

## English Summary

The Institute on Housing and Environment (Institut Wohnen und Umwelt), Darmstadt, has been charged by the German Federal Ministry for Transport, Construction and Housing (FMTCH) to investigate in a feasibility study into the structural conditions for the performance of a "Competence Centre for Low-Priced and Ecological Construction". With the help of interviews with key persons in institutions working in the field of low-priced and ecological construction or seeming to be potential partners for the Centre, experience and requirements from practise have been collected which engraved on the subsequent proposals for a concept of the envisaged Competence Centre.

### Objectives and Clients

The "Competence Centre for Low-Priced and Ecological Construction" shall be founded with the aims of enhancing the home ownership ratio and contributing to a stabilisation of employment in the building industry. To achieve these aims the Competence Centre shall inform about the access potentials towards home ownership and stimulate innovations in the building sector – particularly also with regard to stock refurbishment.

Services produced by the Competence Centre shall primarily be directed towards private owners and purchasers of homes and among these particularly the so-called threshold households. Apart from that, the actors on the municipal level as well as the various actors in the construction process shall be addressed, from the planning (architectural and engineering offices) and financing (financial institutions) over the construction (handicraft firms, surveyors, craftsmen etc) until the marketing (developer, prefab supplier). Particular emphasis should be laid however on small and medium size enterprise with a regional or local basis. Further actors shall be involved on a project base, for instance occupational training institutions.

### Organisational Structure

Many pragmatic reasons call for an affiliation of the Competence Centre at an existing institution which we therefore suggest. Decisive would be the readiness of the management and the employed of the "mother"-institution to venture on new and dynamic processes. A proper mother institution can be selected on the basis of a limited call for tenders. If it should be founded as an autonomous new body we propose the limited company as the legal form for the Centre.

The donator of the grant should be prepared to finance more or less fully a necessary take-off period of about three years. Particularly in view of this initial phase being still little remarkable from outside the Competence Centre should be approved full budget security for that period. At the time of its foundation the Competence Centre should be obliged to present after three years clear perspectives for its future work and financial schedule.

### Personnel

The Competence Centre should at its beginning employ a team of about five or six professionals. The manager should have experience in the field of economics or business administration, two or three other collaborators should come from such dis-

ciplines as construction techniques, construction engineering, architecture, construction physics or real estate economics. All team members should dispose of long experience in the field of low-priced and ecological construction and of a network of personal communications to regional actors. A further position should be advertised as press/public relations officer. Apart from supporting office personnel from the mother institution one person should be explicitly responsible for bookkeeping and reporting (annual reports, finance, annual work plans and cost estimates).

### **Organs**

At its start the Competence centre should receive from its board of associators clear benchmarks of success, but simultaneously the management should receive broad decision competence. This board of associators is the controlling body in which the Ministry should be granted a majority position. The controlling of the management should be based upon clear examination criteria. Particularly in the take-off period, a pluralistically composed further board, the advisory board composed of persons with a variety of backgrounds, should function as a marketing instrument for the Centre. After that phase, rotating representatives of the various co-operation partners of the Centre should be called in the advisory board and be also embodied in the frame of workshops.

### **Co-operations**

The Competence Centre should develop a network of regionally active partners, in order to on the one hand create a full territorial presence of the Centre and on the other hand to initiate local or regional activities. Some interview partners have expressed a vivid interest in co-operating with the Competence Centre.

### **Finance**

The FMTCH should commit itself to a full financing of the Centre over the first three years and a continuing basic financial contribution at a lower volume. At a full financing, the cost of personnel with one manager, five engineers one press and marketing officer, bookkeeping and 3.5 positions for supporting personnel would add up to about two million DM. Furthermore, costs for public relations and internet presentation of about 600.000,- DM as well as costs for the development and supply of services would arise.

The Competence Centre is to be requested to present a personnel development plan and cost estimate no later than after three years as a basis for the discussion about the continuation of its work and about the volume of FMTCH grants.

From the present point of view it does not seem realistic to reduce after the three years, if neutrality should be kept, the basic grant below the level of 75%, particularly as criteria like "credibility" and "sincerity" are decisive for the acceptance among and the co-operation with the various actors.

### **Services To Be Delivered**

The recommendations relate to measures to be taken immediately after the foundation of the Competence Centre. We would not like to present recommendations at this stage about the further development of the service basket towards the middle or end of the take-off period. It should rather be left for decision by the future manage-

ment which of the alternatives described in this study should be further developed with which partners or if other paths should be taken.

- One of the most important initial tasks consists in the development of the network with the potential partners for co-operation, largely on the basis of personal contacts. These personal contacts constitute the basis for a successful co-operation in the framework of many of the measures described above.
- An internet homepage should be developed at a professional standard (about 100.000,- DM), which is to be well attended and permanently actualised (about 50.000,- DM/a).
- At an early stage, the Competence Centre should start with public relations work specified for different target groups, with respective presentations of its own activities and press relations (about 500.000,- DM/a). This implies also the development of exhibitions, e.g. as an instrument of presentation in the framework of "ecological service stock exchanges".

At the Federal, State and local levels, among scientific institutions, professional, industrial and economic organisations and other actors, broad knowledge and actual information about all relevant aspects of low-priced and ecological is available. However, this knowledge is widely dispersed and of limited accessibility. It is particularly from the side of medium enterprise (FMTCH, Forum for Future Energies, VNW, Environment Centres of Craft Industries) that the wish was expressed to collect, analyse, prepare for specific target groups – in the sense of "best practises" – and make available via a data bank such knowledge.

But also private consumers having decided to purchase or build a home should be enabled to collect respective information from the data bank, be it as a contribution to consumer protection. Supported by respective public relation activities also threshold households who by then had not estimated it to be possible to finance a home should be made aware of the data bank in order to receive there respective suggestions or offers.

- A respective data bank should be set up at an early stage as one of the most important service offers for threshold households as well as small and medium size enterprise (development costs for the data bank about 100.000,- DM, running costs about 50.000,- DM/a).

Furthermore, a rapid start of the Competence Centre with substantial work can be accomplished:

- Together with the associations of the public and the private Bausparkassen and/or the German Mortgage Banks concrete agreements should be strived at in the field of public relations.
- For the internet supported adult education, innovative procedures are at hand in the field of ecological construction, which could be widened at low cost by the aspects of low-priced housing. Also here institutions exist with which the Competence Centre could co-operate.