



Executive report on the performance of BUILD UP and options for the way forward

Final Report

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Assessment of BUILD UP platform

Executive report

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Abbreviations

| | |
|-----------|--|
| BPIE | Buildings Performance Institute Europe |
| CA | Concerted action |
| CINEA | European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency |
| E3P | European Energy Efficiency Platform |
| ECEEE | European Council for an Energy Efficient Economy |
| ECTP | European Construction, built environment and energy efficient building Technology Platform |
| EFTA | European Free Trade Association |
| EPB | Energy performance of buildings |
| EPBD | Energy Performance of Buildings Directive |
| EU | European Union |
| GBPN | Global Buildings Performance Network |
| IA | Information architecture |
| IEA | International Energy Agency |
| iPHA | International Passive House Association |
| LCA | Life cycle assessment |
| MCA | Multi-criteria analysis |
| NTP | National Construction Technology Platform |
| SEO | Search engine optimisation |
| SME | Small and medium-sized enterprises |
| SWOT | Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats |
| UI | User interface |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| US | United States |
| UX | User experience |
| World GBC | World Green Building Council |

Executive summary

Background

Buildings are responsible for 40% of energy consumption and nearly 36% greenhouse gas emissions in the European Union (EU), stemming mainly from construction, usage, renovation and demolition.¹ The EU recognised the importance of improving the energy performance of buildings in addressing climate change, reduce dependency on energy imports and alleviate energy poverty very early. It is now almost 20 years since the first Directive on energy performance in buildings (EPBD) was adopted. The EPBD is the main comprehensive EU piece of legislation on this topic and it was revised as part of the “Clean Energy for all Europeans” package. With Directive (EU) 2018/844, amending Directive 2010/31/EU and Directive 2012/27/EU on energy efficiency, changes were introduced to create a clear path towards a decarbonised building stock in the EU by 2050.

Within this framework, the European Commission has supported the creation and operation of a European wide website to foster exchanges on energy efficiency and renewable energy in buildings among policymakers and practitioners. A first version of the website, called the “EPBD Buildings Platform” was established in 2006. It later became the “BUILD UP web portal”. BUILD UP aims to increase the awareness among stakeholders and assist Member States in their related information and awareness-raising efforts. In particular, and in support to the different directives, it aims to foster the market transformation towards Nearly Zero Energy Buildings. BUILD UP is used to exchange knowledge, guidelines, tools and best practices as well as to inform on the latest updates to the legislative framework.

Objectives

The objectives of this assignment were:

- to deliver a comprehensive analysis of what **type of stakeholders** have used BUILD UP, and gauge the extent to which they correspond to the main desired target groups of the platform
- to assess the extent to which BUILD UP responds to the **needs of its target groups**, and highlight any major differentiation in its effectiveness towards different target groups
- to improve the **understanding of how practitioners access information** related to energy efficiency and renewable energy in buildings and compare BUILD UP to other sources in order to better assess its added value
- to measure the **performance of BUILD UP** and its effectiveness in fulfilling the related aims of the EPBD
- to provide **options on how BUILD UP could evolve** to meet current and future needs of stakeholders and, where appropriate, support the implementation of the European Green Deal (COM/2019/640 final) roadmap to make the EU’s economy more sustainable

The study team assessed the extent to which BUILD UP fulfils its objectives and its ability to respond to the needs of target groups.

¹ European Commission, *Energy efficiency in buildings*, Brussels 17.02.2020, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/energy_climate_change_environment/events/documents/in_focus_energy_efficiency_in_buildings_en.pdf.

Methodology of the assessment

The study was carried out between May and October 2021. The assessment was divided in four main tasks:

- Mapping of registered BUILD UP users
- Mapping of main relevant knowledge sharing and practitioners' web platforms on energy efficiency and renewable energy in buildings
- Assessment of BUILD UP web performance, including an online survey and interviews with registered and non-registered users
- Assessment and options to address the needs of users from now until 2030

In order to achieve the objectives and complete the Tasks, the study comprised three phases. The initial phase 1 served to prepare and structure the work which was achieved through a preliminary background research and a set of familiarisation interviews, the second phase was that of the data collection. The study team collected views and experiences of stakeholders via an online survey among registered and non-registered users as well as by assessing user experience. The team also analysed BUILD UP web performance in terms of its user friendliness (user experience audit) and analysed the traffic of the website as well as BUILD UP performance on social media. The third phase was the final layer in which the study team triangulated the findings and assessed the performance of BUILD UP in addition to undertaking an analysis of the options for the way forward.

Key findings

The assessment suggested that a major strength of BUILD UP is that it is a unique source of EU-level information, and the surveys and interviews carried out for this study showed that this is appreciated. The assessment of BUILD UP in the survey was generally good. The portal is considered to offer quality, reliable content. Respondents valued in particular the quality of the content, which was rated as good or excellent by almost nine out of ten respondents (87%). They also valued BUILD UP's usefulness for their work (71% rating it good or excellent) and the information timeliness (69%), so it addressed the needs of its audiences. The interviewees also confirmed that BUILD UP was useful for their work. BUILD UP is mainly used for sharing knowledge and best practice, with half of respondents assessing this aspect as very useful and another 40% as somewhat useful. This was followed by raising awareness about energy efficiency in buildings (33% rating it very useful and 45% somewhat useful) and informing and updating about legislative frameworks (21% and 45%). This suggests that BUILD UP has its role in promoting the improvement of the energy performance of buildings, the aim of the energy performance of buildings directive.

The portal is reaching a broad audience across sectors. It is also reaching a broad range of countries. However, there is no consistency in the balance between the international audience and the EU-27 audience, and the EU-27 audience is very unevenly spread. This suggests the need to better reach out to users in underrepresented Member States, e.g. Poland, Romania, Germany and Austria.

Based on the survey and our dedicated analysis, the design of the portal represents a major weakness. The portal is working with an outdated design from at least a decade ago. Whilst it is accessible on mobile phones, it was not optimised for that purpose.

There is a significant following on the social media most used in the business world, i.e. Twitter and LinkedIn. Engagement levels are low, but the absolute numbers compare favourably with sites on similar topics. However, the portal does not make the most of social media channels, e.g. by tailoring content to

the respective user habits of Twitter and LinkedIn, and not using Facebook – as some similar portals do. Nor are analytics used as comprehensively as they could to fill gaps.

News is the most popular feature on the site, but the news items include items which are new to the site, but not necessarily news. This is not standard practice and contrasts with the practice of some similar sites. The news section is also not as prominent on the homepage as standard practice would suggest it should be, it does not immediately catch the eye of a user.

The result is a portal of high quality that could be under threat from less comprehensive and less reliable, but more user-friendly sites. However, a redesign that also leverages BUILD UP unique selling points including quality and reliability of its content as well as interest in climate change and the recast Energy Performance of Buildings Directive is a major opportunity.

Options for the future

Based on the study findings, the study team identified four different options for the future development of BUILD UP.

- **Option 0** – status quo, a continuation of the current portal without any significant changes in the design and functionalities of the portal.
- **Option 1** (2022-2024) for the forthcoming service contract, which foresees a migration of BUILD UP to europa.eu. It foresees a general continuation of the current role of BUILD UP, but with significant improvement of its accessibility and attractiveness for users, building engagement and extending reach. This should include better reaching the audiences in some EU Member States, which are currently less represented in the share of users, and in Associate Countries to the extent that financial and human resources allow. The timeline of the forthcoming contract (2022-2024) corresponds to interinstitutional negotiations of the proposed revision of the Energy performance of buildings directive (EPBD) and the first phase of implementation of the Renovation Wave Strategy².
- **Option 2** (2022-2027) foresees an expansion of the portal's reach. Implementation of this option can start in the the next contract, but should be conditional on BUILD UP being on track with achieving its annual KPIs and addressing weaknesses addressed within this study.

This option includes expanding the coverage of the EU's role in energy efficiency of buildings and developments in the Member States (and in Associate Countries to the extent that financial and human resources allow). The timeline of this scenario corresponds to the transposition and implementation phases of the revised EPBD and second phase of implementation of the Renovation Wave.

- **Option 3** (2025-2030) is a further expansion with a broader coverage of developments at Member State and Associate country level activities. In this timeframe, there will likely be new regulatory measures under preparation at the EU-level for the two decades to carbon neutrality in 2050. In addition, the portal could promote the EU as a model for other countries and complement the external dimension of the Green Deal.

² Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A Renovation Wave for Europe - greening our buildings, creating jobs, improving lives, COM(2020) 662 final

1. Introduction

This report is the final report of the Assessment of BUILD UP platform, a study commissioned by the European Commission's European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA).

The purpose of this report is to present the assessment of the performance of BUILD UP based on the research and analysis carried out within the study. The assessment is based on the following tools:

- Desk review of an anonymised database of BUILD UP registered members
- Results of an online survey of BUILD UP members, users and potential users
- In-depth interviews of BUILD UP users
- Web analytics of BUILD UP
- User experience audit of the website
- Analysis of BUILD UP social media performance

This report aims to assess the extent to which BUILD UP fulfils its objectives and its ability to respond to the needs of target groups.

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 presents the background of the study, i.e. the basic information about BUILD UP
- Chapter 3 presents the results of the assessment, including
 - Analysis of BUILD UP web performance
 - Findings from consultation activities with BUILD UP users from an online survey and interviews
 - Analysis of BUILD UP performance on social media
 - BUILD UP performance SWOT analysis
- Chapter 4 presents options for the future of BUILD UP in three scenarios

2. Background of BUILD UP assessment

2.1. The objectives of BUILD UP

BUILD UP is a web portal intended to support the objectives of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), namely, to enhance the energy performance of buildings. The EPBD also includes provisions on information, both on the role of the Member States and the European Commission. There is a specific reference to BUILD UP in Article 20.4 of the Directive:

Article 20.4 of Energy Performance of Buildings Directive

‘The Commission is invited to continuously improve its information services, in particular the website that has been set up as a **European portal for energy efficiency in buildings directed towards citizens, professionals and authorities**, in order to assist Member States in their information and awareness-raising efforts. Information displayed on this website might include links to relevant European Union and national, regional and local legislation, links to Europa websites that display the National Energy Efficiency Action Plans, links to available financial instruments, as well as best practice examples at national, regional and local level.’

The rationale of the BUILD UP platform, based on the call for tender on which the current portal was based, is depicted below.

