



ACCELERATING ENERGY RENOVATION THROUGH
COLLABORATIVE FINANCING SOLUTIONS IN BELGIUM

LIFE BE FREE

REPORT

Colophon

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22

**THEMATIC
ROUNDTABLES**

**NATIONAL
ROUNDTABLES**

270

**UNIQUE
PARTICIPANTS**

6

Executive summary

Europe cannot achieve its climate goals without a major increase in energy-efficient building renovations.

In Belgium, 92% of the country's 5.7 million homes do not meet 2050 energy standards, yet the current renovation rate of 0.8% per year remains far below the 4% needed. While many recognise the need for renovation, access to suitable financing remains a key barrier that requires collaboration between a wide range of stakeholders.

Life BE FREE (Belgian Financing Roundtables on Energy Efficiency) set out to support this collaboration in Belgium. Through a series of national and thematic roundtables, the project brought together representatives from financial institutions, public authorities, the construction sector, businesses, homeowner organisations, civil society and knowledge institutions across all three regions and the federal level. This diversity helped participants identify financing barriers, exchange experiences and develop practical solutions.

Over the course of the project, our collaborative approach resulted in:

- » **22 thematic roundtables**, focusing on topics such as Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs), apartment buildings and homeowners' associations (HOAs), subsidies and pre-financing, district renovation, social lending, rental market renovation, and the renovation of public buildings and ESCOs (Energy Service Companies);
- » **6 national roundtables**, bringing together stakeholders from across the Belgian renovation and finance landscape;
- » **270 unique participants**, representing **140 organisations** from both the public and private sectors.

Together, these exchanges created a shared understanding of the barriers to financing energy renovation with existing regulatory and financial frameworks. They also demonstrated that the biggest challenges are rarely technical. Instead, they stem from fragmented governance, insufficient coordination, and the difficulty of scaling up successful solutions.

Throughout the process, participants explored ways to make financing more accessible and to mobilise greater private investment for the energy transition.

These insights were translated into 20 policy briefs, distilled from the thematic roundtables and shared with the relevant federal, regional and local authorities, spanning topics from EPC reform and co-ownership to social lending, rental market renovation and the decarbonisation of public buildings. A practical Roundtable Manual was produced to help other organisations replicate this multi-stakeholder approach.

This report shares the project's main lessons and offers practical recommendations for organisations and public authorities that wish to set up similar initiatives.

Three lessons stand out:

1. Innovative financing solutions do not emerge from a single organisation - they are the result of long-term collaboration and shared ownership. In Belgium's complex constitutional landscape, bringing all three regions together in a single project is an achievement in itself, and one that lays essential groundwork for further cooperation.

2. Regulations across different levels of government too often pull in different directions, slowing renovation down or even undoing progress already made. Closer alignment between these frameworks is not optional; it is a condition for progress.

3. The issue is rarely a lack of public funding or subsidies, it is how that funding is deployed. Support schemes too often fail to reach the households that need them most, particularly vulnerable ones, leaving resources unused and making the transition less inclusive and effective than it could be.

Building on these lessons, Belgium must now move beyond dialogue towards tangible, scalable action, with the public and private sectors sharing responsibility. As a next step, the Belgian Energy Efficiency Financial Coalition (BEEFiC), together with partners such as the Belgian Green Building Council (BGBC), will build on Life BE FREE's pilots, data and solutions to help decarbonise Belgium's building sector on the path to 2030 and 2050.



Three lessons we take forward

Innovative financing

doesn't emerge from a single organisation - it's the result of long-term collaboration between complementary partners.

01

02

**Aligning
regulation across
policy levels**
is essential
for progress.

03

The challenge
is not only funding,
but ensuring it **reaches
the people who
need it most.**

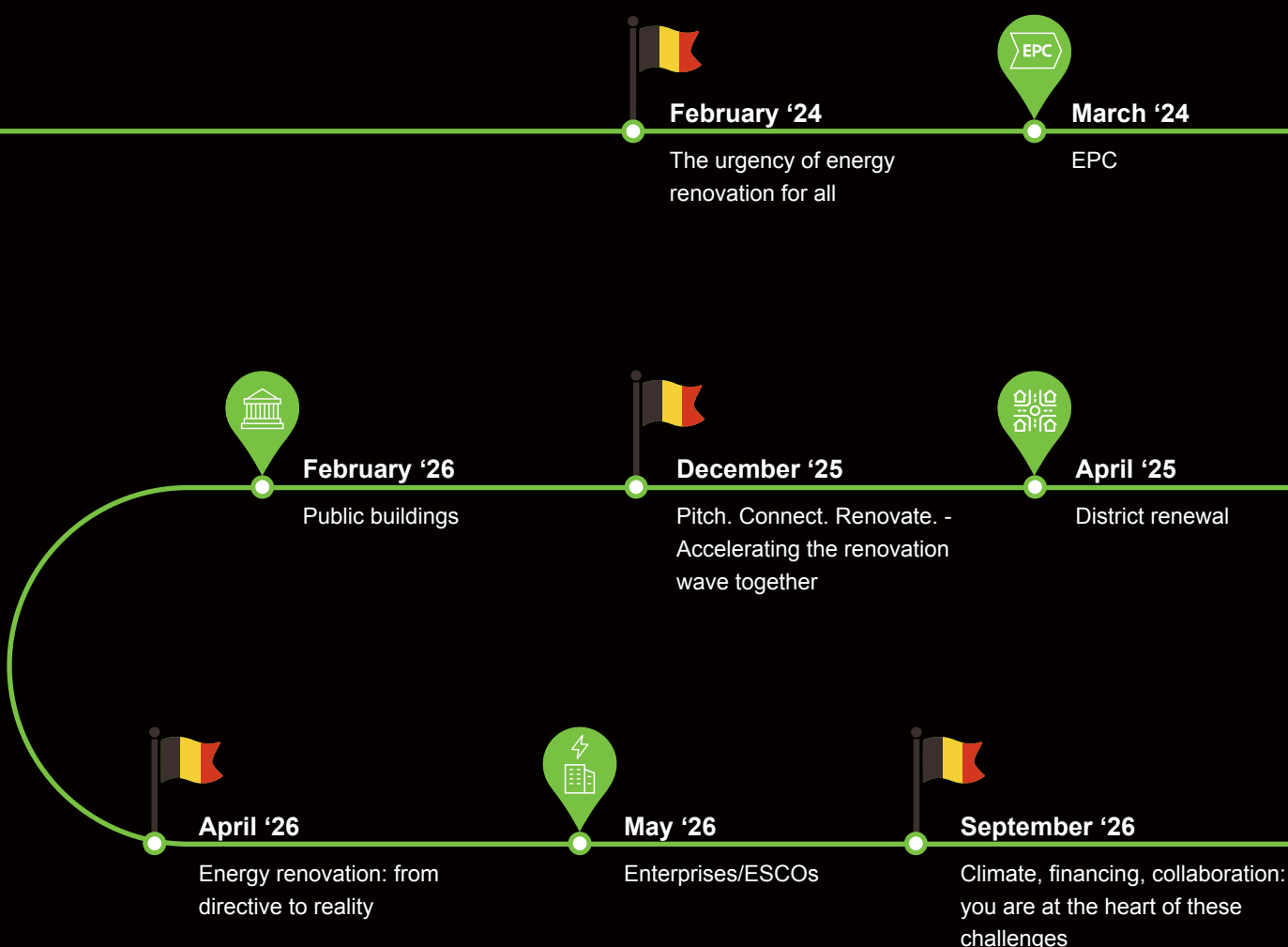
The challenge

Scaling energy renovation across Belgium

Belgium's annual renovation rate is just 0.8% - far below what is needed to transform the building stock.

