



GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF NEARLY ZERO-ENERGY BUILDINGS

CERTIFICATION SCHEME FOR UPSKILLING OF CONSTRUCTION TECHNICIANS IN BULGARIA

The certification course "Basic principles of nZEB", developed by EnEffect within the INSTRUCT project financed by the Horizon 2020 programme of the EU under Grant Agreement 894756, is targeted to professionals with qualification "Construction Technician" (EQF 3), but also applicable for other specialties at EQF 2-4.

The specialized training on energy efficiency for construction technicians offers several significant benefits, both for the technicians themselves and for the construction industry as a whole:

Enhanced Skills and Knowledge: Energy efficiency training equips construction technicians with up-to-date knowledge and techniques related to energy-efficient building practices. They learn about the latest technologies, materials, and methodologies that can significantly reduce energy consumption in buildings.

Improved Work Performance: With specialized training, construction technicians can apply energy-efficient practices effectively during construction and renovation projects. They can identify opportunities for energy savings, implement energy-efficient solutions, and ensure that buildings meet or exceed energy performance standards.

Reduced Energy Costs: Energy-efficient buildings consume less energy, leading to lower utility bills for building owners and occupants. Construction technicians who are trained in energy efficiency can contribute to building designs that optimize energy usage, resulting in long-term cost savings.

Environmental Benefits: Energy-efficient buildings contribute to a reduced carbon footprint and overall environmental impact. Trained construction technicians play a vital role in promoting sustainable construction practices that help combat climate change and conserve natural resources.

Compliance with Regulations: Many regions have building codes and regulations that mandate certain energy efficiency standards. Specialized training ensures that construction technicians are familiar with these requirements and can implement them appropriately, avoiding potential legal and financial consequences for non-compliance.

Career Advancement Opportunities: Technicians with expertise in energy efficiency are highly sought after in the construction industry. Employers value these skills, which can lead to increased job opportunities and potential for career advancement.

Market Demand: As awareness of environmental sustainability and energy efficiency grows, there is a rising demand for construction projects that prioritize energy efficiency. Trained technicians can position themselves to meet this demand and work on cutting-edge, eco-friendly projects.

Customer Satisfaction: Energy-efficient buildings are attractive to customers due to their reduced operating costs and improved comfort. Construction technicians trained in energy efficiency can deliver projects that meet clients' expectations and create more satisfied customers.

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Reputation and Competitiveness: Companies that prioritize energy efficiency and sustainability gain a positive reputation in the market. Construction firms with trained technicians can use their expertise to market themselves as leaders in eco-friendly construction, giving them a competitive edge.

Long-Term Sustainability: Energy efficiency is not just a passing trend; it is a crucial aspect of sustainable construction. By investing in specialized training for energy efficiency, construction technicians contribute to the long-term sustainability of the construction industry and the built environment.

The current training scheme **is accustomed to the requirement of the Bulgarian qualification framework**, developing the knowledge, skills and competences of building technicians graduated **before 2021**, which marks the introduction of **specialized units of learning outcomes related to energy efficiency in the state educational standards**. **It is also applicable to other specialists, and due to its modular structure, can also be adapted to the needs of recent graduates of professional high schools of construction and architecture.**

The course includes 10 modules that form an initial understanding of the basic principles of passive and near-zero energy building from a building physics perspective, enabled by design for optimal solar gains, with a focus on:

- 1) Location, orientation and shape
- 2) Thermal insulation
- 3) Windows and shading
- 4) Airtightness
- 5) Thermal bridges
- 6) Ventilation with heat recovery
- 7) Heating and cooling
- 8) Integration of renewable energy installations
- 9) Renovation of existing buildings
- 10) Economic viability.

The topics are underpinned by the following units of learning outcomes (ULOs), which are distributed in two levels: 1) ULOs, providing shared knowledge base related to the achievement of nZEBs for all professions within area of education "Architecture and construction" and professional direction 582 "Construction", and 2) specialized knowledge for the specific profession 582010 "Construction technician".