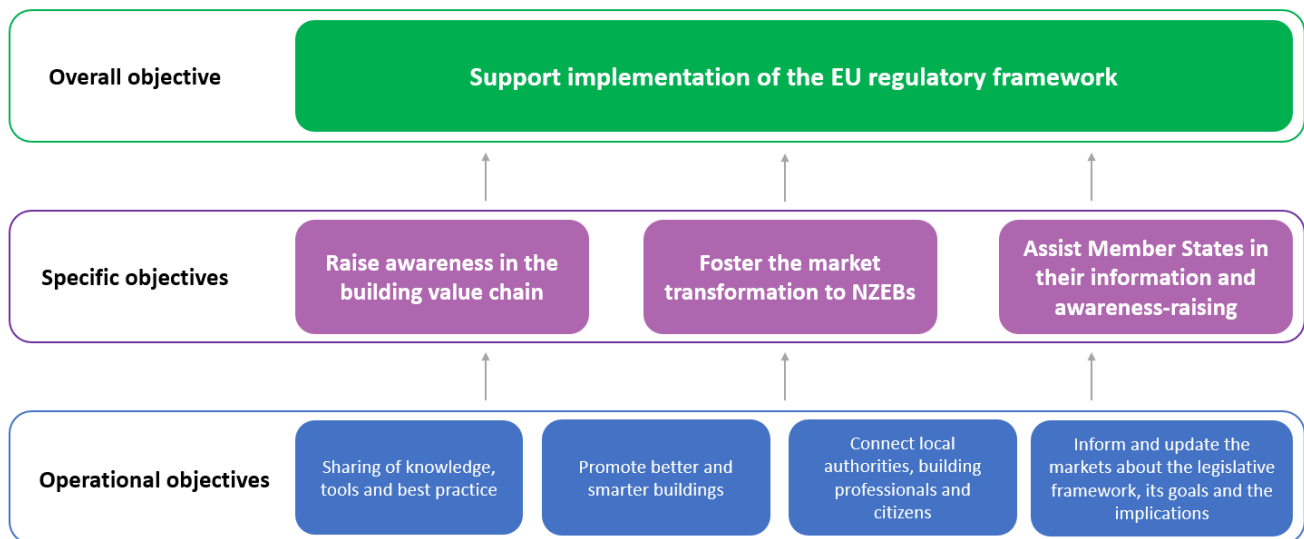


Figure 1. Objectives of BUILD UP Platform

BUILD UP is the tool to achieve these objectives. It is a comprehensive web portal comprising the components described in section 2.2. It targets multipliers, i.e.:

- policymakers at European Union (EU), national, regional and local levels
- staff of national, regional and local energy agencies
- civil servants in public authorities such as urban planners, building inspectors and regulators
- associations of building professionals and craftsmen and their members
- industry stakeholders, including materials and equipment suppliers and installers, surveyors, contractors, property developers and investors, architects, engineers, building managers
- researchers
- training providers

2.2. BUILD UP structure

Information is segmented by broad category, as illustrated in the figure below:

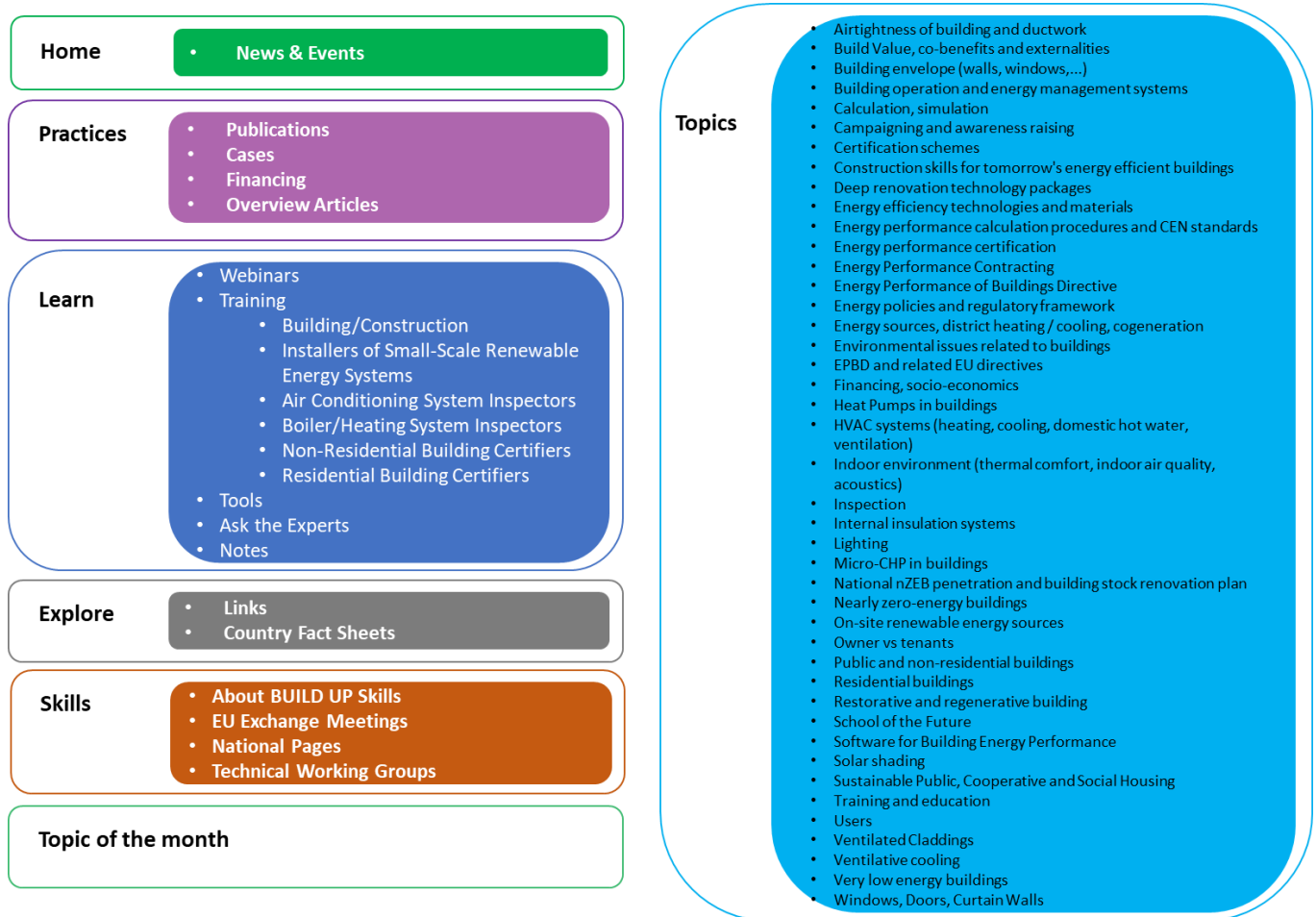


Figure 2. Structure of BUILD UP Platform

The Topics page has a slightly different layout (while retaining the same 'look and feel'). As can be seen above, it provides access to a mix of topics, some of which are technical (e.g., Micro-CHP in buildings), some generic (e.g., Training and education) and some regulatory (e.g., Energy performance certification).

The portal provides information in English. It also offers translation to Croatian, French, German, Italian, Polish and Spanish, but in fact translation of this information is automated and de facto very limited.

The platform includes several interactive features which are highlighted below.

At the bottom of the Home page, it is possible to sign up for a monthly news alert.

It is also possible to register as a member on the site. There are currently more than 17,000 members. Certain member data are made public on the site, namely their name, function, country, social media profile(s) and languages understood, and it is possible to contact a member by email via the site.

Registration as a member is a precondition for uploading content and members earn 'Kudos points' for posting. This ensures high visibility on the site, but the portal also features a member each day on the Home Page. The type of content members can upload falls into eight possible categories, as follows:

- Ask the experts,
- Cases,
- Events,

- Link,
- News,
- Note,
- Publication,
- Tool.

Some member content is moderated, namely for: Link, News, Note, Publication and Tool. In the case of Link, members can choose from 24 categories of information plus a General category³. These are not the same as the Topics List (see figure 2) but are the same as the Themes that members list when they register. For content on Link, members can also choose to tag the information for three target groups: local/regional/national authorities and facilitators, building professionals or building occupants.

BUILD UP also uses other channels to reach out to its target audience, including a newsletter and social media accounts on Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube.

³ The list is as follows: Deep renovation technology packages; Deep renovation: paradigm and technology packages for historic and existing residential building cases; Energy policies, Legislation, regulations, standards; Energy performance certification; Building envelope (walls, windows etc.); Heating, domestic hot water; Air conditions, cooling, ventilation, air infiltration; Lighting; Controls, energy management systems, Energy efficiency technologies and materials; Energy sources, district heating/cooling, cogeneration; On-site renewable energy sources; Residential buildings; Public and non-residential buildings; Very low energy buildings; Building operation, monitoring, energy management; Thermal comfort, indoor air quality, acoustics; Inspection; Calculation, simulation; Training and education; Financing, socio-economics; Campaigning and awareness-raising; Environmental issues related to building.

2.3. Mapping of BUILD UP users

One of the tasks within the study was the mapping of BUILD UP users. It was based on the analysis of the available anonymised database of BUILD UP registered users as provided to the study team. However, the database had significant weaknesses and therefore did not allow for a comprehensive mapping. The analysis below is not only based on the database, but also on findings from the survey of BUILD UP users, as well as the web and social media analytics carried out.

2.3.1. The number of BUILD UP users

The BUILD UP platform has 17,948 registered users. However, it was not possible to verify how many of these accounts were active or when users registered. Also, at least some accounts are 'fake accounts'.

In terms of social media community, BUILD UP has 7,480 followers on Twitter and 2,037 on LinkedIn, as well as 570 subscribers on YouTube.⁴

These are the indicative numbers of maximum size of BUILD UP community, however the number of those who actively and regularly follow these BUILD UP channels is probably lower. Nevertheless, a number of users can also visit BUILD UP channels from time to time and do not register or follow the channels on social media. This group also uses BUILD UP content. BUILD UP website was visited 340,865 times in 2020 (28,405 visits a month on average) and 94,883 times in the first four months of 2021 (23,720 on average).

2.3.2. Geographical coverage

When it comes to the geographical coverage of BUILD UP, each data source (database of members, traffic data of the website and social media data) draw slightly different picture. The triangulation of findings suggests that, [overall, there is overrepresentation of Belgium in the BUILD UP audience. The data confirm that Germany is represented to a lesser extent than the other largest Member States and that Member States that joined the EU in 2004 or later are represented to a lesser extent. Spain and Italy generally have significant representation. There also seems to be a large audience in the United States, but not on all channels \(for instance the American audience is absent from the LinkedIn channel\).](#)

According to the database of BUILD UP members, about 6 out of 10 BUILD UP registered users are from the EU. About 7 out of 10 are from wider Europe, including: the EU, EFTA, candidate countries, the United Kingdom etc. (see Figure 3). The most frequently selected EU country is Belgium (8.6%), followed by Italy (6.4%), France (5.7%), Spain (5.3%), Germany (4.5%) and Austria (4%). However, the second most frequently selected country was the UK (7.4%) and the second single most frequently selected option was 'North America', which suggests a high share of users from the United States.

Belgium may be overrepresented relative to its size because of the EU institutions, Permanent Representations and European trade associations located in Brussels (there was a separate option in the registration form: 'EU Institutions', but it was only selected by 0.2% of members, i.e. 36 people). Germany is represented to a lesser extent than the other largest Member States. Generally, Member States that joined the EU in 2004 or later are represented to a lesser extent (see e.g. Poland 1.3% compared to Spain 5.3%). Some candidate countries have significant representation, in particular Albania (3.6%).