Scaling up energy renovation requires smart regulation, fair energy pricing, guarantees and strong partnerships.

Bringing stakeholders together through national and thematic roundtables





6 national roundtables

Large-scale gatherings of 100 participants, creating opportunities for networking, learning, and cross-sector dialogue.



8 thematic roundtables

consisting of 22 smaller expert sessions exploring challenges in depth and co-creating practical solutions.

→ Driving policy change

The collective expertise and ideas informed a series of inspiring policy recommendations.



March '24

Association of co-owners



June '24

Review of premiums/
pre-financing



November '24

Energy renovation: financing
solutions as a lever



March '25

Renovation rental
market



March '25

Social lending



March '25

The policy ambition!



September '26

Closing event

3 years of collaboration resulting in

- 20 policy briefs, from EPC reform to social credit
- A practical manual for organising roundtables
- New cross-sector collaborations
- Continued action through BEEFiC and BGBC



01

The Life BE FREE partnership

Life BE FREE was made possible through a unique partnership bringing together organisations from the financial sector, local government, the construction industry, sustainability networks and research.

Funded by the European Commission's LIFE Clean Energy Transition programme, the consortium combined complementary expertise and extensive stakeholder networks. This approach connected stakeholders who might not otherwise have crossed paths, building the mutual understanding and trust needed to take further, joint steps towards accelerating energy renovation.

The consortium consisted of six partners:



Representing the Belgian financial sector and providing expertise on financing solutions and market developments.



Representing the construction sector and contributing practical insights on renovation projects and market challenges.



Providing expertise in energy transition, low-carbon buildings and innovation processes.



(Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities) – bringing the perspective of local authorities and their role in supporting energy renovation.



Supporting companies and organisations in their shift to a way of working that is climate-neutral, inclusive, nature-positive and equitable.



Contributing policy and EU funding expertise, while supporting project management and collaboration between partners.



02

Key results

This report presents the main results of the Life BE FREE project. It first describes the approach and working methods that helped bring stakeholders together and build a shared understanding of financing challenges. It then highlights the key outcomes of the thematic roundtables, the policy work and the practical tools developed throughout the project.

2.1 The Life BE FREE process

Building dialogue across sectors

At the heart of Life BE FREE was a clear challenge: how to accelerate energy renovation by making financing solutions more effective, accessible, and scalable. Rather than developing solutions within a single organisation or sector, the project created a structured process that **brought together stakeholders** from across the renovation ecosystem to identify barriers, exchange experiences and develop practical recommendations.

The process was built around a combination of national roundtables and thematic roundtables.

- » **6 national roundtables** provided a broad platform for networking, knowledge sharing and agenda setting. They helped identify priority topics, shared lessons learned and created visibility for the project.

- » **22 thematic roundtables** allowed stakeholders to explore specific financing challenges in greater depth and work towards practical recommendations and solutions.

The project brought together representatives from **140 organisations**: financial institutions, public authorities, the construction sector, businesses, homeowner organisations, civil society and knowledge institutions. This diversity of perspectives helped participants better understand each other's needs, constraints and opportunities.

www.lifebefree.be

From dialogue to action

An important aspect of the Life BE FREE approach was its focus on continuous learning. Participants were encouraged to share experiences, learn from existing practices in Belgium and abroad, and jointly explore new ideas. Rather than following a fixed roadmap from the start, the project adopted an iterative approach, allowing priorities and activities to evolve as new insights emerged. Life BE FREE was itself a learning journey: the team actively sought feedback from participants and used it to adapt the roundtables throughout the process.

Over time, the roundtables helped build trust between stakeholders who would not normally meet in a structured setting. This trust proved essential for open discussions, consensus building and the development of shared recommendations. At the same time, participants recognised the need to translate recommendations into concrete action.

The project also paid particular attention to Belgium's multi-level governance context. Stakeholders from different regions and policy levels were actively involved throughout the process, helping to create alignment where possible and ensuring that discussions reflected the realities of the Belgian institutional landscape.



2.2 The Life BE FREE roundtables

The Life BE FREE process was built around two types of complementary roundtables: **national roundtables** and **thematic roundtables**. Together, they created a structured process for stakeholder dialogue, knowledge sharing, and the co-development of financing solutions for energy renovation.

To ensure that this approach can be replicated beyond the project, the consortium developed a practical **Life BE FREE Roundtable Manual**. Based on the project's experience, it translates the main lessons into practical guidance for organisations wishing to organise similar multi-stakeholder processes. Throughout this chapter, key recommendations from the manual are highlighted.





National roundtables at a glance

Scale: typically 75-125 participants

Purpose: build a shared understanding of financing challenges and draw inspiration from pioneering national and international use cases

Format: expert presentations, live polling, plenary discussions and breakout sessions

Added value: cross-sector and cross-regional dialogue, complemented by international exchange

Outcome: a lasting stakeholder platform and input for further thematic work

2.2.1 National roundtables

The national roundtables were designed as large, multi-stakeholder events bringing together representatives from financial institutions, public authorities, the construction sector, businesses, homeowner organisations, civil society and knowledge institutions. Their purpose was to **build a shared understanding** of the main financing challenges for energy renovation, identify priorities and launch a structured dialogue across sectors.

Each session focused on a limited number of priority topics and combined expert presentations with interactive discussions. Experts provided market data, policy insights and practical experience that helped ground the discussions. Participants were actively involved through live polling, plenary debate and breakout sessions, creating space to validate challenges, exchange perspectives and identify shared priorities.

The national roundtables also provided opportunities to learn from other European LIFE projects and international good practices, enriching the discussions with additional perspectives. Beyond the individual meetings, they laid the foundation for a long-term dialogue platform connecting stakeholders across Belgium's different regions and governance levels.

FROM THE MANUAL

Organising national roundtables

Experience from Life BE FREE shows that successful national roundtables share a number of common design principles:

- define clear objectives and priority topics well in advance;
- invite a balanced mix of stakeholders from the public sector, financial institutions, construction, civil society and academia;
- combine expert presentations with interactive formats such as live polling, Q&A sessions and plenary discussions;
- use breakout groups to explore selected topics in greater depth;
- create opportunities for networking and short project pitches, allowing participants to present ongoing initiatives and connect with potential partners;
- document questions, conclusions and follow-up actions, making them available online where possible;
- use the outcomes of the national roundtables to identify priorities for more detailed thematic discussions.

