

nearly
zero energy
buildings

OPEN DOORS DAYS

NEARLY ZERO ENERGY BUILDINGS OPEN DOORS

Visit today the buildings of tomorrow



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25,870 visitors got hands on
information on nearly zero energy
buildings during two campaigns in 2013
and 2014

I. INTRODUCTION

Dear reader,

In the next pages you will get to know everything about the Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB) Open Doors Campaigns: the concept of the campaigns, the communication strategies and activities and the impressive results.

The objective of the NZEB Open Doors Days campaign is to give hands-on-experience of nearly zero energy buildings or existing low-energy label buildings to the broad public and public authorities in order to show that the new NZEB regulations resulting from European Energy Performance Directive (EPBD), though challenging, can be met. During campaign events both members of the public and building professionals are given the opportunity to visit new and refurbished houses and public buildings, highlighting nearly zero energy standards. Owners of NZEB buildings are similarly given the opportunity to explain what inspired them to build to an NZEB standard and to outline the issues that arose during the planning and construction phases of their project. They are every often very enthusiastic speakers that are happy to share their experiences with others.

Those who are planning to build or refurbish their dream home or public building are given a unique chance to visit exemplary buildings, talk to the house/building owner and get to hear first hand experiences of designing and building low energy buildings. No sales talk, but real experiences on low energy building in practice.

In this brochure you don't only read about the practical organization of the campaigns and the results, but you also get a feel of the experiences of the exhibitors and visitors.

We hope this brochure gives you inspiration to promote nearly zero energy buildings by peer to peer experience exchanges in your country. A full campaign manual is available on www.nzebopendoorsdays.eu.

Benjamin Clarysse

NZEB2021 coordinator

Bond Beter Leefmilieu



"Congratulations for the organisation of the open doors days. Nothing better than meeting people already living in a low energy house to really understand all the aspects."

Family Hallet, Wallonia, Belgium

II. NZEB OPEN DOORS DAYS IN A NUTSHELL

Many have heard about nearly zero energy houses or the benefits of saving energy by renovating to high performance standards. There is a lot of technical and commercial information available. But on the other hand the wide range of technical solutions make it difficult to choose the right option. High upfront investment costs scare potential builders and renovators. And the successful forerunners are not visible enough.

That is why NZEB European Open Doors Days were organized in Belgium, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Ireland, Hungary, France, Malta, Slovenia and Poland

“We see NZEB Open Doors as an important means of spreading the word about the NZEB standard”

Official from Building Standards, Dept of Environment, Ireland

“We understood that innovative construction processes are initially more expensive. But we have clear signs that Nearly Zero Energy Buildings provide a better thermal comfort and living standard that leads to the satisfaction our clients”

Construction company EVG3D, commercial exhibitor, Malta

in 2013 and 2014 with support of the European Commission. The campaign was based on a Belgian initiative called “Ecobouwers Opendeur” that has been running since 1998.

During the events both public and private actors could visit new and refurbished houses and public buildings, highlighting nearly zero energy standards. In all communication towards the different actors, the European challenge was emphasized by many inspiring examples of NZEB's from the different participating regions. A strong visual eye-catcher were the mini-documentaries showing energy efficient solutions from all over Europe and at the same time



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visualizing the common European goal of the EPBD

The aim was to inspire homeowners to build and renovate their houses to a high energy standard and in a sustainable way. The Open Doors Days gave a human touch to a technical topic. The method of the Doors Open Days is a low barrier method: exhibitors share the experience of living in an NZEB, in the stimulating surrounding of an NZEB where every visitor gets a warm welcome. The project partners reached a high number of potential builders and public authorities, due to this attractive low barrier method and due to the communication channels through regional and national stakeholders. These stakeholders turned out to be a success factor for the project. They disseminated the call for NZEB owners and announced the Door Open Days event itself.

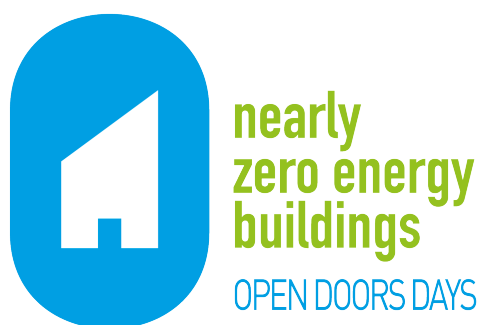
Neutral information about building an NZEB was distributed, together with experiences on the building process, practical information about building professionals, do's and don'ts of any kind related to NZEB's. And all this information was given in a special surrounding: the NZEB of the exhibitor, where everybody could see all building details and could check every given information immediately with his or her own eyes. This is strong and very stimulating information.