⁴ As of 9.08.2021

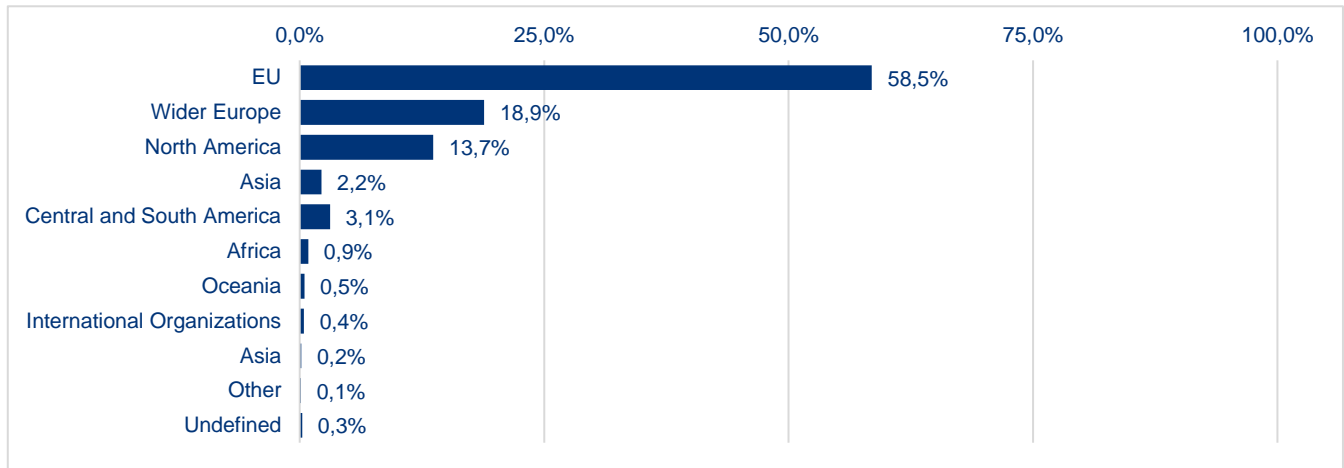


Figure 3. Distribution of BUILD UP users per region (n=17,913)⁵; source: BUILD UP members database

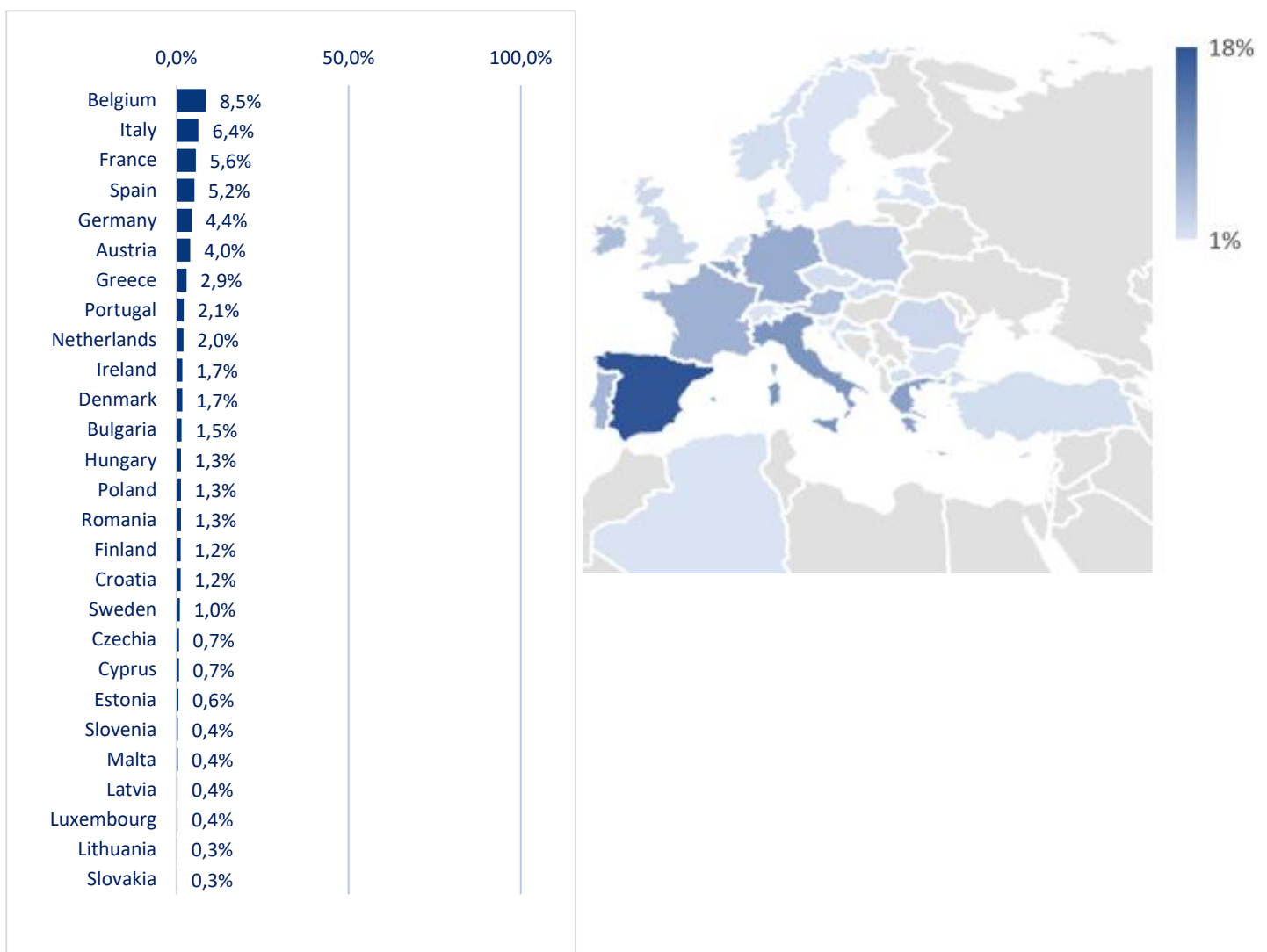


Figure 4. Distribution of BUILD UP users per EU Member State (n=17,913); source: BUILD UP members database

According to the analysis of the web traffic carried out between January 2020 and April 2021, BUILD UP was visited by users from 161 countries. The top two counties were outside the EU. The highest traffic

⁵ Categorisation in this question is complex and include selected countries (in the EU, but also for instance Russia or China), regions and other options such as 'Pan European'. The following categories were used in the graph: 'EU' includes EU Member States as well as 'EU institutions'. Wider Europe includes EFTA countries, candidate countries, the UK, Russia, 'other European countries' and 'Pan European'. Asia includes 'Asian countries', China and India.

was generated by users from the US (168,621 visits) and the UK (68,998). They were followed by EU Member States, including Spain (23,861), Italy (17,812), Germany (17,552), France (17,350) and the Netherlands (7,999). These were followed by China (7,906) and Poland (6,699). For 11,748 users, the country of origin could not be determined. Belgium was not among the top countries.

Social media analytics provided additional information. Most of Twitter followers are in Europe, with Brussels at the top (data per country is not available in the analytical tool for Twitter), but there are also many followers in the US. On LinkedIn, Belgium is again at the very top with 21% of followers. It is followed by Italy (16%) and Spain (15%). There is only 1% of followers from the US.

BUILD UP members in their registration process, can also specify their 'geographical coverage', i.e. whether their interests are primarily international, national, regional or local. Half of the users who provided their answers to this question selected the option 'international' (49.6%). It was followed by 'national' (25.7%), 'regional' (14.9%) and 'local' (9.8%). The survey confirmed this finding. According to the survey results, the vast majority of BUILD UP users and members use the platform to look for EU-level information (84%). Only one in six reported they were looking for national and local-level information. These results appear to be expected given the purpose of BUILD UP but confirm where the emphasis of BUILD UP's editorial content should lie.

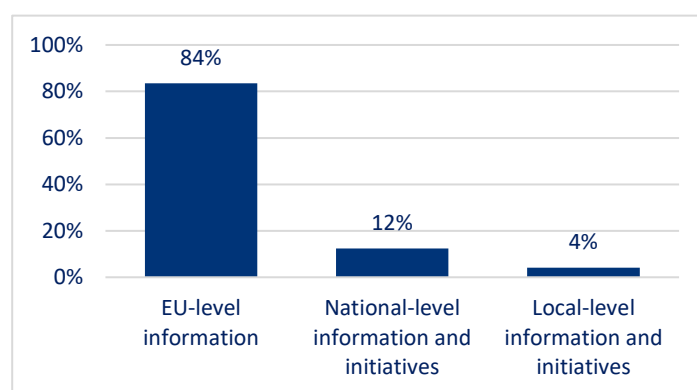


Figure 5. When you go to BUILD UP are you mainly looking for ...? (N=97); source: BUILD UP members database

2.3.3. Level of English

The data confirm that most of BUILD UP users understand English. In the registration process, almost all users (96%) indicated that their preferred language was English. However, such a high frequency of selecting English is probably related to the fact that English was automatically preselected by default in the sign-up form. Users were also able voluntarily to suggest languages that they understand.⁶ Most indicated that they understood English (67%). This also indicates that one third of BUILD UP did not confirm understanding English, i.e. the main language of the website in which most of the content is provided. However, this can be related to the fact that English was already selected in the question mentioned above. Some of the users might have understood this question as 'Other languages understood'.

In the survey, almost all respondents confirmed that they were comfortable with reading BUILD UP content in English (86% comfortable with no problem; 11% mostly comfortable with some problems for technical content). All respondents (members) indicated that they were also comfortable with writing contributions for BUILD UP in English (74% with no problem; 26% with some problems). But clearly, there is likely to be a bias in the responses as the survey was in English.

⁶ This voluntary field of the questionnaire was filled in by 24.8% of members, i.e. 4,446 of them.

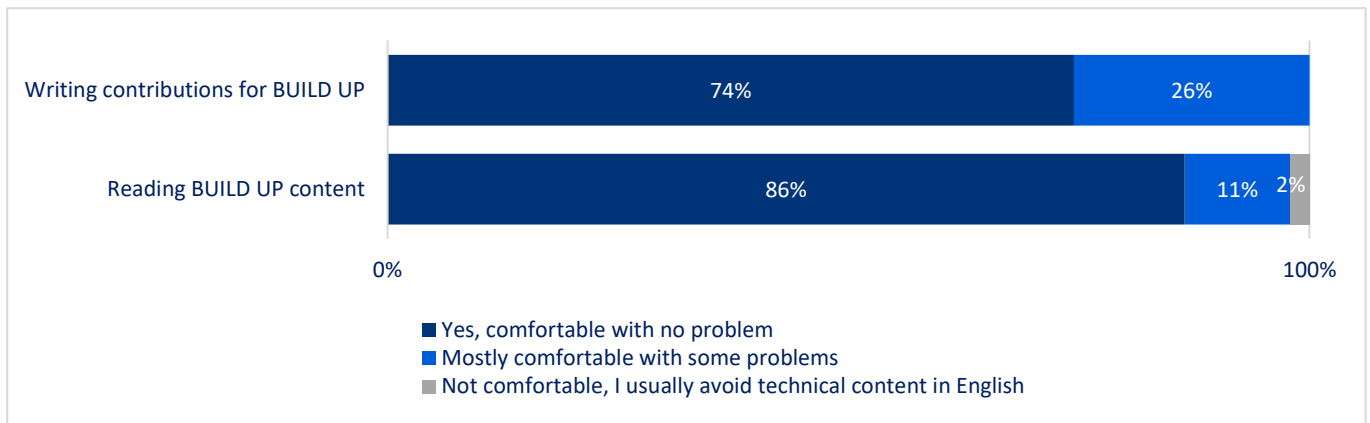


Figure 6. How comfortable are you with reading ($n=96$) and writing ($n=47$) BUILD UP content in English?; source: BUILD UP members database. Additionally, most of the interviewees consulted within the study were satisfied with the English version of the platform and did not think that it required more language versions. Only two interviewees mentioned that local stakeholders had difficulties in accessing the website and thus recommended to add more content in local languages. Nevertheless, it appears that using English is not a significant barrier for BUILD UP users.