Our 6 national roundtables



The urgency of energy renovation for all

On February 19th 2024, Life BE FREE launched its first national roundtable. The event brought together various speakers, including Estelle Cantillon from the ULB, who shared insights from the 35th Congress of Belgian Economists. Peter Reussens from the National Bank of Belgium shed light on the impact of climate targets on the Belgian property market, whilst Christine Lhoste from Embuild highlighted the crucial role of the construction sector in the transition towards a more sustainable world. Willemien Anaf from the City of Mechelen also presented the innovative 'one-stop-shop' model of the Life FOSSTER project, highlighting the funding opportunities available for Flemish Energy Houses.



Energy renovation: financing solutions as a lever

On November 19th 2024, Life BE FREE brought together key players in energy-efficiency renovation funding at the Circularium in Anderlecht to explore innovative financing solutions for accelerating the renovation of Belgium's building stock. Janko Lindenbergh presented the Dutch Nationaal Warmtefonds, highlighting its public-private financing model and accessible loan schemes. Romain Bocognani shared lessons from Italy's Superbonus 110, a tax incentive that significantly increased renovation rates and supported vulnerable households. Salim Chamcham presented insights from the RENO+ project and its 'renovation train' pilot in Braine-l'Alleud, showcasing tailored funding tools and support for renovation projects.



The policy ambition!

On March 17th 2025, Life BE FREE held its third national roundtable, 'The policy ambition', bringing together representatives from the European, Walloon and Flemish policy levels to discuss the role of policy in accelerating energy-efficient renovation. Kurt Vandenberghe from the European Commission highlighted the importance of the EPBD, carbon pricing and European funding mechanisms. Sébastien Pradella from the Centre d'études Habitat Durable presented Wallonia's approach, with a focus on social housing, private homes and collective renovation initiatives. Jan Schaerlaekens, representing the Flemish Minister for Housing, Energy and Climate, outlined Flanders' priorities, including accelerating renovation, shifting taxation away from electricity towards fossil fuels, and developing measures for apartment buildings.



Pitch. Connect. Renovate. – Accelerating the renovation wave together

On December 11th 2025, Life BE FREE held its fourth national roundtable, 'Pitch. Connect. Renovate.', focusing on tangible approaches to making energy renovation more accessible and scalable. Ten pilot projects showcased solutions ranging from innovative renovation loans and support for vulnerable households to fossil-free districts, neighbourhood renovation, mobile renovation advice and strategies for the private rental market. Prof. Fedra Vanhuyse from Uppsala University complemented these practical examples by highlighting how climate risks affect financial stability, property values and investment decisions. The pitches, thematic discussions and matchmaking sessions underlined the importance of local collaboration to tackle the renovation challenges.



Energy renovation: from Directive to Reality

On April 22nd 2026, Life BE FREE held its fifth national roundtable, 'Energy Renovation: From Directive to Reality', exploring how European climate and energy directives are translated into concrete action across Belgium. Representatives from Wallonia, Brussels and Flanders presented their approaches to implementing the EPBD through renovation plans, performance requirements, certification and long-term policy frameworks. Jean-Pierre Liebaert from Embuild highlighted the scale of the challenge, stressing that Belgium's renovation rate must increase fivefold to meet its 2050 targets. The Montoyer 34 case by Alides and Van Roey brought the discussion into practice, demonstrating how circular renovation can achieve substantial CO₂ reductions while maintaining architectural quality and economic viability.



Renovation, climate, financing, collaboration: you are at the heart of these challenges

On September 17th 2026, Life BE FREE held its sixth and final national roundtable, followed by the project's Closing Event. The morning session focused on practical solutions for ESCOs and the renovation of public buildings, featuring five Belgian ESCO cases and an Italian citizen-led renovation example presented by Claudia Carani from LIFE AT LAST/AESS. The afternoon session looked back on the achievements and lessons of Life BE FREE, while bringing key partners together to discuss the road to 2050. Finally, the event looked ahead at Life BE FREE 2.0 and the further scaling of project results through the Belgian Green Building Council (BGBC) and the Belgian Energy Efficiency Financial Coalition (BEEFiC).

2.2.2 Thematic roundtables

The thematic roundtables translated the priorities identified during the national roundtables into focused working sessions. Following the first national roundtable, stakeholders prioritised a number of financing challenges, which were incorporated into a three-year action plan determining when each topic would be addressed.

Each thematic roundtable brought together 10 to 20 carefully selected participants with expertise relevant to the topic under discussion. The agenda was prepared jointly by the consortium, the chair and the secretary to ensure focused and productive discussions.

FROM THE MANUAL

Organising thematic roundtables

The experience of Life BE FREE suggests several practical principles for organising effective thematic roundtables:

- appoint a chair and secretary to prepare and moderate the process;
- select participants based on their expertise and role in the specific topic;
- prepare a focused agenda and, where necessary, organise preparatory meetings with key experts;
- begin with a shared overview of the current situation to establish a common understanding;
- structure discussions in successive phases: defining the problem, exploring solutions and formulating recommendations;
- use concrete case studies, pilot projects and real-life examples to support the discussion;
- translate the outcomes into practical deliverables such as reports, policy briefs and recommendations;
- where relevant, connect the results with dedicated policy workshops involving public authorities.

Rather than identifying challenges, these sessions concentrated on **developing practical solutions**. Participants worked together to explore financing mechanisms, identify implementation barriers and formulate concrete recommendations. The outcomes were consolidated into policy briefs, creating a direct link between stakeholder dialogue and policy development.

2.2.3 Cross-cutting elements

Although the national and thematic roundtables had different objectives, several elements proved important across both formats. Careful preparation, a balanced mix of participants and clear facilitation helped create open and productive discussions.

Following up after each meeting was equally important. Reports, policy briefs and online summaries ensured that the knowledge and ideas generated during the discussions remained available for future work and policy development. In Belgium, bilingual communication (Dutch and French) and accessible online documentation were essential to engage stakeholders across all regions.

The roundtables were not intended as one-off events. Each meeting built on the previous one, allowing discussions to evolve over time and leading to concrete outputs such as policy recommendations, pilot initiatives and new financing solutions for energy-efficient renovation.

