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2020-11-26

Pandemic: The need for government incentivised retrofitting

Improvement of ventilation and air filtration in existing buildings

In a nutshell

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) to the health and welfare of building inhabitants. Insufficient air filtration and ventilation has proven to increase the risk of airborne viral transmission in closed spaces. While the need to improve IAQ has always been a public health priority, it is now an urgent necessity with far reaching economic and employment impacts. To ensure the safe operation of buildings, improvements to ventilation and air filtration systems need to be put in focus.

Background

The possibility of airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2, especially in badly ventilated indoor settings, has been acknowledged by all relevant organisations¹, from the World Health Organisation (WHO) to the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and others.

While retrofitting gained traction in the past for energy conservation reasons, its ability to include upgrading building ventilation and the provision of safe, clean air should now become a key focus. Research proves that IAQ is an essential element of work-place safety. As established by the World Health Organization (WHO), people in industrialised countries spend up to 90% of their time indoors, so exposure to airborne pathogens such as bacteria, moulds, spores, Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) and viral particles should be a key strategic priority.

Introducing robust, incentivised retrofitting initiatives is of fundamental importance to move towards better preparedness for future airborne threats and we believe would yield significant benefits for governments, the economy and society:

- Reduced transmission of airborne diseases
- Increased public health and productivity through better IAQ
- Improved energy efficiency in retrofitted buildings
- Stimulus to the economy by support of the building industry
- Provision of a significant amount of jobs at all skill levels

Call for Action

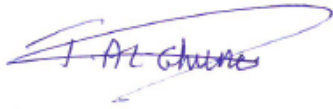
The HVACR industry is calling on Governments to initiate retrofitting measures for public buildings and to provide incentives for retrofits in the private sector. The energy savings achieved with better Heating, Ventilation and Air-Conditioning (HVAC) installations will enable a return on investment within a short period of time, while improvements in ventilation could also have an immediate effect on transmission numbers in affected buildings.

¹ As officially published through their respective websites: www.who.org, www.cdc.gov, www.ecdc.europa.eu, www.rki.de, www.ashrae.org, www.rehva.eu

Germany recently provided funds of 500m EUR to upgrade ventilation systems in all state-owned buildings, from offices to schools and hospitals and this measure is expected to lead to significant improvements of IAQ while stimulating the economy by providing jobs and projects to the building and ventilation industry.

A safe and healthy building environment is the foundation of every society and requires our joint efforts to work towards achieving targets of a safer environment for all.

This Position Paper reflects the joint opinion of Eurovent Middle East, its members and affiliated organisations. It was written in good faith and expresses opportunities and potentials to the advantage of the region.



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About Eurovent Middle East

Eurovent Middle East is the region's Industry Association for Energy Efficiency, Indoor Air Quality and Cold Chain Solutions. Its participants constitute leading manufacturers of Indoor Climate (HVAC), Process Cooling, Food Cold Chain, Industrial Ventilation, and Building Automation Technologies, as well as sector associations and industry initiatives active in these fields. By thinking 'Beyond HVACR', contributing manufacturers fulfil the highest requirements in terms of product quality and sustainability. For more information, visit www.eurovent.me.