2.3.4. Type of organisations and sectors

It is challenging to draw a coherent picture of the types of organisations and sectors represented by BUILD UP users, as the data are a bit fragmented. Nevertheless, overall, the evidence suggests that the sectors of users clearly reflect BUILD UP target audiences, described above (see section 2.1). It also suggests that industry stakeholders are perhaps represented to a larger extent than state authorities.

In terms of organisations represented, most of BUILD UP members, 51% according to the database, are from the private sector, including 'SME and independent' (35%) and large enterprises (16%). The private sector was followed by the non-profit sector (20%), public sector (15%) and academia (14%).⁷

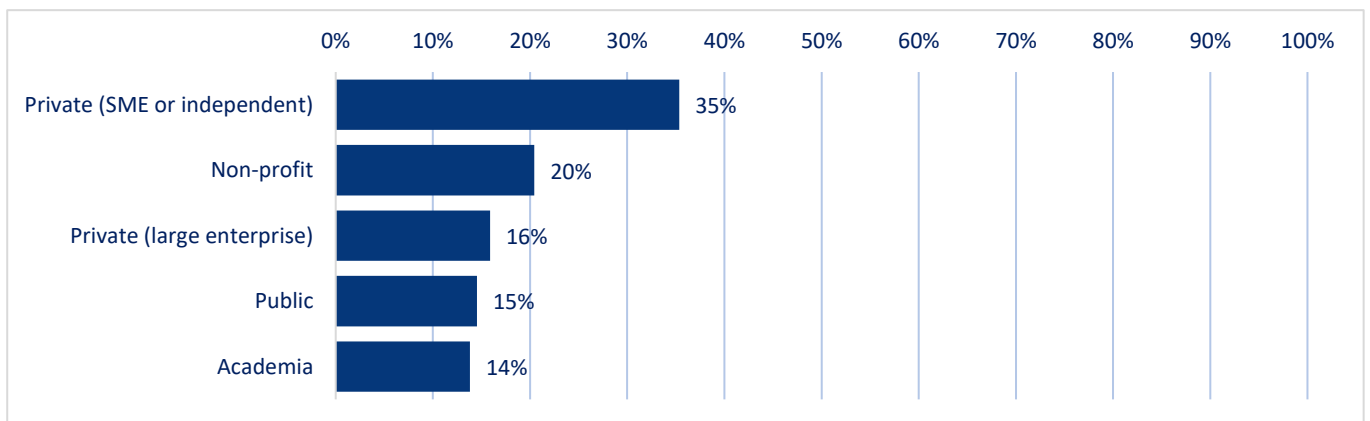


Figure 7. Type of organisation of the registered users ($n=3,022$); source: BUILD UP members database

In the registration process, members also filled in a field 'sector'. Most of them indicated they were 'building professionals' (65%), followed by 'Local/regional/national authorities and facilitators' (29%) and 'building occupants' (5%).⁸ However, the categorisation in this question was very narrow, as it only included these three categories, so the numbers are not very meaningful to confirm that BUILD UP reached its target audiences. For instance, it is unclear which category would be relevant for representatives of academia or

⁷ This voluntary field of the questionnaire was filled in by 19% of members, i.e. 3,401 of them.

⁸ This voluntary field of the questionnaire was filled in by 16,8% of members, i.e. 3,022 of them.

even those representatives of private or non-profit sectors who represent the environmental angle of BUILD UP and are not covered by the category of 'building professionals'.

According to the survey, more than one in three respondents (36%) represented the academic sector, followed by industry professionals (19%). 20% of respondents selected 'other' which included mostly consultants, project managers, communication experts/officers, think-tank staff members, not-for-profit and EU organisations as well as networks and agencies. Only 6% represented national authorities. The proportion of academics responding to the survey relative to their representation in the platform's membership is significantly higher (36% against 14%).

The analysis of LinkedIn followers and visitors provides some further insights into the breakdown by sector. The most frequently represented industries by BUILD UP followers on LinkedIn include Renewables & Environment (167 people), Research (160 people), Architecture & Planning (159 people), Construction (155 people), Higher education (112 people) and Government Administration (100 people). The list of industries visitors represent is similar, with only slight shifts in order.

Most followers work in the following areas: business development (14% of followers), operations (11%), engineering (9%), programme and project management (9%) and research (8%). However, there are also users from other areas, such as arts, sales, marketing, administration, finance and law. In the case of visitors, the first area is the same (business development), but it is followed by media and communications (10%), absent from the previous list. This can indicate that visitors can often be journalists who are temporarily interested in the topics BUILD UP covers, looking for data or information on an ad hoc basis. It is followed by engineering (9%) again.

In terms of the positions followers have, the number of followers at the senior level (39% of the following) is similar to those at entry level (34%). This indicates that the BUILD UP community consists of a significant share of people who have started their professional careers recently. This group can be potentially interested in learning opportunities provided by BUILD UP. The data for visitors are similar.

2.3.5. Areas of interest

Members of BUILD UP can select their areas of interest in the registration process. The detailed frequencies of their selection are presented in the figure below. The most frequently selected topic is 'Energy efficient buildings, cases', which was also the only one selected by the majority of users (60%).

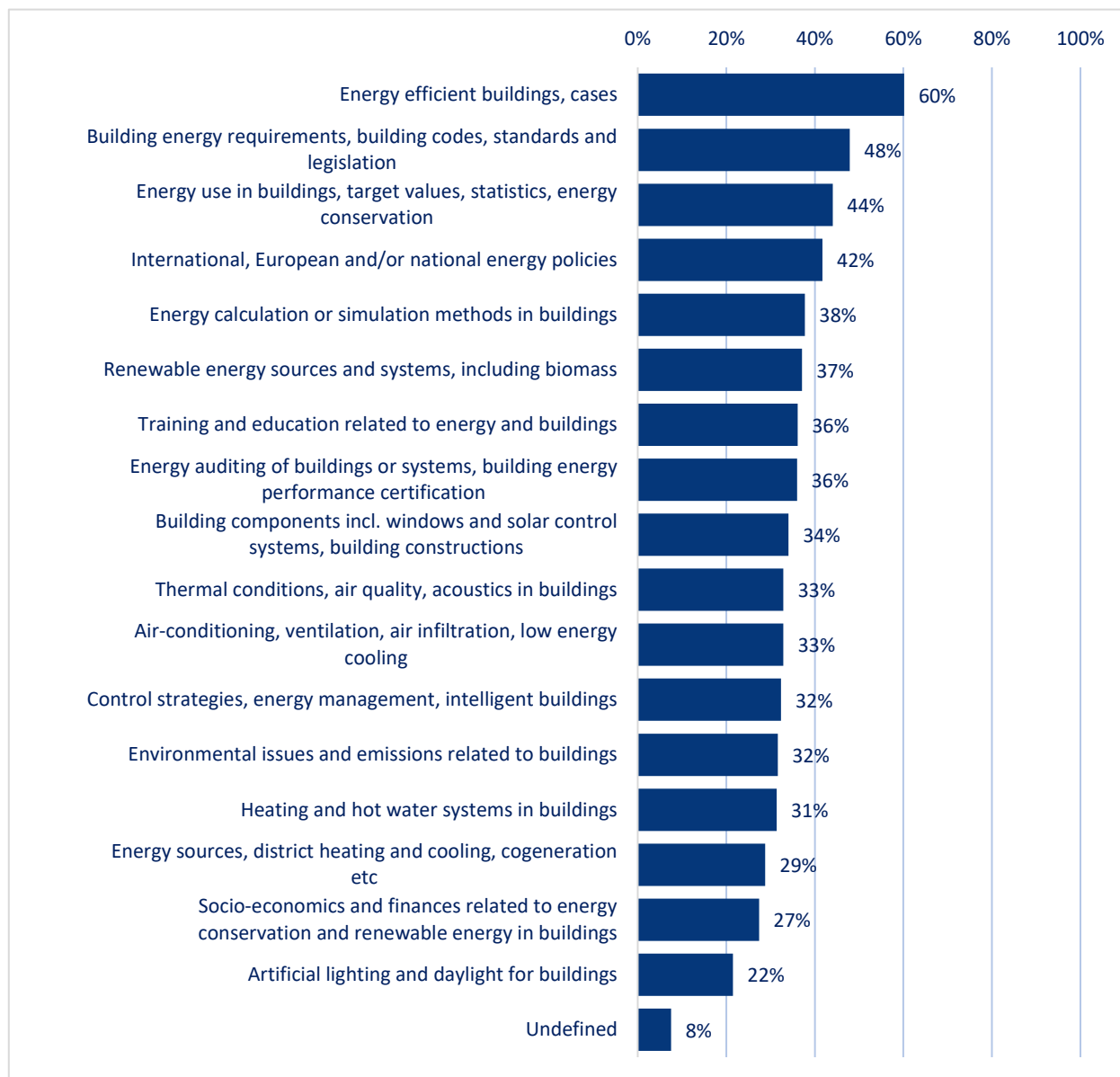


Figure 8. Areas of interest of the registered users (n=781); source: BUILD UP members database

Energy efficiency was also the top theme selected by survey users. It was selected by 17% of respondents. It was followed by smart buildings (11.7%) and deep renovation (10.9%).

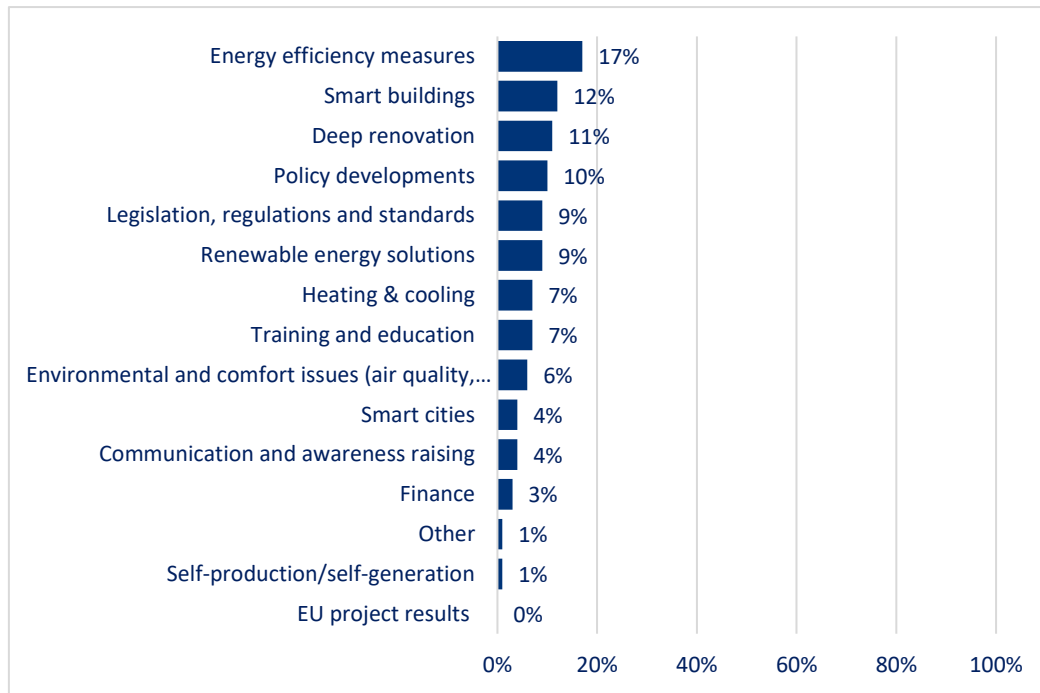


Figure 9. Which of the following BUILD UP themes are of most interest to you? (N=97); source: survey carried out within the study

2.3.6. Gender and age

The data confirm that there are more male than female BUILD UP users across the channels. Three quarters of BUILD UP registered members are male (74%) and one quarter is female (26%), according to the database. In the survey, 54% of respondents were male and 44% were female (the rest preferred not to specify). On YouTube (the gender distribution is not available in other social media channels), 77% of video viewers are male and 23% female.