Topic	Authority and responsibility	Skills	Knowledge
Location, orientation and shape	- competence in building envelope installations (solar shading, ventilation system, window positioning)	- practical skills to explain effective design with respect to solar gains and use of shading devices	- knowledge of the impact of spatial orientation on building performance - knowledge of the influence of shape and compactness on building performance
	- competence in design of building envelope and passive solar systems with regards to choice of building elements and systems	- range of practical skills necessary to explain the importance of building envelope design and building systems	- theoretical knowledge of the impact of spatial orientation on building performance - theoretical knowledge of the influence of shape and compactness on building performance - theoretical knowledge of Heat Transfer – Principles of thermal conduction, convection and radiation and transfer of energy - theoretical knowledge of passive solar systems, building envelope and thermal mass and their effect on the energy performance
Thermal insulation	- responsibility and self-management in correct installation of insulation elements and systems - responsibility in (self) quality control	- practical skills related to types of insulation materials and building envelope systems - necessary for selecting and using methods, tools and materials for adequate installation of insulation - skills related to the issues of quality control process in detecting issues related to poor execution - practical skills related to potential construction mistakes and risks - practical skills related to cross- craft work	- Knowledge on the principle of the unbroken thermal envelope - knowledge on types of insulating materials- overview of available products and their properties - knowledge of the main physical properties of insulating materials - knowledge on elements comprising building envelope systems and their main properties - knowledge on importance of correct installation of insulation materials and risks related to it - knowledge of other related crafts to insulation installation

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- independence in executing installation of insulation materials for different building systems- coordination of works related to proper construction and installation of building systems with regards to building regulations and product guidelines- self- evaluation and consideration of other disciplines on site	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- practical skills necessary for recognition of individual building systems, related solutions and potential problematic areas- practical skills to providing solutions and fixing problems resulting from poor craftsmanship- practical skills required for seeking interdisciplinary solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- theoretical knowledge on the importance of insulation to health and safety in a building- theoretical knowledge on the principle of the unbroken thermal envelope; relevance of diffusion-impermeable and diffusion-permeable solutions with regards to external and internal insulation- theoretical knowledge on types of insulating materials- overview of available products and their advantages and disadvantages- theoretical knowledge of the main physical properties of insulating materials including hydro and thermal performance and fire resistance- theoretical knowledge on elements comprising building envelope systems and their main properties such as u- value, fire resistance, acoustics- theoretical knowledge on different practices and methods for correct installation of insulation materials- theoretical knowledge on typical mistakes in insulation installation and resulting construction risks- theoretical knowledge on performing quality assurance for thermal insulation installation- theoretical knowledge on interdisciplinary work
Windows and shading		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- practical skills required to correctly install windows in the building facade without disrupting the principle of unbroken thermal envelope- practical skills necessary for distinguishing different types of windows with regards to their performance and position in the building facade- practical skills required to apply appropriate methods and materials for airtightness during window installation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- knowledge on main characteristics of glazing and windows- knowledge on variety of window systems and their importance to building energy performance through correct installation- knowledge on shading possibilities, importance and concepts



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - taking responsibility for drawing details for optimized window features - incl. reduction of thermal bridges, optimization of vapor flow, waterproofing and others - Taking responsibility for the correct selection of the windows, recognition of the parameters of the selected products (U-values, g-values etc.), as well as the correct installation of the systems - Taking responsibility for the correct selection of high-quality shading devices, selection according to required parameters, recognizing the correct shading devices in suitable exposures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - practical skills required to ensuring continuity with the insulation layer by install windows in the correct position in the thermal envelope - practical skills to achieve proper connection between the windows and doors to the airtight and windtight layers. <i>Practical skills</i> in recognition different types of airtight and windtight layers and adapting to the suitable sealing systems and <i>practical skills</i> in micro adjustment of windows during airtight test in order to reduce air leakage - practical skills to ensure an optimal flow of solar energy to the premises, taking into account summer and winter mode, window sizes, orientation and installation method - practical skills in recognizing the different types of shading devices and their best application in terms of building orientations - practical skills required for adjustment external shading devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - specific knowledge on the physical characteristics and performance of windows with regards to energy efficiency and comfort in buildings - specific knowledge on the general requirements for windows relevant for ensuring energy efficiency and comfort such as airtight construction, solar gain parameters, visual comfort and orientation, ventilation possibilities - knowledge on existing digital tools and methods for evaluating and designing
Airtightness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - competence in specifying steps and procedures related to airtightness - competence and responsibility in tasks for correct installation of airtight layers including correct installation and ensuring continuity in the building envelope - competence in choice of materials and performance of the individual layers within the building envelope - responsibility in detecting flaw in execution of the airtight layer of the building, communicating the issues and proposing alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - theoretical skills necessary for explaining the underlying differences between airtightness, windtightness and vapor control - theoretical skills necessary to distinguish between the different properties of the airtight layer - practical skills required to explain the test procedures for airtightness in a building - practical skills necessary to ensure a continuous airtight layer by sealing building envelope penetrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - general knowledge on the concept of airtightness and its impact on the performance of the building - general knowledge on the concepts of vapor control and their effect on the performance of the building - general knowledge on the performance, difference and physical properties of airtight layer, vapor control layer and wind barrier - knowledge on the importance of a continuous airtight layer and associated installation methods - knowledge on the connection between airtight layer, vapour control layer, wind barrier and ventilation of the building