Thematic roundtables at a glance

Scale: typically 10 - 20 participants

Purpose: develop solutions for specific financing challenges

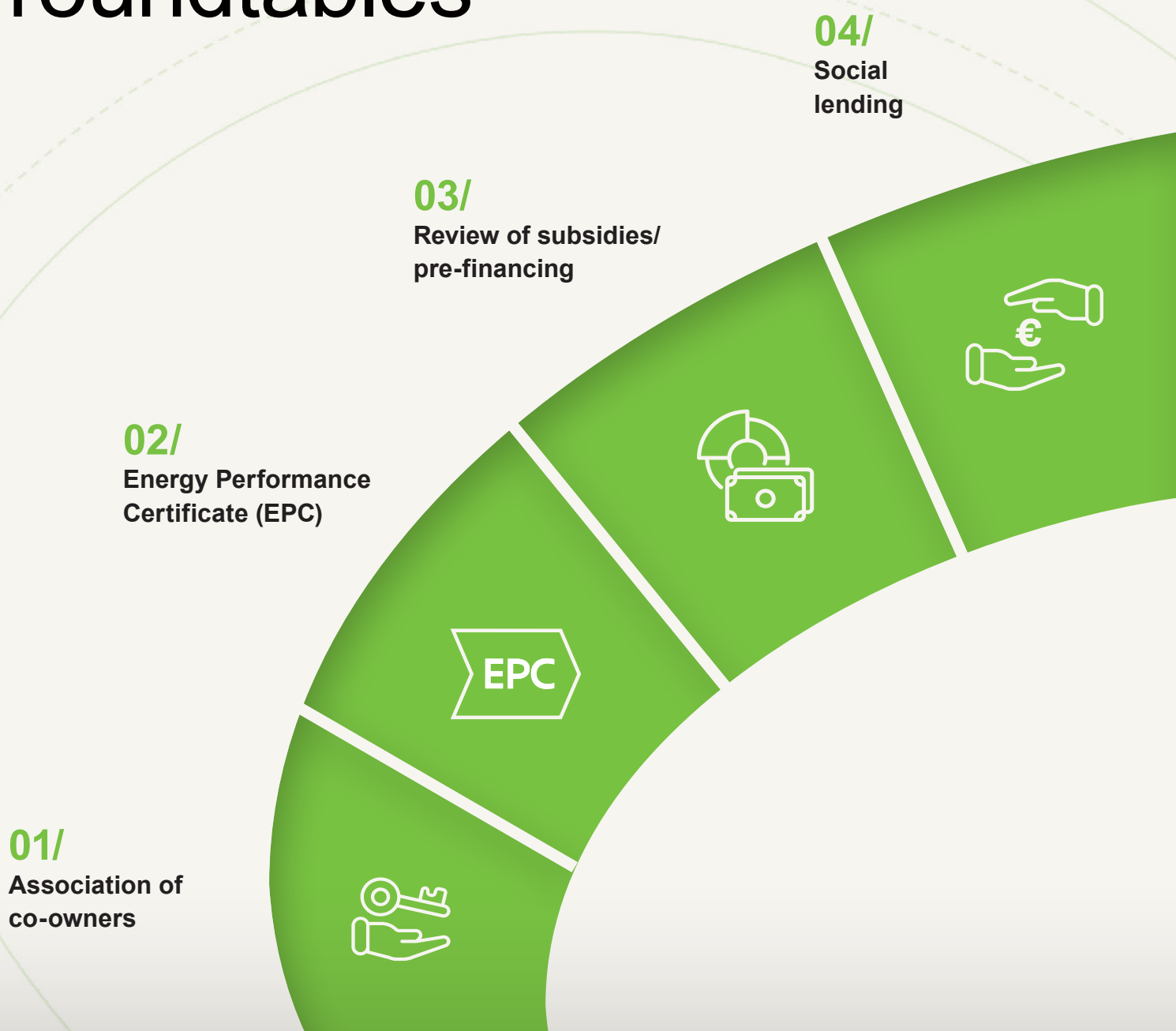
Format: focused expert discussions and collaborative working sessions

Added value: topic-specific expertise and co-creation of practical solutions

Outcome: policy briefs and actionable recommendations



Our 8 thematic roundtables



05/

District renewal



06/

**Renovation of
the rental market**



07/

**Companies/Energy
Service Companies
(ESCOs)**



08/

**Public
buildings**



2.3 Key operational and methodological insights

The manual for organising roundtables builds on broader insights from Life BE FREE about how a permanent dialogue platform on renovation financing can be built and sustained.



A broad, diverse stakeholder group makes the difference

Involving public authorities, financial institutions, the construction sector, knowledge institutions, civil society and businesses improved mutual understanding and sparked new collaborations. Bringing together stakeholders with different perspectives led to better solutions and stronger ownership. At the same time, participants highlighted the importance of a neutral collaboration platform: an independent space where challenges can be discussed openly and tackled jointly. Complex challenges like renovation financing can only be addressed through this kind of cross-sector cooperation.



Small thematic groups generate deeper insights

Smaller groups let experts exchange ideas freely and jointly develop solutions, following a clear sequence: identify problems, develop solutions, formulate recommendations. Compared with traditional discussion forums, these focused workstreams proved more effective in translating expertise into concrete outcomes.





Knowledge sharing has a lasting impact

Documenting insights and translating them into policy briefs, events and webinars built a shared knowledge base that extended the project's reach well beyond the roundtables themselves. Combining data, practical experience and tested solutions helped build consensus and provided a stronger foundation for shaping policy than opinions alone.



Flexible governance enables focused collaboration

Bringing in the most relevant experts per theme, rather than working with a fixed group, kept discussions focused while leaving room for new insights and partnerships. This flexible approach made it easier to respond to new developments, while clear roles, responsibilities and decision-making structures helped maintain momentum and effective collaboration. At the same time, broad participation requires a careful balance: aiming for wide buy-in can sometimes lead to more generic solutions, whereas smaller groups of frontrunners may be better positioned to push more innovative ideas.



What partners take forward:

- Work with a broad and diverse stakeholder group.
- Invest in trust, consensus and multilingual communication.
- Allow enough time for dialogue and joint knowledge development.
- Connect technical discussions to policy recommendations.
- Focus not only on new pilots, but also on removing structural policy barriers.
- Build knowledge capture and sharing into the project design from the start.
- Keep consultation structures flexible.



03

From roundtable insights to policy briefs

One of the key objectives of Life BE FREE was to translate the insights from the roundtables into concrete policy recommendations. To achieve this, the project brought together stakeholder input, research findings and practical experience. The resulting insights were reviewed and translated into recommendations tailored to the responsibilities of the different policy levels.

3.1 Turning insights into recommendations

For each thematic roundtable, policy briefs were prepared for federal, regional and local authorities. The briefs address financial barriers to energy-efficient building renovation and propose measures such as mixed financing models, financial incentives, supporting measures and governance improvements. In total, the project produced 20 policy briefs.

Reaching policymakers

Developing policy briefs was only part of the process. Ensuring that the recommendations reach the right decision-makers was equally important. To support

this, Life BE FREE organised policy workshops for policymakers and representatives from federal, regional and local authorities.

These workshops took the form of public webinars, featuring external speakers who endorsed the project's policy recommendations. They provided an opportunity to discuss findings, validate recommendations and explore how they could be translated into policy measures. Together, the policy briefs and workshops helped bridge the gap between stakeholder dialogue and policy action.

3.2 Our policy briefs



01

29 July 2024

Energy renovation:
everyone must be included!