In the survey, the largest age groups represented were 31-40 years old (34%) and 41-50 (27%). On YouTube more than a half (52%) are people aged 25–34. They are followed by people aged 45–54 (26%).

3. Looking backwards – assessment of BUILD UP performance

The following section presents the analysis of BUILD UP performance, which was based on web analytics, an audit of the user experience, social media analysis as well as the analysis of the feedback from BUILD UP users gathered through the online survey and in-depth interviews.

3.1. BUILD UP web performance

The web review assessed the BUILD UP website in terms of its user friendliness and analysed the traffic or coverage of the website. This delivered:

- A comprehensive analysis of what type of stakeholders have, until today, used BUILD UP website, and the extent to which they correspond to the main desired target groups of the platform.
- An assessment of the extent to which BUILD UP responds to the needs of its target groups, in particular in terms of user friendliness of the website and the identification of any major differentiation in its effectiveness towards different target groups.
- A measure of the web performance of BUILD UP.

The web analysis relied on the following:

- Quantitative analysis of website traffic and visits based on data extracted from Piwik analytical tool⁹, which the BUILD UP contractor provided
- Qualitative analysis of user experience (UX) based on:
 - heuristic evaluation, i.e. expert-based analysis
 - cognitive walkthrough examining the usability of a digital product
 - information architecture (IA) evaluation

The analysis included data from 16 months, between January 2020 and April 2021 (the data were gathered from Piwik in May 2021). While Piwik does not allow the collection of data about user accounts, it allows the analysis of website activity based on cookies.

3.1.1. Website traffic

According to BUILD UP website traffic data, the portal was visited 340,865 times in 2020 and 94,883 times in the first four months of 2021. More than one third of these visits (124,491) happened in the first four months of 2020. In the first four months of 2021, BUILD UP was visited 94,883 times. The number of visits decreased in January-April 2021 compared with the same period in 2020 by 24%. The decrease was slightly higher in February (28%) and slightly lower in March (16%). 2020 data show that the number of visits decreased most significantly between October and December 2020 (by 32%).

As discussed above, web traffic data suggest that the highest traffic was generated by users from the US (168,621 visits) and the UK (68,998), so countries from outside the EU. This can be perceived both as an issue and an opportunity. It suggests that the EU portal is not sufficiently used by users from the EU, to whom it is mainly directed. On the other hand, it allows for promotion of EU standards, best practices and policies worldwide.

The figure on the next page presents a comparison of the share of BUILD UP visits per EU Member States compared with their share in EU population. Although the population may not be the key indicator used to assess the adequacy of BUILD UP reach (other indicators can include the development of construction

⁹ <https://piwik.pro/>

industry, the level of interest in energy efficiency or the existence of alternative portals at national level), it suggests that the geographical coverage between Member States is not balanced. Countries from Southern Europe seem to be slightly overrepresented, mainly Spain (its share in the web traffic is 12 percentage point higher than its share of the population), Italy (3.4 pp), Greece (3.2 pp), Portugal (2.2 pp), but also the Netherlands (3.8 pp). This is not necessarily an issue but suggests that perhaps some more efforts are required to better reach out to users in underrepresented Member States, such as Poland (its share in the web traffic is 2.1 percentage point lower than its share of the population), Romania (2 pp), Germany (1.8 pp) and in particular Austria, which did not record any visits on BUILD UP in the analysed period, although its share of BUILD UP members is substantial (4%).

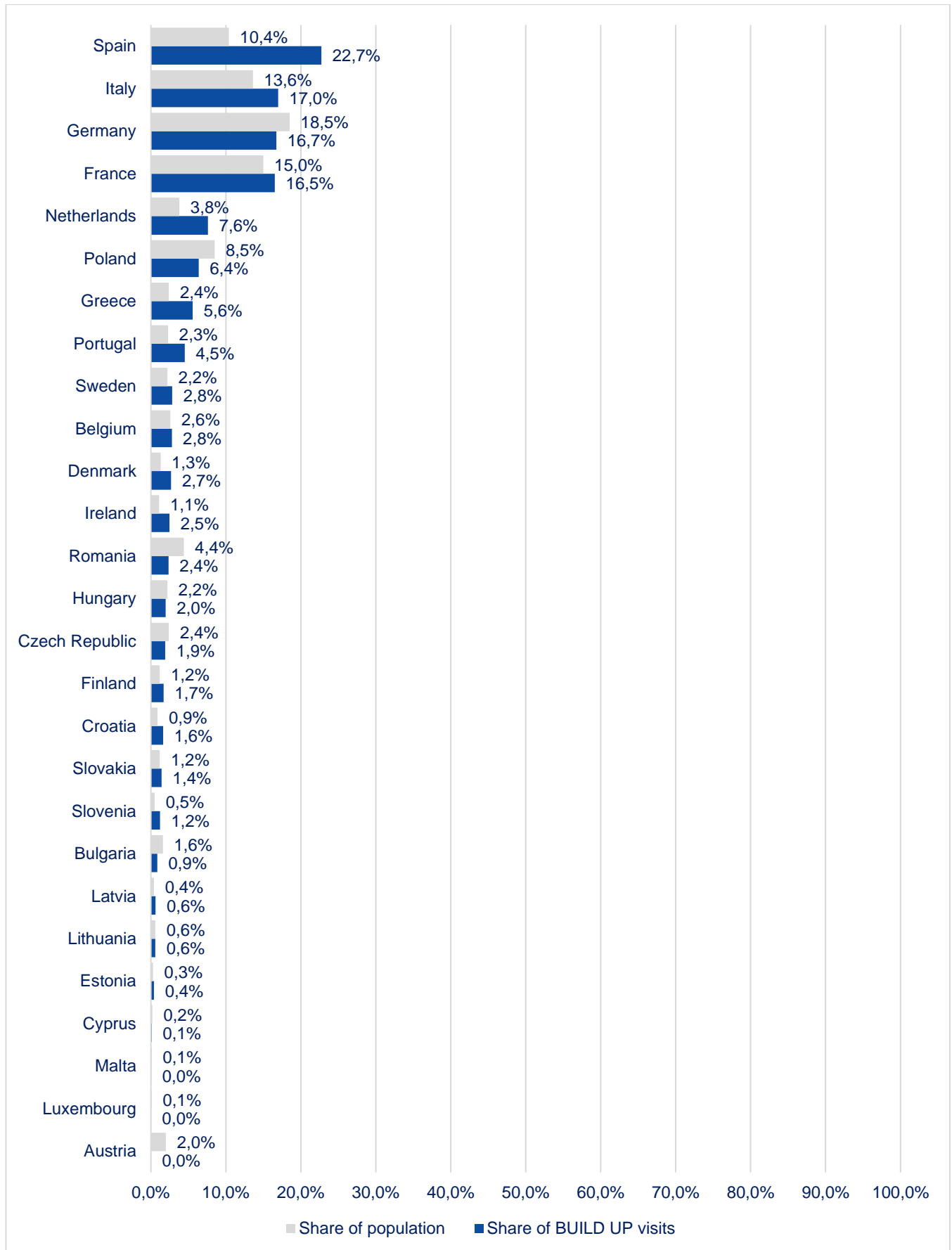


Figure 10. Share of BUILD UP visits per country compared to share in total EU population (visits from EU countries only), source: BUILD UP contractor

The highest traffic on the website in 2020 was generated by search engines (248,469 visits in 2020, with 95% from Google), which was followed by direct entries (74,591), links from websites, including social media (16,927) and campaigns (878). Out of social media from which users accessed the website in 2020, there are three key channels: LinkedIn (with 3,434 visits), Twitter (3,363) and Facebook (2,397; although BUILD UP itself does not have a Facebook account, the traffic was generated by other accounts). Overall, social media do not represent a significant source of traffic for BUILD UP. This suggests that social media should not be treated as an advertising channel for BUILD UP, used to make people access the website, but could rather be used as a separate tool to reach out to and engage the target audience.

There is a slight increase in the share of BUILD UP users visiting the website from smartphones between 2020 and 2021. In the period between January and April 2020, 16.7% of visits were from smartphones. Throughout 2020, this increased to 18.4% and in the first four months of 2021, it reached 22%. In fact, despite the year-over-year decline in traffic on the website between January and April 2020 and 2021, the traffic from smartphones remained at a similar level and only desktop traffic decreased. It means that more than one in five visitors of BUILD UP reach the portal through a smartphone and this share is likely to increase in the coming months and years. It is important to consider this trend, as the user experience audit carried out within the study uncovered some issues with accessing the mobile version of the website (see below), which will affect more and more mobile users.

3.1.2. Users' behaviour

The most visited subpages of BUILD UP with the highest traffic are 'News', 'Publications' and the homepage. This trend is visible both in 2020 and 2021 data. Most traffic was generated by pages that are constantly updated and have new content added to them.

The bounce rate, that is the share of visitors that leave a webpage without taking any action, such as clicking on link to other subpage or homepage, amounted to 71% in 2020. This indicates that after reading one article, users return to the entire section or home page in search of more interesting articles. In 2021, the bounce rate slightly decreased to 65%. Research suggests benchmark averages for bounce rates for content websites is 40-60%.¹⁰ To achieve this, websites should be structured in a way that encourages the user to move on to the next article, for example suggesting 'similar topics' and 'related articles'.

The average time spent by users on the website almost doubled from 65 seconds in the first four months in 2020 to 120 seconds in the same period in 2021. This change can be related either to BUILD UP becoming more engaging (as the bounce rate decreased) or to an increase in time needed to read an article (the articles and news releases could have become longer, but there is no evidence to prove it). Along with the decreasing bounce rate, this translates into greater BUILD UP 'site penetration' and longer time spent on the site. By adding internal linking to similar news to the website, as suggested above, both the time spent on the website and the bounce rate can be further improved.

¹⁰ <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/decrease-website-bounce-rate-infographic>

3.1.1. User experience analysis

The user experience audit highlighted several issues related to navigation on the portal, its design and content. The issues are very specific, and they are discussed in Annex 4 to this report in detail. The annex includes screenshots to illustrate each issue, as well as best practice examples, which can be followed to improve BUILD UP user experience. Below we present a table of the issues identified with a rate of their significance.

Table 1. BUILD UP user experience issues identified in the study

| Issue | Rate |
|--|----------|
| Navigation | |
| Lack of traditional drop downs in the navigation bar | Critical |
| Breadcrumb navigation does not indicate proper location | Critical |
| Overwhelming headlines differing in colour | Medium |
| Naming of categories not well structured | Critical |
| Main page | |
| Duplicated navigation of home page | Low |
| Link to login page not following standards | Low |
| Lack of easy access to 'About BUILD UP' page | Medium |
| Content | |
| Unattractive format of texts | Medium |
| Lack of consistency in presenting source links | Low |
| Incomprehensible tabs on post pages (for logged user) | Low |
| Issues in presenting search results | |
| Sign up, login page and user's account | |
| Irrelevant information displayed on the sign-up form | Low |
| Shorten message about e-mail utilisation | Low |
| Poor validation form validation | Medium |
| Error messages discouraging users to engage further | Medium |
| User's account | |
| Edit page being too long and inconsistent with the rest of the website | Medium |
| Improve field validation | Medium |
| Navigation of user's account is not user friendly | Medium |
| Inconsistency of naming Kudos ¹¹ | Low |
| Inconsistency of buttons and other components on the website | Low |
| Other issues | |
| Performance on smartphones | Low |
| Lack of error explanation | Low |
| User Experience (UX)/ User Interface (UI) Patterns | Medium |
| Visual imperfections | Low |

¹¹ Kudos is a peer recognition programme which assesses the activity of registered members.