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge on importance of vapour control layer related to physics of condensation, mould formation and the reasons for occurrence and the solutions to it
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - theoretical knowledge on key physical properties of airtight layer and relationship between other layers in the building envelope - theoretical knowledge on physical performance of the airtight layer with regards to pressure, temperature, relative humidity - specialized knowledge on the correct installation of the vapor control layer within the building structure - theoretical knowledge on the impact of occurring condensation on health and comfort and resulting damage to the building skin and structure - specialized knowledge on the various materials and their physical ability to absorb, diffuse and retain moisture - specialized knowledge on constructing a wall with inner insulation, related condensation risks and solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - range of practical skills necessary for an execution strategy involving choice of materials, correct application of airtight layers and use of tools - practical skills required to identify air leaks through the building envelope using alternative methods for detecting practical skills required to apply variety of materials and methods necessary for achieving high level airtightness at problematic areas in the building envelope - practical skills necessary for the explanation of physical values connected to airtightness ($n_{50} < 1.0$ ac/hr) - practical and communication skills necessary for communicating issues related to airtightness on the building site with other crafts - practical skills for differentiating between performance properties of various vapor control layers - practical skills required to detecting potential problematic areas and surfaces within the building envelope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - competence and autonomy in processes related to airtightness and performing tests - autonomy in correct installation of vapor control layer with regards to permeability and diffusion properties of the layer - responsibility in observing the correct application of materials and workflow and autonomy in using various tools and methods for detecting and preventing air leaks - autonomy in coordination with other crafts on the building site
Thermal bridges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - responsibility in recognizing potential risk of thermal bridge and undertaking necessary actions for avoiding it - responsibility in using the correct materials and methods for minimisation of thermal bridges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - practical skills required for distinguishing between different types of thermal bridges and reason for their occurrence - practical skills necessary for dealing with minimisation and prevention of thermal bridges including correct use of materials, tools and methods - practical skills required to correct installation of products for prevention and minimisation of thermal bridges in building construction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - knowledge on thermal bridges and causes (heat transfer and loss) - knowledge on damage occurring from thermal bridges and impact on the building performance. - general knowledge of solutions to thermal bridges- prevention and minimisation - knowledge on other relevant building processes for thermal bridges
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - autonomy in recognizing thermal bridges in drawings and offered construction methods - responsibility in observing the correct application of materials and workflow and autonomy in using 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - practical skills in detecting critical points in the building envelope with regards to the appearance of thermal bridges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - deeper knowledge on the causes for thermal bridges- typical areas where they occur in a building and common reasons

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	<p>various tools and methods for detecting and preventing air leaks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - responsibility in coordinating and communicating potential risks for constructing a thermal bridge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ability in analysing and evaluating the presence of thermal bridges and the potential condensation risk - practical skills in solving thermal bridge by minimising heat loss through surfaces - practical skills in communicating thermal bridge related issues on the building site with the other crafts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - theoretical knowledge on the surface temperatures at thermal bridges due to heat loss and resulting damage to the building performance - theoretical knowledge on moisture building and potential health issues related to the existence of thermal bridges - specialized knowledge on solutions for preventing and minimising thermal bridges - specialized knowledge on avoiding thermal bridges around windows, balconies and other building envelope elements
<p>Ventilation with heat recovery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - responsibility for ensuring the ventilation systems remain clean prior to commissioning. - responsibility for maintaining the systems in their entirety after installation, before applying finishing coatings. - responsibility for executing airtight penetrations of systems through the building envelope. - responsibility not to cover inspection openings, control systems or maintenance systems. - ability to read drawings and digital models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cognitive and practical skills needed to create a schematic layout of essential components in a residential MVHR system. - cognitive and practical skills needed to strategically route ducts throughout the project, avoiding excessive pressure losses that could lead to higher fan energy consumption and potential noise concerns due to increased turbulence. - cognitive and practical skills required to identify heating and ventilation systems and understand factors that could impact the installation's integrity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - general knowledge on facts, principles, processes, and general concepts regarding the advantages of incorporating a controlled ventilation system in a DER. - general knowledge on facts, principles, processes, and general concepts related to heat recovery from exhaust air and tempering fresh air. - general knowledge on facts, principles, processes, and general concepts concerning the use of MVHR in DER, including noise levels, electrical energy requirements for fans, and its impact on reducing heating and/or cooling demand. - general knowledge on facts, principles, processes, and general concepts surrounding the two most common ducting arrangements used in residential ventilation systems (trunk-and-branch and octopus) and their impact on the need for sound attenuators. - general knowledge on facts, principles, processes, and general concepts regarding the preferred duct types to ensure smooth airflow and avoid sagging or kinking. - general knowledge on key components such as heat exchanger, ducting, filters, supply and exhaust registers, condensate drain and post heater - general knowledge on various tools and digital applications for the design of building ventilation systems