02

10 February 2025

Modernising
the EPC

08

5 February 2026

Neighbourhood-based
renovation: affordable and
inclusive decarbonisation

07

2 February 2026

Towards a renovation toolkit
for sustainable buildings

09

5 March 2026

Energy renovation in the rental market

10

5 March 2026

Structuring social credit in Belgium

17

1 July 2026

On the need for an
integrated policy
framework

16

22 June 2026

Administrative simplification
for renovation support
in Flanders

18

8 July 2026

Targeted and sustainable incentives to
accelerate the energy transition of the
Brussels building stock





03

10 March 2025

The Long Term Maintenance Plan (LTMP) for apartment buildings

04

6 June 2025

Grants and pre-financing in the energy transition

06

15 July 2025

Towards a fairer and clearer EPC certificate

05

14 July 2025

Co-ownership in Belgium: towards a balanced and sustainable reform

11

26 May 2026

2026 ESCOs and SMEs: accelerating through scale, standardisation and risk sharing

12

5 June 2026

From ambition to action: fossil-free public buildings

13

5 June 2026

Renovating Belgium's building stock: a national issue requiring improved interregional coordination

15

22 June 2026

Accelerating the energy transition through renovation support

14

22 June 2026

Energy renovation: removing barriers through clarity, consistency and support

19

8 July 2026

From ambition to action: using ETS2 revenues for an ambitious, socially just and renovation-oriented climate policy

20

9 July 2026

Targeted and sustainable incentives to accelerate the energy transition of the Belgian building stock

01

Energy renovation: everyone must be included!

CHALLENGES

Belgium's renovation rate is far below the 90,000 renovations per year needed to meet climate targets. Financing is the main barrier: a full energy renovation now costs €90,000–100,000, while the average homeowner can only borrow or access about €60,000.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To close this gap, pre-financing and other accessible solutions should be developed for financially weaker owners. The EPC can be reformed to make it clearer and linked to concrete cost and improvement estimates, with a harmonised methodology across the three regions.

CONCLUSION

There is strong momentum among stakeholders for scalable, market-conform financing solutions. Making renovation work for everyone means ensuring these solutions reach the owners currently priced out.



02

Modernising the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)

CHALLENGES

The EPC remains difficult for the public to understand and suffers from a credibility problem. Research found that scores for the same property can vary by up to 47%, while around one third of certificates contain inconsistencies. Different methodologies across Belgium's three regions further reduce transparency and make comparisons difficult.

In apartment buildings, renovation decisions are particularly complex because many key measures, such as façade insulation, roof works and heating systems, require approval by the co-owners' association rather than individual owners. While new buildings are covered by the EPB framework (Energy Performance and Indoor Climate Requirements for New Buildings) during design and construction, improving the energy performance of the existing building stock remains the greatest challenge.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduce stricter, RESCERT-style quality control for certifiers. Work towards a harmonised calculation method and, eventually, a single certificate model across the three regions. Ensure long-term access to EPB databases for financial institutions and allow only one valid certificate per property.

CONCLUSION

The upcoming transposition of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) is the European Union's framework that sets requirements to improve the energy efficiency and decarbonisation of buildings across Member States. EPBD was a unique opportunity to make the EPC an instrument people can trust, without adding cost or complexity for owners. However, it is not too late for regions to better align these instruments and share the relevant data with key stakeholders, such as financial institutions.

03

The Long Term Maintenance Plan (LTMP) for apartment buildings

CHALLENGES

Most Belgian apartment buildings need major renovation: 64% of the roughly 225,000 buildings are over 40 years old. Yet homeowners' associations (HOAs) and syndics typically lack any long-term view of what needs to happen and when. Reserve funds are often minimal (averaging just €645 per apartment) and disconnected from real needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Make a quality Long Term Maintenance Plan (LTMP) standard practice for every HOA, based on a condition assessment with at least a 10–20 year horizon. Base reserve fund contributions on actual building value rather than past operating costs. Introduce RESCERT-style quality assurance for LTMP providers and align it with existing instruments instead of adding another separate document.

RESCERT already exists for technologies such as PV systems, heat pumps and ventilation systems, where it currently functions primarily as a quality label. While inspections can in principle be carried out, these are relatively limited in practice. At present, its main value appears to lie in providing quality assurance and building trust in the market.

CONCLUSION

A well-designed LTMP gives HOAs the compass they currently lack, turning renovation from a reactive scramble into a planned, financeable process.

04

Grants and pre-financing in the energy transition

CHALLENGES

Renovation grants differ from region to region in criteria and procedures, making the support landscape hard to navigate, particularly for vulnerable owners and apartment residents who often lack the funds to pre-finance works. Frequent changes with each new legislature add further uncertainty.

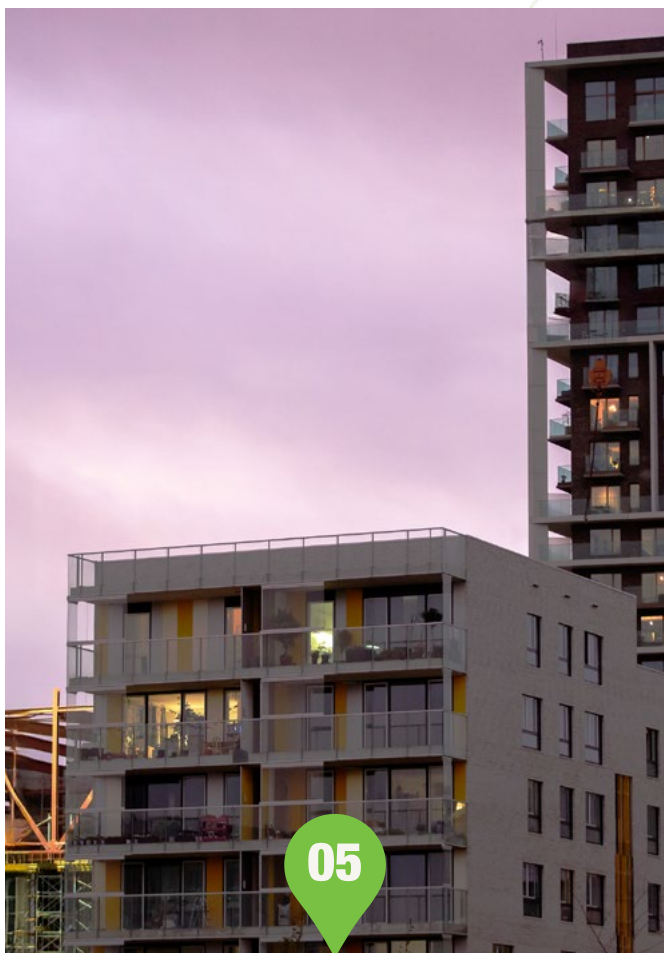
RECOMMENDATIONS

Expand pre-financing models so owners have the full budget available upfront, with subsidies and support measures primarily targeted at households most in need.

Combine grants with targeted fiscal incentives, such as reduced VAT and a bonus-malus on property tax linked to energy performance, and support collective, neighbourhood-scale renovation. Build in social safeguards for elderly owners and young families to avoid gentrification.

CONCLUSION

Grants alone are not enough: it is the combination of pre-financing, stable fiscal incentives and scale that will make support genuinely accessible.



05

Co-ownership in Belgium: towards a balanced and sustainable reform

CHALLENGES

Lowering the voting threshold to a simple majority for energy-related works is a welcome step, but risks marginalising vulnerable co-owners who are less able to finance renovations. This may create conflict rather than progress, as seen in cases where approved works ended up in dispute.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Link any lowered quorum to the existence of a validated multi-annual investment and maintenance plan. Introduce an interregional quality framework for these plans, inspired by the RESCERT model, and provide permanent technical, legal and financial guidance to HOAs, with targeted support for vulnerable co-owners. Make plan and reserve fund information mandatory when an apartment is sold.