3.2. Users' assessment of BUILD UP

This section presents the key findings from the online survey of BUILD UP users, members and potential users, which was carried out within the study. The survey was followed by interviews with seven BUILD UP users¹². Annex 3 includes the detailed survey and interview report, as well as the list of interviews.

3.2.1. Respondents' profile

The survey was addressed to three groups of respondents, depending on their level of engagement with BUILD UP:

- potential users, who have not visited it before
- unregistered users
- registered members

Altogether, 163 respondents contributed to the survey.

Based on profiling questions, the study team was able to determine that the sample of 163 respondents was composed of:

- 45 **potential users** (who confirmed they had never visited BUILD UP before)
- 50 **unregistered users** (who confirmed that they had not registered or were unsure)
- 48 **registered members** (who confirmed that they had registered)

Most of the registered members and unregistered users have only been using BUILD UP for 3 years or less (1-3 years – 30%, less than a year – 24%). Most of the users reported that they had learned about the website through their work or professional network (58%).

Slightly more respondents who contributed to the survey were male (54%) than female (44%). The largest age groups represented were 31-40 years old (34%) and 41-50 (27%).

In geographical terms, Southern European countries were the most represented, with 18% of the respondents from Spain, 10% from Italy and 9% from Greece. These three countries were followed by Belgium (8%), Germany (7%), France (7%) and Portugal (6%).

More than one in three respondents (36%) represented the academic sector, followed by industry professionals (19%). 20% of respondents selected 'other' which included mostly consultants, project managers, communication experts/officers, think-tank staff members, not-for-profit and EU organisations as well as networks and agencies. 6% represented national authorities.

3.2.2. Survey and interview findings

The usage of BUILD UP

According to the survey, only 13% of BUILD UP users visited it regularly (at least once a week). The largest group of respondents (50%) reported visiting it sometimes (at least once a month), 35% more rarely (a few times a year). The 'Practices' section was the most frequently visited (67% of the respondents reported visiting it regularly or sometimes), followed by 'Learn' (50%) and 'Topics' (48%). These sections were also considered useful by the highest numbers of respondents (68%, 64% and 54% respectively), as presented in the figure below.

¹² The study team invited for interviews 22 BUILD UP users with the highest number of Kudos, however most of them did not respond to the invitations.

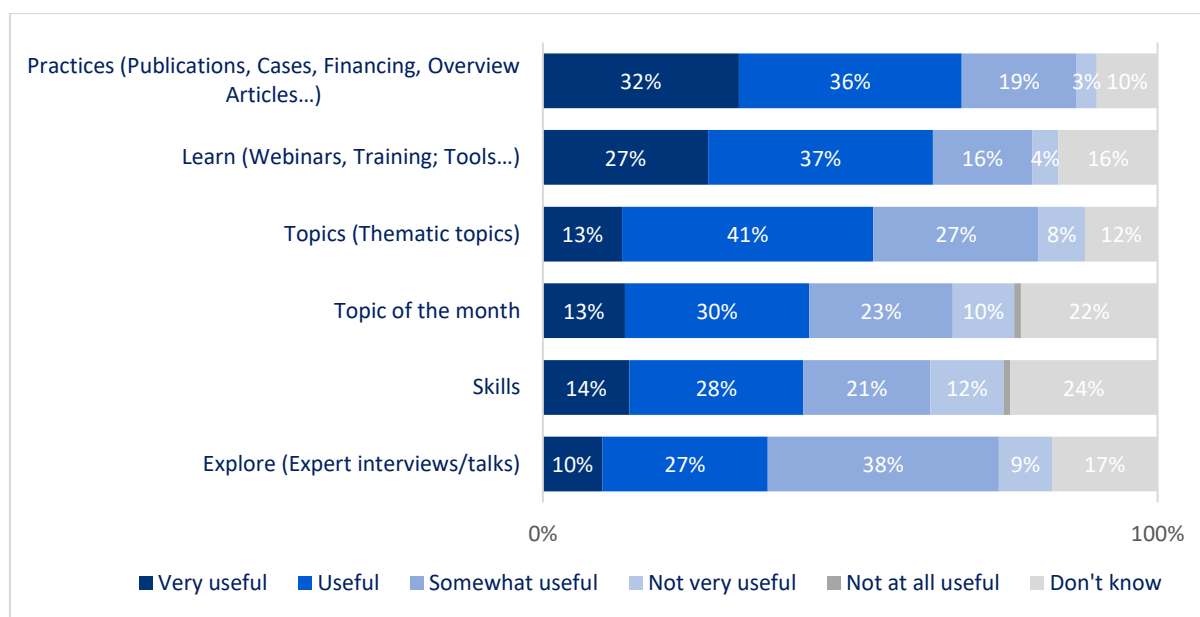


Figure 11. How useful are the following BUILD UP sections? (n=94); source: survey carried out within the study

The interviews confirmed that the sections 'News & Events' but also 'Topic of the month' were widely used by BUILD UP members in order to stay up-to-date with the newest developments in their industry.

The most popular topics on the platform were energy efficiency measures (selected by 17% of respondents), smart buildings (12%) and deep renovation (11%). The full list of topic is presented below.

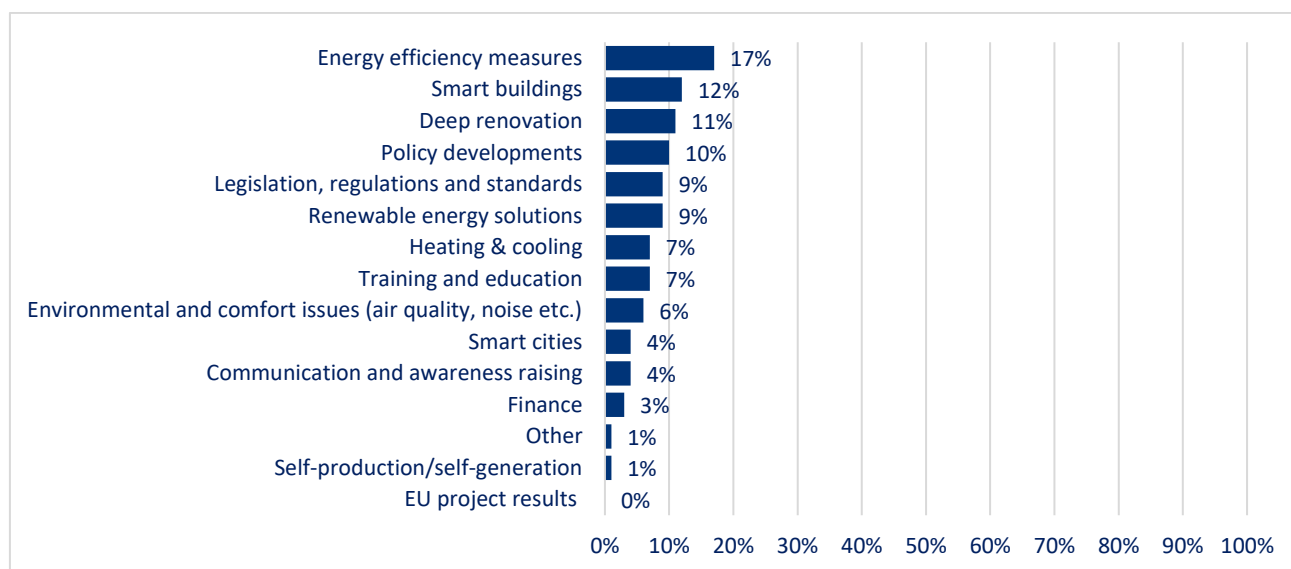


Figure 12. Which of the following BUILD UP themes are of most interest to you? (N=97); source: survey carried out within the study

As mentioned above, the vast majority of the users sought EU-level information (84%) rather than national-level information (12%) on BUILD UP. According to the survey, users and members use BUILD UP for a variety of purposes, but the most frequent was to find Commission publications and information (69% of respondents confirmed the relevance of this purpose to at least a moderate extent), followed by gathering information on specific topics and good practice/case studies (66% for both). But other purposes were also relevant for most of the respondents: seeking information on webinars and events and taking part in them, reading about market and technology trends and research results. This suggests that BUILD UP is used for many different purposes, but nevertheless more to pull information than to push it, as an option of 'posting information' was one of the two least frequently used.

Assessment of BUILD UP

General assessment

Respondents' assessment of BUILD UP was generally good. They valued in particular the quality of the content, which was rated as good or excellent by almost nine out of ten respondents (87%). They also valued BUILD UP's usefulness for their work (71% rating it good or excellent) and the information timeliness (69%). Among the four elements assessed, user-friendliness was rated the lowest, but still positive with 66% of good or excellent rates.

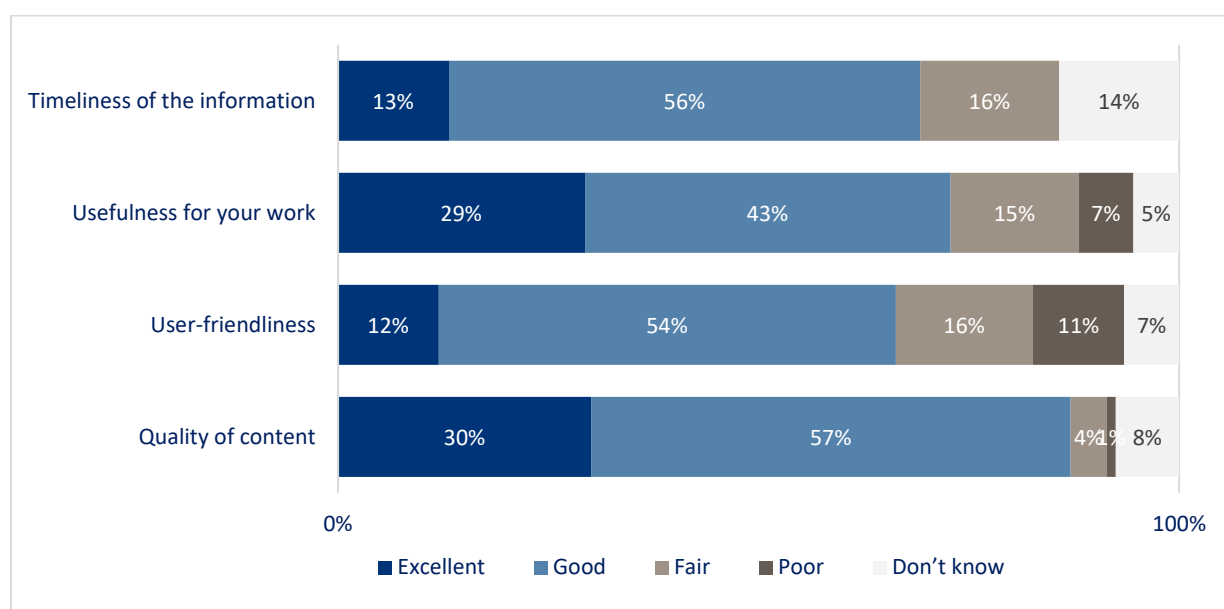


Figure 13. Figure 27 21. How would you rate the following aspects of BUILD UP? (N=91); source: survey carried out within the study

The interviews confirmed their positive assessment of the quality of BUILD UP content. However, two interviewees believed that BUILD UP offered little in terms of the actual depth of information and were not aware of projects promoted on BUILD UP containing technical guidelines and directions; their usefulness for researchers was limited.

