

# Czech Construction Forum 2009: the state doesn't help builders too much

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“Public administration pays no attention to sustainable construction, which is today’s priority in Czech and global construction,” said Václav Matyáš, President of the Association of Building Entrepreneurs, in his speech at the conference Czech Construction Forum 2009. According to him, the domestic executive branch does not do much to minimize the impact of the current “deep crisis” on the construction sector. So far the Association has not been successful with many proposals submitted to the government, e.g. a short-term decrease of the VAT rate for housing construction or VAT payments on the basis of paid, not issued invoices.

The conference showed that while the Czech construction sector has not started to accommodate the imperative of low-energy buildings too much yet, it is facing a new task right now, at least theoretically: sustainable construction. However, this term is not identical with green architecture or environmental and energy-saving construction. According to G. Hauser, of the German Fraunhofer-Institut für Bauphysik, this trend of method of construction takes into account a larger range of factors and construction criteria: environment, economy (competitiveness), socio-cultural aspects (building operation), level of technology, construction process (planning, management) and location. In Germany they are already thinking about sustainable construction certificates. The current situation in the Czech Republic is not, however, ideal in this regard. Public administration, whose active approach in the field is generally considered a necessity, as well as construction firms themselves feel the need for change only to a limited extent. According to a survey by Incoma Research, 53% of Czech builders consider low-energy houses a transient fashion and only 28% of them follow global trends. The poll also shows, however, that the builders mostly see the investor as the person responsible for the character of construction. Yet it is sustainable or environmental construction that gives a chance to Czech construction today to balance the drop in demand among private investors. This is especially true for thermal insulation, for which the state earmarked CZK 4.1 billion today - according to Milan Machatka, of Stomix, 113 million square metres of external walls on prefabricated and brick houses are waiting for thermal insulation in the Czech Republic.

The frequently criticized Ministry should have been represented by Rut Bízková, Secretary to the Environmental Minister, at the conference. However, she apologized for her lack of time and her speech - a standard summary of “environmental” subsidies - was made by an alternative, who did not even wait for the discussion for lack of time. “The conduct of public officials didn’t disappoint me. They exhibit a total lack of understanding of the issues we’re talking about here,” Matyáš commented on the Ministry’s participation at the conference.

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