, met at the end of April in Denmark for their semi-annual general meeting. Here, they gained insight into relevant Danish projects and initiatives within construction, including the Refurbishment Award as a catalyst for the green transition.

Toni Floriach, who's an Arquitecto Técnico and a member of AEEBC, can also recognize the need in his own home country, Spain, where they are increasingly experiencing a demand and not least a need for more and better renovation of the building.

"In Spain, 70 per cent of the buildings are older than 40 years. Back in the 1960s and 70s, there was a massive need for building new homes, and therefore there was a higher interest in quantity rather than quality, which means that proper insulation and the like have not been considered. This have created a huge need for renovation today if the homes are to continue to live up to today's requirements. We have, for example, very hot summers in Spain and without proper insulation, it's unbearable to stay in the homes," explains Toni Floriach.

Toni Floriach also emphasizes that the sustainable solutions in the renovations in particular are something he expects, we will see more of both in Spain and the rest of Europe in the future.

"Especially the renovations that focus on more sustainable solutions will play a bigger role in the future. We already see this through certifications such as DGNB, which assesses how sustainable a renovation really is. It's just a very central part of renovations, and I just think it's becoming more relevant to see that path," says Toni and explains how the great awareness of climate change among consumers also helps to push for the green transition in construction.

"If I start from my own everyday life, I already see a great development. Just a year ago, no one in my neighbourhood in Barcelona had solar cells on the roof, but this year I can count at least 10. And I think that's just the beginning. We see a greater demand and motivation among citizens to optimize energy consumption with sustainable solutions. That's why it's also important that we share experiences across countries. For example, through awards such as the Refurbishment Award, which can help to put renovation on the agenda and highlight it as an equal discipline compared to new constructions. The more aware of green solutions we can make consumers, the more likely they are to demand them. Here, the Refurbishment Award's focus on sustainability is also a good example, because it motivates people to think in those lanes when setting up. We need to pave the way for green demand," says Toni Floriach.

Knowledge sharing across countries is an important factor

But it's not only in Spain and Denmark that we're experiencing a greater demand for green solutions in construction and renovation, and therefore there is a need for inspiration and sharing the good experiences, says Jette Leth Fejerskov Djaelund, Vice President of AEEBC and General

Manager of Professional and International Affairs at The Danish Association of Architectural Technologists and Construction Managers.

“Renovation’s an increasingly important discipline in construction if we’re to live up to the CO₂ requirements and the resource scarcity we can see into, and therefore it’s also a focal point for AEEBC. At AEEBC, experts from all over Europe meet and talk about ongoing projects in the member countries, while we want to inspire and share our knowledge of new trends and initiatives so that we can keep each other up to date. And here it was obvious to take a closer look at the Refurbishment Award, because it’s such a different price than what we usually see”.

“The purpose of the Refurbishment Award is partly to set focus on the benefits of renovation and make it relevant for society and the industry. That combined with the special setup, where the whole team behind the renovation is celebrated rather than just one party, is quite unique, and I hope that other parts of Europe can be inspired by it,” continues Jette Leth Fejerskov Djaelund.

On the day, members of the AEEBC visited two previous projects from the Refurbishment Award. One was Ryesgade 25, which was nominated in 2020, and the other Ørstedes Haver, winner of the Refurbishment Award 2021. Here the group got a tour of the projects and an introduction to the solutions they had each made use of within the renovation discipline at these two projects.