

Executive Summary

Building structure in France and Germany

France and Germany differ in terms of ownership structure and the ability to renovate buildings. While in Germany the share of rented dwellings and buildings constructed after the Second World War in the 1950s and 1960s is higher, in France there are more owner-occupied single-family houses built before the Second World War. This is relevant to the renovation strategy. Available but classified figures currently suggest higher refurbishment rates in France than in Germany. The questions as to the depth and quality of those refurbishments and the figure stating reduced emissions remain open. However, it appears that neither country has yet achieved its building renovation targets.

Energy and heat generation

Different paths have also been taken for the decarbonisation of heat generation. In France, electricity accounts for a much higher proportion of building heating. This has a negative impact on the primary energy balance, but due to the high proportion of nuclear generation, it has a positive effect on CO₂ emissions. However, nuclear-generated electricity is not considered renewable. Both countries are in the need to develop strategies for decarbonisation or renewable heat generation, especially for existing buildings.

Commitments and targets for climate protection and energy system transformation

In the context of the EU energy and climate policy framework, Germany and France are striving for similarly ambitious transformation paths in the sense of a far-reaching decarbonization of their economies by 2050. By 2050, both France and Germany want to achieve a climate-neutral (France) or almost climate-neutral (Germany) building stock and are planning corresponding milestones in the medium term. Both countries are responding to the challenge of accelerated and more comprehensive energy-efficient renovation of existing buildings with ambitious strategies and targets. In France, concrete targets for energy-efficient refurbishment partly find a stronger integration in the law or are linked to corresponding obligations. Furthermore, in France the reduction of energy poverty is also given greater consideration in the renovation targets. Both countries still need to take action to achieve the energy and climate targets in the building sector.

Regulatory framework

The strategies of both countries to demand efficiency measures through regulatory requirements differ with the focus on new and existing buildings. While France's Energy Transformation Act (Loi relative à la transition énergétique pour la croissance verte) already calls for interventions in existing buildings to improve efficiency, Germany is focusing more on voluntary measures in existing buildings and on heat generation from renewable energies for new buildings. In France, on the other hand, there are plans to refurbish all private residential buildings with an annual primary energy consumption of over 330 kWh/m²a by 2025. Although the calculation methods for the energy evaluation of buildings are different, they are within

the framework of the requirements of the European Performance of Building Directive (EPBD) as a common basis. Both countries have also pushed ahead with the qualification of building experts and publish lists of certified experts. In addition, both sides have additional voluntary efficiency labels for new and existing buildings, some of which are also promoted.

Instruments for stimulating energy-efficient building refurbishment

Germany and France are meeting the ambitious targets for energy-efficient buildings with differentiated subsidy programmes. Despite their wide range of subsidy instruments, however, both countries fall short of their targets (annual renovation rate of 2 percent). There are differences between the subsidy strategies: in Germany, subsidies are granted irrespective of income, and the amount of subsidy is generally based on the impact of the measures taken. In Germany, for example, many funds provided by KfW Bankengruppe (KfW) and in some cases also regional promotional funds are tied to the achievement of a standard (KfW Efficiency House New and Existing). In France, the social aspect is given greater consideration, e.g. by making many grants dependent on income and by targeting individual promotional offers specifically at low-income households. By contrast, the achievement of a certain efficiency standard is not universally specified as a condition of promotion.

Efficiency measures in the building sector are also promoted in France with a tax credit, which is widely used. In addition, France uses the instrument of energy-saving certificates as a further incentive system and as an important source of income to finance subsidy structures for energy-saving renovations. Such a market instrument has not existed in Germany to date, but it will probably be introduced via the new climate protection law.