CONCLUSION

Simplifying decision-making only works if it goes hand in hand with planning tools and safeguards that keep co-ownership associations socially cohesive.

06

Towards a fairer and clearer EPC certificate

CHALLENGES

Belgium's current A-label can still be awarded to homes running on gas or oil, even though the 2026 EPBD transposition will require it to mean fossil-free. Combined with weak oversight of certifiers and inconsistent scores across regions, this risks further undermining public trust.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Prepare the public now for the new fossil-free A-label standard. Strengthen oversight of certifiers, with independent control bodies and graduated sanctions per region. Work towards a single certificate model and label system for the three regions, with specific procedures for co-ownership, backed by a public awareness campaign.

CONCLUSION

Belgium cannot afford a two-speed energy transition: the EPC needs to become more accessible, reliable and ambitious before the new fossil-free standard takes effect.

07

Towards a renovation toolkit for sustainable buildings

CHALLENGES

Renovation remains slow and fragmented, and uncertainty keeps citizens and investors on the sidelines. Belgium's split competences between the federal and regional levels make a coherent framework harder to design, while gas remains structurally underpriced compared to electricity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Build a policy toolkit around three levers: harmonised EPC methodologies and data access across regions; a long-term, legally anchored roadmap towards a fossil-free building stock by 2050; and a reform of energy taxation to correct the gas-electricity imbalance. Combine this with stable support measures targeted at those who need them most, and transparent renovation cost estimates in the EPC.

CONCLUSION

The instruments to accelerate renovation already exist; what is missing is coherence between them and sustained cooperation across government levels.

08

Neighbourhood-based renovation: affordable and inclusive decarbonisation

CHALLENGES

Belgium's reliance on individual grants and loans is too slow, too costly, and mostly benefits those who already have means. In dense neighbourhoods, uncoordinated individual renovations can even slow down the collective goal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Use the European Social Climate Fund (over €1 billion) to accelerate collective action, reserving at least 25% for neighbourhood programmes. Develop heat networks and renovation pools, with municipalities as coordinators, and provide them with the right tools to take on this role. Set up a dedicated taskforce, launch pilot regions, and build a phase-out calendar and guarantee fund to move away from gas.

CONCLUSION

Renovating neighbourhood by neighbourhood, rather than building by building, offers the best chance of achieving both scale and inclusion.

09

Energy renovation in the rental market

CHALLENGES

Renovating the private rental stock is held back by fragmented regional rules, weak financial incentives for landlords, and a lack of personal guidance. The classic split-incentive problem persists: landlords bear the cost while tenants capture the savings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Create a single point of contact for landlords and harmonise requirements across regions. Introduce a bonus-malus on property tax linked to energy performance, reduced VAT on renovation, and extend grants to small landlords in exchange for rent caps. Protect tenants through rehousing guarantees and rent regulation, while allowing landlords a limited, savings-linked rent increase.

CONCLUSION

Making the rental market work for the energy transition means solving the split incentive without compromising affordability or protection for tenants.

10

Structuring social credit in Belgium

CHALLENGES

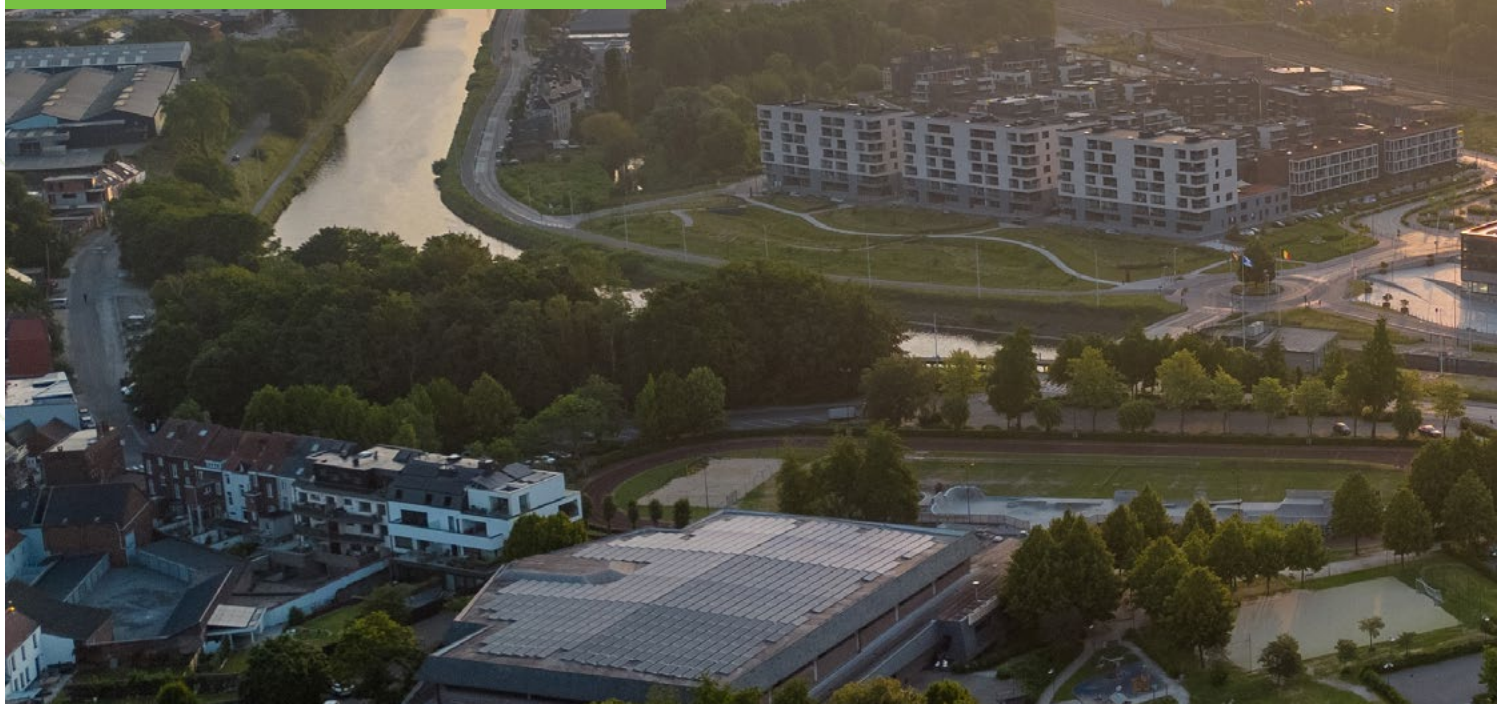
Around 25% of the population remains excluded from classic renovation credit, yet Belgium uses only about 10% of the financing available through the European Investment Bank. Each region runs its own system, and frequent policy changes create ongoing uncertainty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Create a single national financial vehicle to pool risk and simplify access to European funding. Strengthen and harmonise guidance and documentation, diversify financial products for co-ownership and vulnerable groups, and explore new levers such as pension funds. Stabilise the political and fiscal framework.