**1,440 buildings where exhibited:
1,200 private houses and 240
public buildings**

During the campaigns in the ten countries, 1,440 state of the art exemplary buildings opened their doors to visitors and all together, 25,870 visitors got hands-on-experience of nearly zero energy buildings by sharing the living, working and building experiences of the owners and builders. 79,5% of the visitors were convinced after the visit and considered building to NZEB standards themselves. If 70% of them chooses for a thorough renovation, we estimate a carbon emission reduction of 46,800 ton and an energy saving of 217,120 MWh.

“Openness, honesty and practical answers from exhibitors are reasons that make this campaign so special.”

Visitor of the Open Doors Days, Slovenia





III. WHAT IS AN NZEB OPEN DOORS CAMPAIGN?

Basic set-up of the campaign

Most Open Doors campaigns were set up in November coinciding with the International Passive House Days taking place on the second weekend of November. Some events cooperated with other related events like building fairs or energy days. Private houses were mostly exhibited during two weekends and public buildings on weekdays. Depending on the partner, in some countries the campaign ran nationally, in others like Germany and Sweden it was carried out on a regional level. In the bigger countries it turned out that a more local communication approach worked better because of the large distances between the exhibited buildings.

“I really liked the professional explanations of the exhibitors and their kindness.”

Visitor, Budapest, Hungary

National NZEB definitions were not available in every country yet at the time of the project period. So the technical standards of the exhibited buildings to be exhibited were developed in line with the current definitions or definitions in progress while aiming at an ambitious energy performance level. The campaigns were addressing all categories of NZEB buildings: existing or renovated buildings, building units or elements with a high energy performance, building systems or technologies that achieve high levels of energy performance.

Coalitions of partners and stakeholders

The campaigns were supported by regional and national stakeholders who helped with communicating about the campaign: passive house associations, building professionals with expertise in NZEBs including planners, contractors, building companies and energy advisors, but also public authorities and

media partners like building magazines and websites, newspapers, radio stations...

Offering free publicity in the campaigns to building companies proved to be a strong motivator for them to convince their clients to participate, thus attracting extra exhibitors. Public authorities were often very well aware of the NZEBs on their territory and they could provide valuable communication channels to the broad public.

Call for exhibitors

Owners of exemplary low energy buildings were invited to participate in the NZEB Open Doors campaigns. The call for exhibitors is a short text outlining the purpose and time period of the campaign, the type and technical minimum requirements of exhibitor buildings, the time and effort required from the exhibitors, the privacy protection and confidentiality offered to the private house owners, the possible remuneration fee or gift for the exhibitors. The call was sent out by the project partners, but also by their coalitions of stakeholders. In practice many exhibitors were recruited by personal contacts of the partner or stakeholder as well. A quick phone call explaining the campaign and asking for help was often the best way to convince new volunteers to participate and open their doors.



Campaign website

During the NZB2021 project, the partners developed a website available in 9 languages (EN, DE, BE, FR, HU, SE, PL, SI) containing the following information:

- Practical information on the campaign, FAQs, technical information on NZEBs and low energy building renovations, online registration of buildings, online visitors subscriptions as well as descriptions and pictures of the buildings open to the visit.
- The buildings database includes technical information on all buildings (insulation, heating system, renewable energy...), contact information, energy use, costs, building partners and opening dates and times during the campaign.
- An independent non-commercial database of building companies is interlinked with the building database. This company database includes contact information, company profile and links to the buildings that are participating in the 'Doors Open Days' campaign. Building companies are automatically ranked according to the number of buildings participating in the campaign.
- Webforum and Building blogs
- Inspiring examples and mini-documentaries of NZEBs throughout Europe

Communication of the event

A wide range of communication materials were used to make the event known:

- Flyers
- Posters
- Campaign brochures with interviews of building owners interviews, technical articles, an overview of the exhibited buildings, interviews with architects, regional or national politicians or opinion makers
- Ready to use presentations or text for websites and agendas, Facebook, Twitter, enabling partners and exhibitors to promote the campaign.
- Press releases, press articles and radio broadcasts presenting the concept of the event and information on the registration and programme. Local press was an important dissemination source. A home visit with an

interview of the house owner proved to be a very interesting topic for local media.