On the other hand, the user friendliness of the portal received mixed opinion among the interviewees. The interviewees generally agreed that the visual style of the BUILD UP platform should be modernised. At present, the platform presents the content in a confusing manner and overloads the user with content. Some features are also lacking, most notably a draft option for posting content and a save option for the work bench. The interviewees also recommended that the portal introduces tools allowing for better communication with other users, for instance introducing notifications about other users posting new content. Furthermore, some of the interviewees complained about the difficulty in finding information on the website, which they had looked for. They suggested that the website should provide users with more sophisticated filtering and search options. Some of them also reported facing technical issues, for instance, with uploading a picture.

Usefulness of BUILD UP

When asked about the usefulness of BUILD UP for different objectives, the top one selected by the respondents was sharing knowledge and best practice, with half of respondents assessing this aspect as very useful and another 40% as somewhat useful. This was followed by raising awareness about energy efficiency in buildings (33% rating it very useful and 45% somewhat useful) and informing and updating about legislative frameworks (21% and 45%). It was considered less useful for building professional networks, again suggesting that the benefits of membership, i.e. the ability to find out who members are, contact other members through the website and learn about their interests are not well known. The interviewees confirmed that BUILD UP was useful for their work.

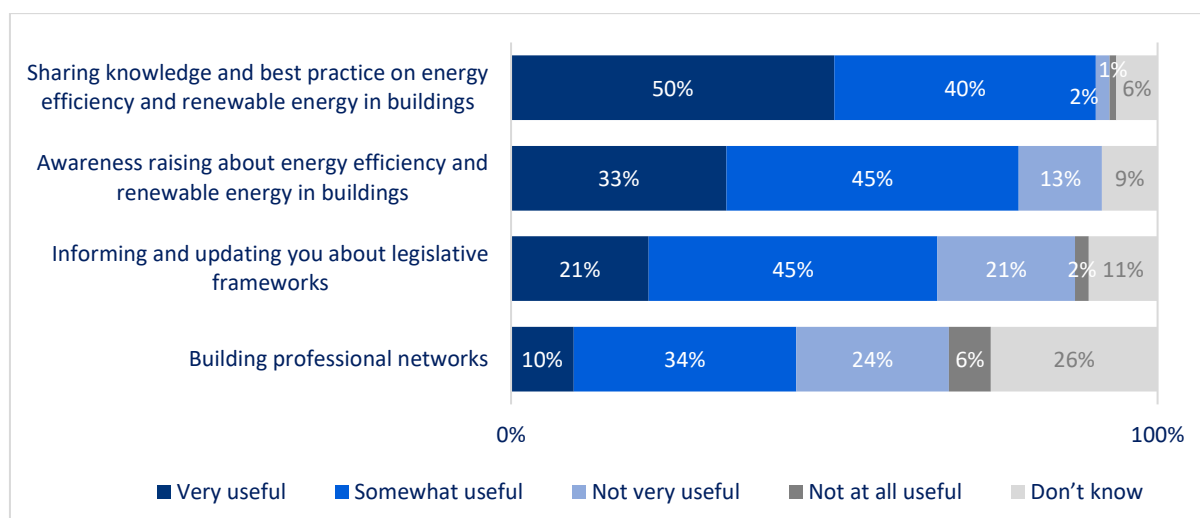


Figure 14. How useful is BUILD UP for...? (N=94); source: survey carried out within the study

Kudos' scheme

In the survey, respondents provided mixed feedback about the usefulness of the Kudos scheme. Kudos is a peer recognition programme which assesses the activity of registered members. The more active a user is, the more Kudos it gains, thus becoming easily visible and traceable for other members of the network. Regarding this solution, a similar share of respondents provided a positive answer (somewhat useful or very useful –21% altogether) and a negative one (not very useful or not useful at all – 18%). Furthermore, 52% could not provide their assessment.

In the interviews, the Kudos scheme was regarded as irrelevant, some of the respondents were not even aware of its existence (although they were registered members of BUILD UP). None of the interviewees also believed that it reached its objective in encouraging users to post more content on the platform. Thus, they were of the view that it was unnecessary to maintain this tool.

BUILD UP channels

Almost half of the respondents (47%) reported subscribing to the portal's newsletter. Regarding BUILD UP's social media channels, the most popular ones among respondents were LinkedIn (43%) and Twitter (40%). One in four respondents (26%) regarded the newsletter as very useful and another one in three (33%) as useful. Altogether 59% assessed it as useful or very useful, which is more than for the social media channels. Social media will be analysed in more details below.

Recommendations for the future

Although BUILD UP was rather positively assessed by its users, some respondents suggested possible improvements to the platform's accessibility (in particular regarding its layout and functionality related to information sharing). Others (14%) also expressed criticisms about the website's content (e.g. insufficient information on projects and best practices, on country reports and skills development, lack of a dedicated section for tools).

As regards recommendations and suggestions on how to develop BUILD UP in the future, 28 respondents provided their feedback in an open question. The two main areas for improvements were related to **user friendliness** and the **content**. Their recommendations included:

- User friendliness of BUILD UP
 - Improving the layout of the website – several respondents deemed the navigation too complicated in terms of the structure of the platform, there were too many sections, making it difficult to find content. Furthermore, some respondents deemed the website visuals outdated and for instance wished for more videos or podcasts (albeit overall there is not a

high demand for podcasts). Summarising these responses, it appears that the website could benefit from simplifying its structure and modernising its visuals. This is consistent with the results of the web user experience report that we submit separately.

- Improving the process of posting/uploading information as well as providing more guidance on how to post and creating an option to save drafts.
- Content of BUILD UP
 - Providing more information on projects and best practices for future sustainable projects
 - Providing more professional coverage of 'Skills' section (BUILD UP Skills and Construction skills)
 - Including a dedicated section for tools (calculation, simulation, evaluation of building performance and impact of renovation, Life-cycle analysis, etc.).

The three key recommendations from the interviews with BUILD UP users included:

- Updating the visuals of the website
- Introducing better tools for filtering and searching information
- Creating new opportunities for users to engage.

3.3. Performance of BUILD UP social media

As discussed above, BUILD UP uses three social media channels: Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. We present the analysis of the performance of each channel below. This analysis is followed by users' feedback about the social media channels, based on the online survey.

3.3.1. BUILD UP performance on Twitter

Twitter is a social media channel that generally stands out the most from the rest. It relies less on visual content and more on the exchange of information between profiles, in the shortest possible time, as enabled by the use of hashtags in publications to sort content.

Twitter is most often used by public figures and the media to create high-impact content that spreads across countries and communities. It is extremely popular in politics, sports, finance and news. The BUILD UP channel on Twitter gathered 7,441 followers as of 28 June 2021.



Figure 15. BUILD UP Twitter headline

Most of BUILD UP followers are in Europe (441 in Brussels, 205 in London, 151 in Paris and 119 in Madrid), but there are also many in the US (249). Most followers indicate that their language is English (52%), followed by Spanish (8.5%) and French (5.7%).

The average number of posts amounts to 106 per month and about 3 posts a day, which is reasonable for publishing a solid dose of content while avoiding excess. However, there were significant differences between months, with the highest number of posts in June 2020 (259) and the lowest in August 2020 (41).

One of the most important indicators on Twitter is the number of impressions (number of times a tweet has been seen, including when it appeared on a follower's timeline, in search results or as a result of someone liking the tweet). The number of impressions was usually above 100,000 each month in 2020, except in July, August and December. In February and May 2020, it even exceeded 160,000 and in June 2020, 200,000. However, this number decreased significantly in 2021, to about 50,000 impressions per month in January-April 2021.

The content on Twitter is accessible, of appropriate length and aesthetic. It contains emojis, is well-structured and easy to read. However, the messages occasionally include posts that do not follow the same style, especially if they are retweets or related to events. Very similar posts are published on LinkedIn, which may suggest to users that one piece of content is displayed to them multiple times and make them hide the content.

3.3.2. BUILD UP performance on LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a professional communication channel for institutions and professionals. It is characterised by a focus on a specific subject matter, the reliability of the information shared and the exclusion of anonymity from the discussion. The most common types of publications include infographics and reports, data reports, audio-visual materials and specialist advice.

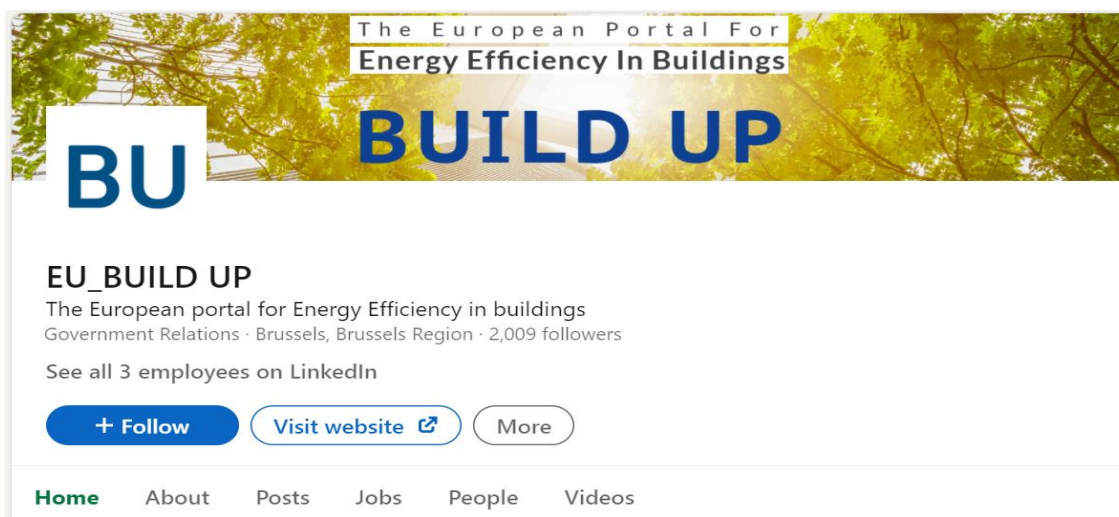


Figure 16. BUILD UP LinkedIn page headline

LinkedIn's internal data divide the audience into 'followers' (users who follow the page) and 'visitors' (users who visited the page). Followers are a key group because they can share content, encouraging others to join the BUILD UP community on LinkedIn. Therefore, the content posted on LinkedIn should take these followers' needs into account to the greatest extent. BUILD UP has 2,025 followers (as of 22.07.2021). Based on the data broken down by country of origin by LinkedIn, the largest group of BUILD UP followers on LinkedIn are users from Belgium (21%), followed by users located in Italy (16%), Spain (15%), Germany (8%) and France (7%).