CONCLUSION

Social credit has real potential to drive both the energy transition and social inclusion, but only with a coherent national strategy built on risk-sharing and stability.



11

ESCOs and SMEs: accelerating through scale, standardisation and risk sharing

CHALLENGES

Small project sizes, high transaction costs and elevated financing risks limit the uptake of ESCO solutions for SMEs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Implement public guarantee schemes, standardised EPC contracts, project pooling mechanisms and support frameworks that enable collective energy investments across SME ecosystems.

CONCLUSION

Scaling up SME renovation requires collective approaches, risk-sharing instruments and standardised market practices that attract both investors and service providers.

12

From ambition to action: fossil-free public buildings

CHALLENGES

Limited project scale, financing barriers, administrative complexity and insufficient local capacity slow renovation efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop long-term building portfolio strategies, bundle projects, simplify regulations, provide policy instruments, financing and strengthen technical support for local authorities.

CONCLUSION

Large-scale, strategically managed renovation programmes are essential to accelerate the decarbonisation of public buildings.



13

Renovating Belgium's building stock: a national issue requiring improved interregional coordination

CHALLENGES

Fragmented regional policies, differing regulatory frameworks and limited data sharing create inefficiencies and uncertainty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improve interregional cooperation, harmonise technical methodologies, coordinate financing mechanisms and strengthen data exchange.

CONCLUSION

A shared national vision and stronger coordination are necessary to achieve Belgium's renovation and climate ambitions.

14

Energy renovation: removing barriers through clarity, consistency and support

CHALLENGES

Citizens face uncertainty about renovation pathways, financing options, obligations and support measures, while fragmented regulations and unclear communication delay action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improve the readability and consistency of climate information, strengthen existing support services and provide clearer guidance on available financing solutions.

CONCLUSION

Accelerating renovation depends less on new instruments and more on creating a coherent, credible and predictable framework that builds trust and supports informed decisions.

17

Accelerating the sustainability of apartment buildings: the need for an integrated policy framework

CHALLENGES

Decision-making barriers, fragmented renovation approaches, insufficient financing mechanisms and lack of long-term planning slow down condominium renovations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduce mandatory long-term maintenance and investment plans, strengthen collective financing tools, provide professional guidance and integrate social protection measures.

CONCLUSION

Simpler voting rules alone will not deliver deep renovations. Only an integrated framework combining planning, financing, guidance and social support can accelerate sustainable upgrades.

18

Targeted and sustainable incentives to accelerate the energy transition of the Brussels building stock

CHALLENGES

Frequent changes to support schemes and the replacement of grants by loans risk excluding vulnerable households.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Maintain a hybrid system combining grants, affordable loans and third-party financing while ensuring stability and social targeting.

CONCLUSION

Renovation policies must remain inclusive, financially accessible and stable enough to support long-term investment decisions.

15

Accelerating the energy transition through renovation support: simple, sustainable and fair

CHALLENGES

Complex procedures, fragmented support systems, unstable incentives and strict eligibility criteria discourage renovation projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Create one-stop-shops, simplify administrative procedures, guarantee long-term support schemes, introduce pre-financing solutions and ensure inclusive access to renovation assistance.

CONCLUSION

Administrative simplification, predictable support mechanisms and inclusive financing are essential to accelerate renovations while ensuring social fairness.

16

Administrative simplification for renovation support in Flanders

CHALLENGES

Households and homeowners' associations face fragmented systems, duplicate procedures and unpredictable support conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Establish a single Flemish renovation portal, reduce procedural complexity, provide stable multiannual support and strengthen local government capacity.

CONCLUSION

A simplified and predictable renovation support framework can increase renovation rates, accessibility and confidence among citizens and local authorities.

19

From ambition to action: using ETS2 revenues for an ambitious, socially just and renovation-oriented climate policy

CHALLENGES

ETS2 will increase energy costs while the current renovation rate remains far below what is needed to achieve climate targets.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Use ETS2 revenues to support renovation programmes, vulnerable households, local authorities and collective renovation initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Strategic use of ETS2 revenues can reduce energy poverty, unlock investments and accelerate a fair energy transition.

20

Targeted and sustainable incentives to accelerate the energy transition of the Belgian building stock

CHALLENGES

Unpredictable support schemes, limited financing access and insufficient support mechanisms undermine renovation uptake.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduce a stable and understandable support framework combining grants, financing instruments and tailored renovation guidance.

CONCLUSION

A predictable, fair and socially inclusive incentive system is necessary to significantly increase renovation rates in Belgium.



Strategic lessons for the future

The Life BE FREE roundtables confirmed that the next challenge is to **move from dialogue to delivery**. Stakeholders largely agree on the main barriers to energy-efficient renovation and on many of the solutions. The priority now is to translate this shared understanding into coordinated action.

The project identified several strategic lessons for the future about the financing needs and levers for energy-efficient renovation:



The main challenge is scaling up renovation, not finding new solutions

Belgium's renovation rate is still far below what is needed. The biggest challenge is no longer identifying solutions, but putting them into practice on a much larger scale. This requires better coordination between stakeholders, policies and financial instruments. Pilot projects remain important, but they should be designed so they can be rolled out more widely. Since many of the remaining barriers are regulatory rather than financial, improving the policy framework is just as important as developing new financing solutions.



Renovation requires a strong public-private partnership

The energy renovation of buildings cannot be delivered by the public or the private sector alone. Governments need to be involved from the start to create the right policy and regulatory conditions, while private-sector organisations bring investment, expertise and innovation. Local governments are especially important because they work closely with citizens and can help accelerate renovation on the ground. To make real progress, organisations and individuals who can influence policy and investment decisions also need to be actively involved.



Build on existing organisations and ensure long-term continuity

Stakeholders clearly expressed the need to continue the platform beyond the LIFE project. Rather than creating a new organisation, it is more effective to build on existing organisations and networks. This increases continuity and makes long-term cooperation more sustainable. It also requires clear governance, focused workstreams and a sustainable organisational and financing model, since many stakeholders are willing to contribute their expertise, but not necessarily long-term funding.



Belgium's federal structure can be an advantage

Belgium's complex governance structure is often seen as a barrier, but LIFE BE FREE showed that it can also be a strength. Bringing together stakeholders from different regions, sectors and levels of government created valuable exchanges that rarely happen otherwise. Many of the challenges are shared across the country, and learning from each other's experiences proved highly valuable. At the same time, differences in working methods and administrative cultures need to be recognised and managed.



The focus should now shift from dialogue to delivery

Dialogue remains important, but it should increasingly lead to concrete results. Future cooperation should focus on practical workstreams, scalable pilot projects, policy recommendations and implementation, so that discussions are translated into real progress.



Communication should focus on the benefits for citizens

Communication about renovation is most effective when it highlights the benefits that people experience directly. Messages about affordability, comfort, health and energy security are often more convincing than climate arguments alone, while still supporting climate objectives.



05

Beyond Life BE FREE

The Life BE FREE project has made it clear that energy renovation is not primarily a financing problem. Many solutions and instruments already exist; their impact is limited by policy, regulatory and organisational barriers.