Exhibitor support

During the project, most of the individual open doors events were hosted by the exhibitors themselves, sometimes accompanied by their architect or the construction company representative. The exhibitors could choose the number of sessions they wished to host, the date and time and the number of visitors they wished to welcome per session. Because all visitors were invited at a fixed time, the exhibitor could offer the guests a personal welcome and could get a comforting overview of the group at all times. This particular approach offered the exhibitor a high degree of control of the time and effort needed.

"You are doing great. Without your initiative we would never have been building an ecological house. Many thanks." Stefan Vanstraelen, Flanders, Belgium

Subscription to the 'Doors Open Days' events was free but mandatory. The subscription allowed visits to be arranged for small defined groups. For private houses, it enabled address details to be withheld except to visitors: the location address was only communicated by e-mail one week beforehand to those who subscribed.

The exhibitors were supported and given tools to help them with the guided tour of their house.

- **A Tips and tricks document** including a guideline on how to give a good presentation of the building process and a tour around the house.
- **A Communication kit:** flyers, posters, brochures, building technical sheets, and in some cases sponsors documentation. The flyers were used by the exhibitors to promote the events locally in their area. The poster with date/time and contact for registration was put in nearby shops or in the city hall. They were also useful as a direction to the open house on the day of the event. Brochures or magazines were distributed to the visitors on the spot. Building technical sheets are a very

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useful item for the visitors as they can leave the house with a memo containing technical references and building costs related to the visited.

- **Shoe protection** to ensure the house stays clean during the visit.

An email and telephone hotline during the campaign was set up to address all questions and needs from the start of the subscriptions to the end of the 'Doors Open Days'. The tasks of the helpdesk included:

- Management of the subscriptions with cancellations or changes of exhibitors and visitors
- Helping lost visitors seeking direction to exhibited building
- Website helpdesk
- Giving information to the press on the campaign or on specific exhibitors
- Technical backup for the website

"I loved the possibility of exchanging the views with the investor, architect and other visitors. Very inspirational!"

Visitor in Gdansk, Poland



IV. RESULTS OF THE OPEN DOORS DAYS CAMPAIGNS

- Open Doors Days events were organized in 10 countries in 2013 and 2014
- 1,440 buildings were exhibited: 1,200 private houses and 240 public buildings
- 25,870 visitors were welcomed: 11,476 visitors to private houses and 4,394 visitors to public buildings
- 92,5% of the visitors were pleased with information heard
- 76,5% of the visitors said they would implement good practices and build to NZEB standards themselves by 2020
- 1,137,000 national campaign brochures were distributed to draw visitors to the open doors events
- 6,900 EU brochures were published, showing how public authorities can stimulate people to build to NZEB standards
- 4,260,000 people visited the campaign websites
- The Open Doors Days campaign appeared 899 times in press articles, TV, Radio and websites
- 82 national partners and stakeholders helped to

"The visit gave me the opportunity to talk about actual results with owners, after some years of use."

Visitor, Annecy, France

make the campaigns a success

- 731 websites linked to one of the national Doors Open Days websites
- 10 mini-documentaries have been published, 6.603 view counts in total
- 39 opinion makers from Malta, Hungary, Poland, France and Slovenia took part in a international study visit. They disseminated their experiences in their home region.
- The project partners presented the open doors days campaign 59 times at national or regional fora
- The NZB2021 project was presented at the European Sustainable Energy Week plenary session in 2014.
- By 2020 the project will achieve a CO2 reduction of 46,800 ton and a primary energy saving of 217,120 MWh



Estimated carbon emission reduction and energy savings of the project

The campaign reached 21,476 visitors for the private houses. 76,5% said they would implement good practices and build to NZEB standards themselves by 2020. This means that 16,429 low energy building projects can be realized after the project period. The biggest energy savings and CO2 savings come from thorough renovations, while newly built low energy houses or NZB will slightly increase the used energy and CO2-emissions. If 70% chooses for a thorough renovation (with estimated energy savings of 70% and a decrease of CO2-emissions with 70%), we estimate a carbon emission reduction of 46,800 ton and an energy saving of 217,120 MWh by 2020.