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<p>Heating and cooling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - responsibility to avoid interfering with existing heating and cooling systems. - responsibility not to obstruct inspection openings, control, or maintenance systems. - responsibility to protect the filters hygienically before commissioning the system, safeguarding them from potential contaminants and moisture/humidity. - responsibility for completion of tasks related to ensuring that the duct network can be easily cleaned in the future should the need arise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cognitive and practical skills required to identify heating and ventilation systems and potential threats to the installation's integrity. - cognitive and practical skills required to coordinate the installation process encompassing heating and cooling systems. <p>cognitive and practical skills required for effectively insulating the two air ducts connecting to the exterior through the thermal envelope to minimize any negative impact of thermal bridging.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - knowledge on fundamental facts, principles, processes, and general concepts regarding water systems in heating and cooling. - knowledge on basic facts, principles, processes, and general concepts concerning refrigerant-driven systems in heating and cooling, including highly efficient heat pump installations, VRV/VRF, and other similar systems. - knowledge on highly efficient heating and cooling systems, their primary components, and underlying principles.
<p>Integration of renewable energy installations</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cognitive skills to describe the impact of the building envelope on the potential utilization of renewable energy sources (RES). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - general knowledge on available renewable and eco-friendly energy sources. - knowledge on potential integration of renewable energy technologies into buildings. - general knowledge on existing HVAC technologies utilizing renewable energy sources. - general knowledge on drawing requirements for building equipment incorporating renewable sources. - general knowledge on short-term energy storage systems. - general knowledge on long-term energy storage solutions. - general knowledge on how building construction impacts the efficiency of various solar installations. - general knowledge of sound propagation and noise emission from different renewable energy installations, and the influence of building cladding and insulation on sound transmission.
<p>Renovation of existing buildings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - responsibility to install and utilize appropriate materials and products for SBS DER, ensuring proper thermal insulation and airtightness without compromising the measures at different stages. - responsibility for ensuring the airtightness during the implementation of different steps and measures. - responsibility for creating conditions to facilitate the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cognitive skills required to articulate the benefits and unique obstacles associated with step-by-step refurbishment. - cognitive skills to recognize opportunities for energy savings. - cognitive and practical skills in comprehending and elucidating the common challenges faced in existing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - knowledge on potential for energy savings in reference to the national and international (e.g. EnerPHit) renovation standards. - knowledge on reference levels of thermal protection for all measures / building components. - knowledge on impact of the existing constructive system on the building renovation opportunities. - knowledge on economic efficiency of the different

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	proper functioning of the building's heating and ventilation systems.	buildings when aiming for ambitious energy standards.	steps. - knowledge on integration of RES installations, storage systems and building automation. - knowledge on advantages of renovating existing buildings using nZEB suitable components with reference to the specific problems of old buildings.
	- self-management and/or management and supervision within the identification of the necessary DER steps in drawings and buildings and estimation of their suitability / economic efficiency / comfort benefits and impact. - responsibility for communicating the project proposal, the connections between the different measures and steps and the time schedule to the different specialities / stakeholders.	- range of cognitive and practical skills required to carefully assess the on-site implementation of DER steps and RES integration.	- knowledge on the basis of decision-making. - knowledge on assessment on a case by case basis: tools and instruments. - knowledge on added cost of DER (based on the different steps and their sequence). - knowledge on Step-by-step retrofit plans. - knowledge on details and products suitable for SBS DER (at the forefront of knowledge).
Economic viability	- Ability to comprehend and analyse economic viability assessments with accountability.	- Skill to define economic viability. - Skill to comprehend the outcomes of economic viability assessments.	- Knowledge on definition of economic viability. - Knowledge on existing methods to assess economic viability of renovation project.
	- Ability to accurately interpret the budget while considering economic viability. - Ability to select building materials with optimal economic viability. - Ability to execute recommended cost-effective measures.	- cognitive skills to define economic viability. - cognitive and practical skills to comprehend the results of economic viability assessment.	- Knowledge of economic viability definition. - Specialised knowledge on existing methods to assess economic viability of renovation project. - Specialised knowledge in LCA (Life Cycle Assessment) principles.



