Global Sustainable Buildings Guide - Netherlands

Green Certification

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# Is there a nationally adopted and recognized form of certification for buildings? What is it and is it mandatory for all new buildings and refurbished buildings?

Different environmental certification methods for buildings exist in the Dutch market. These include (i) Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM), (ii) Energy label, (iii) Energy Performance Coefficient (EPC)-norm, (iv) Eco-Quantum (EQ), (v) Municipal Practice Guideline (Gemeentelijke Praktijk Richtlijn) (GPR) (GPR Gebouw, GPR Materiaal, GPR Vastgoed), (vi) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), (vii) Passive House Planning Package (PHPP), (viii) Cradle-to-Cradle (C2C) tool Woningbouw xx, (ix) WELL Building Standard and (x) Actual Energy intensity indicator (Werkelijke Energie intensiteit indicator) (WEii). Among these, BREEAM has become the most commonly used model in the Netherlands to classify new and renovated buildings.

In June 2008, the Dutch Green Building Council (DGBC) was established as a "market initiative" by the real estate and construction sector to align the government's sustainability policy with the interests of the real estate stakeholders. As an independent, nonprofit organization, the DGBC aims to increase the number of sustainably (re)developed buildings. The DGBC is part of the World Green Building Council. Back then, it was supported by the (now dissolved) Building Research Foundation (Stichting Bouw Research) when it was developing and administering the assessment method BREEAM-NL, the Dutch version of the British BREEAM certificate.

Currently, there are four different BREEAM-NL certificates. The first one is "BREEAM-NL for New Buildings & Renovations." This first version of the certificate was launched in September 2009, with the first building designs being certified in April 2010. This certificate is mostly used for offices, retail establishments, schools, light industry, housing units and data centers. The second certificate, "BREEAM-NL In Use," was introduced in June 2011, and applies to existing buildings that are older than two years. It gives insight into the building's current sustainable condition and opportunities for improvement. The third certificate, "BREEAM-NL Area Development," was launched in September 2011 and assesses the building's sustainability from the perspective of the entire area where the building is located. The fourth certificate, "BREEAM-NL Demolition & Disassembly," was launched in 2013 and applies to demolition and disassembly projects. The assessment methodologies in relation to the existing BREEAM certificates are subject to ongoing amendments to cater to new developments in the market. Both BREAAM-NL for New Buildings & Renovations and BREAAM-NL In Use provide different certifications for residential and nonresidential works. With four BREEAM-NL certificates created within the first four years and the updates and expansions within each category, the desire for building verification in the Netherlands is apparent.

BREEAM-NL for New Buildings & Renovations rates buildings using five different star ratings, which are as follows: (i) Pass ≥30%; (ii) Good ≥45%; (iii) Very Good ≥55%; (iv) Excellent ≥70%; and (v) Outstanding ≥85%. BREEAM-NL In Use contains a different rating system, which is as follows: (i) Unclassified <10%; (ii) Acceptable ≥10%; (iii) Pass ≥25%; (iv) Good ≥40%; (v) Very Good ≥55%; (vi) Excellent ≥70%; and (vii) Outstanding ≥85%. BREAAM-NL Area Development measures sustainability levels using the following six categories: (i) management; (ii) synergy; (iii) sources; (iv) spatial development; (v) welfare and prosperity; and (vi) the area's climate. Lastly, BREAAM- NL Demolition & Disassembly measures sustainability taking into account the following eight categories: (i) management; (ii) health; (iii) energy; (iv) transport; (v) water; (vi) materials; (vii) waste and land use; and (viii) ecology.

With regard to legal framework, the Dutch Housing Act (Woningwet) requires the owner of an existing building to carry out energy-saving measures if local authorities deem it necessary. Under the law, authorities can impose penalty payments. As of 1 January 2022, sustainability has explicitly become part of the housing cooperative's statutory task or tasks. With the entry into force of the Environment and Planning Act (Omgevingswet) (EPA), the authorities intended to contribute to sustainable development, the habitability of the land, and the protection and improvement of the living environment. The EPA states that a company is required to save energy by making energy-saving provisions with a payback time of within five years. An owner of a residential or nonresidential building can also succeed in this requirement by taking measures listed in the Recognized Energy-Saving Measures List (Erkende maatregelenlijst). This list contains the measures to be taken by the owners of residential and/or nonresidential buildings to comply with the energy-saving obligation, and the measures to be considered when a party acts in a manner that could adversely affect the environment.

Under the Building Decree (Bouwbesluit 2012), which applies to new buildings, including residential and nonresidential buildings, minimum standards are set for energy performance according to the "Nearly Energy-Neutral Buildings" (Bijna Energieneutrale Gebouwen) (BENG). The energy performance requirements are determined based on three individually achieved demands. These requirements arise from the "Energy Agreement for Sustainable Growth" (Energieakkoord voor duurzame groei) signed in 2013 and from the European Energy Performance of Buildings Directive.

The Building Decree contains multiple sustainability requirements, including those arising from the European Energy Performance of Buildings Directive. All applications for new construction permits must meet the requirements of the BENG. These building regulations set standards for the maximum energy requirement, fossil energy use and the generation of renewable energy in buildings.

The Energy Performance Buildings Decree (Besluit Energieprestatie Gebouwen) provides the energy label obligation regarding nonresidential buildings. The energy label must be available upon delivery, sale and lease of the building. As of 1 January 2023, it is prohibited to use all office buildings, new and refurbished, with a minimum of 100 square meters, without a valid energy label of at least C.

Residential and/or nonresidential buildings will have to meet the requirements of the Environmental Performance for Buildings (Milieu Prestatie Gebouwen) when applying for a permit under the EPA.

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