The biggest lever for acceleration is therefore not new financial products, but **better alignment of existing instruments, stable long-term frameworks, and stronger cooperation between public and private actors**. Local authorities are expected to play a coordinating role, but are often constrained by regional policy and funding without adequate instruments and support behind them. The role of the government also extends beyond subsidies: consistent frameworks, risk-sharing mechanisms, smart permitting and well-designed incentives can all help unlock private investment.

Accelerating building renovation also requires bringing together actors from the quadruple helix: public institutions and cities, universities/ academia/ knowledge and research organisations, companies, and civil society. None of these actors can deliver the transition alone. What is needed is a structure in which their different roles, expertise and capacities can reinforce one another and translate shared ambitions into coordinated action. Pilot projects are an important part of this approach: they provide a practical testing ground where actors from across the quadruple helix can work together, test solutions in real-world conditions and identify what is needed to bring them to scale.

One lesson became fully clear along the way: dialogue is no longer enough. What's needed now is an

operational phase, focused on implementation rather than further discussion. A permanent roundtable remains valuable, but it needs a concrete plan for execution - and fast.

The foundations for this next phase are already in place. During Life BE FREE's lifetime, two organisations emerged to carry the approach forward: the **Belgian Green Building Council (BGBC)** and the **Belgian Energy Efficiency Financial Coalition (BEEFiC)**, neither of which existed when the project started. Both became involved in the roundtables at an early stage, allowing them to further develop the project's approach. By anchoring the continuation of Life BE FREE within BGBC and BEEFiC, the quadruple-helix collaboration built through the project is not only preserved, but given a platform to develop further beyond the project period. They will build on Life BE FREE's network of stakeholders, data and solutions to help decarbonise Belgium's building sector on the path to 2030 and 2050.

The continued involvement of the original consortium partners ensures that the expertise, stakeholder relationships and lessons learned through Life BE FREE remain available after the formal end of the project. It also provides continuity for stakeholders and strengthens the long-term sustainability of the network and its objectives. By maintaining an active presence within BGBC and BEEFiC, the **consortium partners**

will continue to support the acceleration of building renovation and the decarbonisation of the Belgian building stock.

The project's impact also reaches beyond its own structure. New collaborations have emerged that aren't formally tied to Life BE FREE, but grew out of connections between sectors that don't typically work together. This proves that the roundtable model is not just producing policy briefs, but **reshaping how the field works together.**

Life BE FREE v1.0

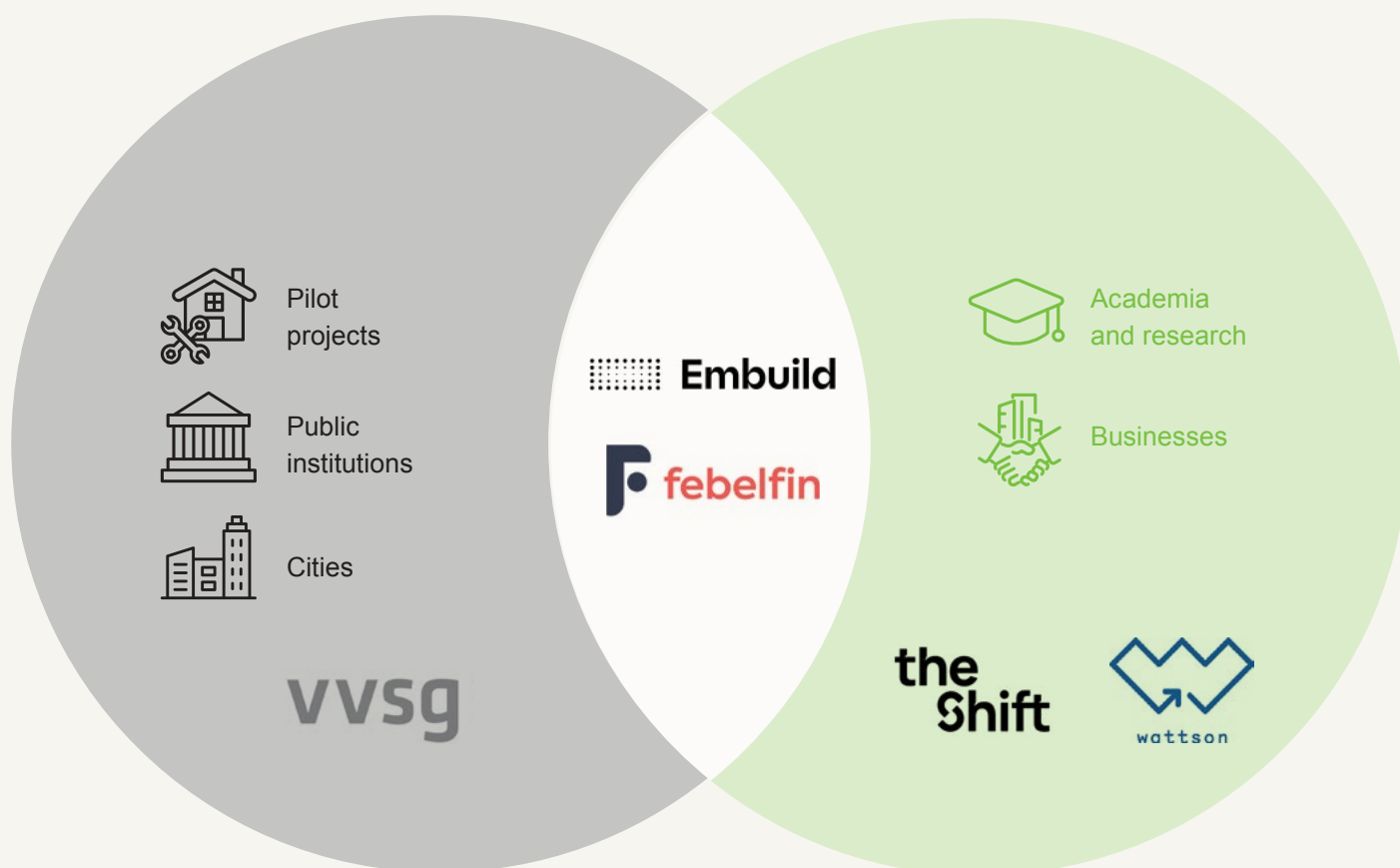
Life BE FREE v2.0

This figure provides an overview of how the original Life BE FREE partners are embedded within BGBC and BEEFiC and the broader networks of EEFiCs and GBCs, ensuring continuity of expertise, networks and activities beyond the lifetime of the project.





BEEFiC
Belgian Energy Efficiency Financing Coalition



EEFiCs $\longleftrightarrow$ GBCs



Life BE FREE (Belgian Financing Roundtables on Energy Efficiency) brought together stakeholders from across Belgium to explore financing solutions for energy-efficient building renovation. Through national and thematic roundtables, the project enabled cross-sector dialogue, identified key obstacles such as fragmented governance and coordination challenges, and strengthened collaboration. The report highlights the need to move from dialogue to concrete action, with clear ownership, resources and scalable initiatives to accelerate renovation and support a fair and inclusive energy transition.



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