Target group

Qualified specialists under specialty 582010 "Construction technician" from the area of education "Architecture and construction" and professional direction 582 "Construction", considering the following occupational profiles:

3112-3004 Technician, civil construction (constructor);

3112-3007 Technician, Investor Control;

3112-3009 Technician, construction and architecture;

3112-3010 Construction technician, design and technical department;

3123-3001 Technical supervisor construction;

Graduate profile

The graduate is a qualified professional graduated from the professional high schools of architecture and civil engineering in Bulgaria with professional diploma under specialisation "Construction technician" corresponding to EQF level 3 or above. The training course is also suitable for students or graduates from the „Construction of Buildings and Facilities" specialty in the universities of architecture and civil engineering, as well as for students in other specialties in the professional areas of Architecture and Civil Engineering.

The graduate is capable of independent work and has the required knowledge and skills to oversee the implementation of the construction activities following the working design documentation. He/she has enough knowledge and comprehension of reading technical documentations and construction details. He/she is responsible for designing workflows for the manufacture, assembly, disassembly and repair of building envelope components. He/she is able to apply acquired knowledge and practical skills in problem solving, he can work independently or in a team. He/she has is manually skilled in working with both traditional building materials and products and prefabricated building components. He/she wants to continue his/her education, is constantly interested in the development of building concepts, materials and technologies.

TEACHING FRAMEWORK

On-site application of EPC-integrated BRP	Number of hours	Of which		
		Self-learning	Classroom	Practice
Location, orientation and shape	1	0,5	0,5	
Thermal insulation	3	1	1	1
Windows and shading	3	1	1	1
Airtightness	4	1	1	2
Thermal bridges	2	1	1	
Ventilation with heat recovery	2	0,5	1	0,5
Heating and cooling	1	0,5	0,5	
Integration of renewable energy installations	1	0,5	0,5	

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On-site application of EPC-integrated BRP	Number of hours	Of which		
		Self-learning	Classroom	Practice
Renovation of existing buildings	2	1	1	
Economic viability	1	0,5	0,5	
Total	20	7,5	8	4,5

Necessary equipment and facilities

Study room: Classrooms should have: a workplace for each student (desk and chair), a workplace for the trainer (desk and chair), a study board, cabinets, screens and stands for hanging blackboards, a writing board, other teaching aids and didactic technique; teaching aids - demonstration mock-ups and models, real samples, visualising boards, educational videos, multimedia equipment - computers, projectors and relevant visualisation software products.

Equipment for practical training: workshop spaces with workbenches and storage for tools and equipment, demonstration mock-ups and models of building components (walls, windows, roofs, etc.), safety equipment (helmets, boots, aprons, safety goggles, ear protection, gloves, high-visibility vests, first aid kits, fire extinguishers), basic working tools (modelling and utility knives, scissors, insulation cutters, cutting boards, cutting pads, measurement devices, cohesive band, mounting foam, etc.), insulation materials, airtightness tapes and membranes, ventilation, heating and cooling equipment (mock-ups or actual samples).

Requirements to trainers and available trainers

Individuals with completed higher education in the relevant specialty can teach a subject or module of professional training.

By subject or module of the professional training, for which there is no corresponding professional direction in the Classifier of the areas of higher education and professional fields, adopted by Resolution No. 125 of 2002 of the Council of Ministers (Government Gazette No. 64 of 2002), persons without higher education and without the professional qualification "teacher" can teach if they have acquired a third degree of professional qualification in the specialty "Construction Technician" under the conditions and in accordance with the Law on Vocational Education and Training.

It is recommended that trainers take a course every three years to update their professional knowledge, skills and competencies.

Available trainers: Zdravko Genchev, Alexander Genchev, Alexander Stankov, Stanislav Andreev, Ralitsa Yordanova

Further reading

ЕНЕфект, 2010, Десет книги за зелената архитектура, София

ЕНЕфект, 2010, 99 успешни практики, София

ЕНЕфект, 2010, Зелен витрувий, София

Да строим зелено: <http://buildinggreen.net/>, отварян октомври 2022

<http://www.fit-to-nzeb.com/>, отварян октомври 2022

<http://www.train-to-nzeb.com/>, отварян октомври 2022

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