92,5% of the visitors were pleased with the information heard. 76,5% of the visitors said they would implement good practices and build to NZEB standards themselves by 2020

NZEB Open Doors Days are replicable

In May 2013, almost a year after the start of the project, the Wallonian environmental NGO joined the Doors Open Days campaign in Belgium. They were trained by BBL and helped with the start up of their first event in November. Although they had only six months of preparation time, they managed to get the support of the Wallonian Passive House Association and to secure financial contributions from the Wallonian Regional Government and the Brussels Regional Government. In Brussels a bilingual open doors campaign was carried out together with BBL. The achievements of this ambitious organisation are impressive: in 2013 138 private house owners took part and 2840 visitors were welcomed. In 2014 125 Wallonian and Brussels houses were shown to 1831 visitors. 92% of the visitors were pleased with the information heard and 75% of the visitors stated they would implement NZEB building practices themselves. 157,000 campaign brochures were distributed in Wallonia and 80,000 in Brussels. The performance of écoconso proves that the concept of the NZEB open doors days is replicable in other European regions and that it is possible to find sufficient financing for this initiative.

NZEB Open Doors Days are attractive to public authorities and enterprises

Energy Action has an ambition to continue with the Irish NZEB Open Doors campaign after the end of the NZEB2021 project. Energy Action has contacted key stakeholders at Government level and presented an NZEB Open Doors funding proposal to the Building Standards section of the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government in March 2015. The Building Standards section supported the proposal and have since placed it on the agenda on the national EPBD Recast Implementation Group who, in turn, referred it to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). SEAI has given a positive response to the funding proposal and has committed to issuing a formal reply by the end of May 2015. Both DECLG and SEAI have stated a three programme for the continuation of NZEB Open Doors would be optimum in order to meet the needs of the NZEB promotional objectives of the EPBD Recast. Commercial sponsors have also been sounded out for additional support and again the indications are very positive.

NZEB Open Doors Days create an online buzz

After the 2013 campaign in Hungary a new media approach was initiated to help boost the number of visitors and people interested in NZEBs. Besides the already well functioning communication channels a greater emphasis was put on Facebook, so GreenDependent spent some advertising money on spreading the Hungarian NZEB Facebook site (www.facebook.com/hatekonyhaznapok). Within a very short period GreenDependent gained more than 2500 followers, which has then gradually increased to 2800. It became a great success and as they posted news items related to the 2014 autumn campaign and energy efficient building quite frequently they were reaching several hundreds of people with them in average. The real success is however that after the campaign finished they can still make good use of these contacts by posting 1 or 2 items each week keeping their followers busy until the next campaign. To GreenDependent's surprise some of their posts still reach more than 2000 people in the group and they hardly had anyone unsubscribing.

V. COLLABORATION IS THE RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

The hundreds of volunteers that opened up their houses were the backbone of the project. The exhibitors gave a warm welcome and took the time to explain and answer questions. They showed their enthusiasm, their motivation and they inspired many visitors to follow their footsteps. More than 90% of the visitors were pleased with the information heard. Without such driven volunteers, we would never have achieved such a success.

The open doors campaigns also relied in great part on the involvement of the numerous stakeholders supporting the project. These stakeholders were invaluable in getting into contact with potential exhibitors. Via their networks we were able to reach out to the right people. But in many cases we also found good communication partners that could bring out the message of the open doors days to the target groups that are interested in the subject of NZEBs or building/renovating in general.

In many countries the passive house associations turned out to be very eager to cooperate with us. Sometimes because they lacked the capacity themselves to organize a full scale open doors event, sometimes because they realized that by joining forces, both organizations would gain.

Secondly building professionals with expertise in NZEBs benefited from supporting the campaign. And many of them also helped us sending out the call for exhibitors or communicating about the event.

Public authorities were both target group and key actors. In most partner countries the collaboration with public authorities ran very smoothly and they were eager to help communicating. Also as a target group, the reactions were enthusiastic.

"The opportunity to share the knowledge I have gained in my building, both regarding ecological building methods and PV is most appreciated by me and my family. I hope we can repeat this a third time 2015."

Peter Elmberg, exhibitor of the MundeKulla Hotel, Emmaboda, Sweden

Want to join?

**Interested in running an open doors campaign?
Contact coordinator Bond Beter Leefmilieu or one of the partners.**

VI. PARTNERS

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