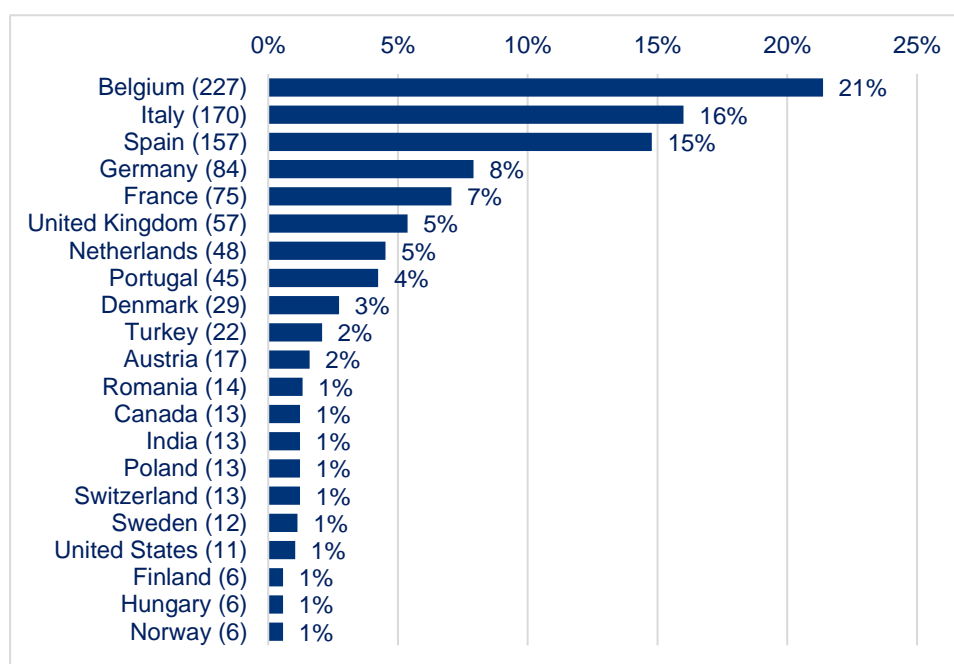


Figure 17. Location of LinkedIn followers (n=1062); BUILD UP LinkedIn analytics

The most important sectors represented by the followers on LinkedIn include Renewables & Environment (167 people), Research (160 people), Architecture & Planning (159 people), Construction (155 people), Higher education (112 people) and Government Administration (100 people).

The number of impressions, which is also an important indicator on LinkedIn, was exceptionally high in May and November 2020 compared with other months, as a result of paid advertising. In terms of organic (unpaid) impressions, the numbers in 2021 were slightly lower than in 2020.

Engagement statistics show that BUILD UP posts on LinkedIn achieve 5 reactions (likes, shares, comments) per post per day on average and 1,666 reactions between May 2020 and March 2021 overall. There were 340 shares and 27 comments in the entire period.

3.3.1. BUILD UP performance on YouTube

YouTube is a channel that mostly involves sharing video content, although from mid-2020 it has been paying much more attention to building a community around channels and therefore has developed mechanisms for publishing posts, the comment section and an algorithm. YouTube data indicate that about 77% of people watching BUILD UP content on the channel are men. More than a half (51.78%) are people aged 25–34. They are followed by people aged 45–54 (26.37%), 35–44 (16.86%) and 65+ (4.99%).

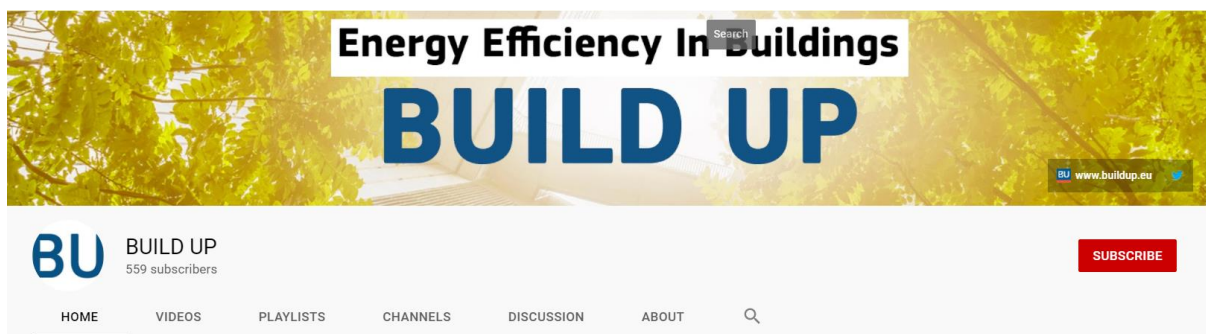


Figure 18. BUILD UP YouTube page

BUILD UP YouTube channel has 559 subscribers. Three out of four (77%) video viewers are men. More than half (51.78%) are people aged 25–34. The second largest age group are people aged 45–54 (26.37%), followed by those aged 35–44 (16.86%) and 65+ (4.99%).

The largest groups among viewers are people from the United Kingdom (842), Belgium (528), Turkey (303) and the US (285).

Most of views on YouTube (84%) are generated by external sources. Organic YouTube mechanisms (search and suggested videos) have a small share in generating views (16%).

The total number of impressions (that is, how many times your video thumbnails are shown on YouTube) in the period analysed amounted to 130,096 and the total number of views to 17,113, indicating that one in seven video suggestions ended up being watched. The average number of impressions amounted to 271 per day, with peaks in May 2020, July 2020 and September 2020.

Most of the content on the channel are videos from webinars. Most videos were played for up to 5 minutes, and the average duration was 7:10. This seems to be short, as many videos on the channel are longer than an hour.

The most popular video was 'BUILD UP | Webinar on how to operate and use building services during the COVID 19 crisis', published on 28 April 2020. It reached 7,617 views within several months (other videos had below 700 views, see table below).

Table 2. Top BUILD UP videos on YouTube

| Video name | Number of views |
|--|-----------------|
| Build Up Webinar on how to operate and use building services during the COVID-19 crisis | 7617 |
| Webinar on Guidance and examples for the EPB standards' flexibility | 630 |
| Build Up Webinar on EPB standards overview: why, how, what! | 444 |
| Build Up webinar EPB standards (III) – Whole building calculations. | 374 |
| Build Up Webinar on How to make good use of the outputs of the EPB assessments | 297 |
| Build Up Webinar DigiPLACE: Are architects ready for the digitalisation? | 292 |
| Build Up Webinar EPB standards hourly vs monthly methods | 284 |
| Build Up Webinar EPB standards linked to health and wellbeing | 262 |
| Build Up webinar EPB standards – Introduction and overarching calculation procedures | 259 |
| Build Up Expert Talk Duygu Erten, Senior Sustainability Executive, Breeam Fellow | 230 |
| Webinar on new business models to de-risk investments and kick start the EU building renovation wave | 210 |

3.3.1. Users' assessment of BUILD UP social media performance

According to the online survey, LinkedIn is the most popular channel (43% respondents reported following it), followed by Twitter (40% follow it), although it is Twitter that has more followers or impressions. This suggests that LinkedIn gathers a more engaged audience, who used the opportunity to contribute to the survey. According to the survey, only 9% of respondents use BUILD UP's YouTube channel (see figure below). This suggests that the YouTube channel is currently not significant for BUILD UP users. Nevertheless, this does not preclude it playing a useful role as an archive of information, the role YouTube often plays for this type of content for this type of audience. The RSS feed is very rarely used. This is consistent with a general trend everywhere for RSS feeds to be very little used.

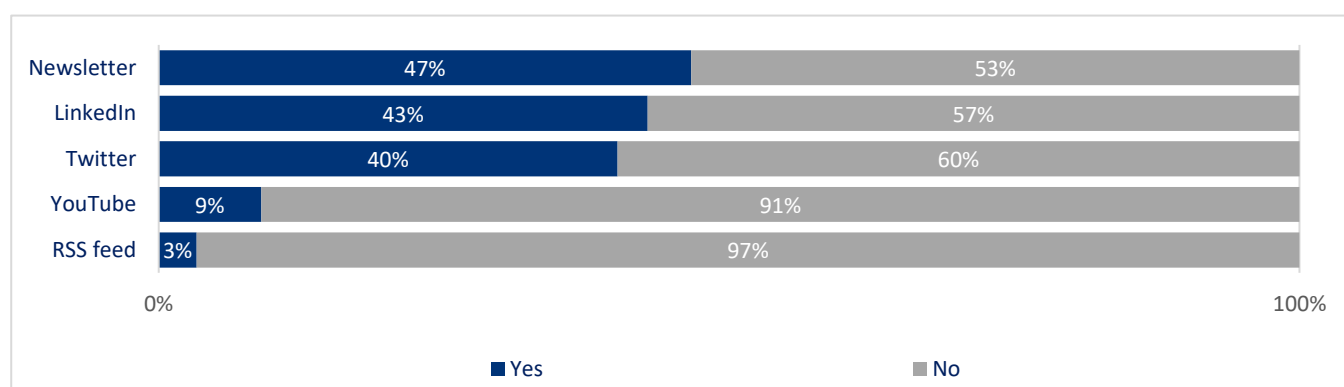


Figure 19. Do you follow BUILD UP via the following channels? (N=92)

Most BUILD UP registered and non-registered users, who contributed to the survey and who follow these channels, considered the Twitter and LinkedIn channels useful or very useful (Twitter – 55%, LinkedIn – 50%). Most respondents were not able to assess the usefulness of YouTube or the RSS feed and answered 'Don't know' in the survey.

Assessment of BUILD UP platform

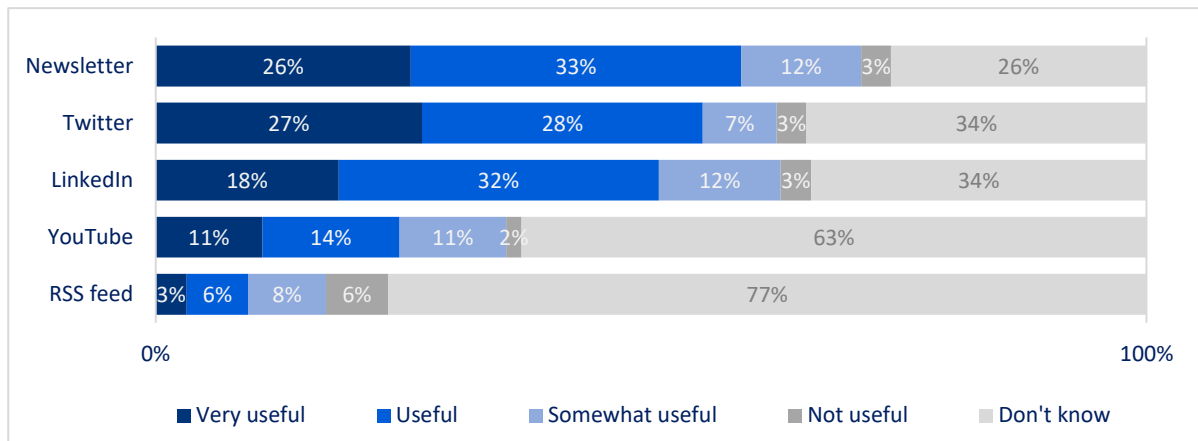


Figure 20. How useful are these BUILD UP channels? (N=67); source: survey carried out within the study

The results do not suggest a need to expand BUILD UP activity to other social media channels. Only one out of four respondents deemed that BUILD UP should start using Facebook and one out of five Instagram. However, the web analytics suggest that Facebook is an important source of visits to BUILD UP within the social media portfolio, so creating an account on this platform could still create some opportunities.

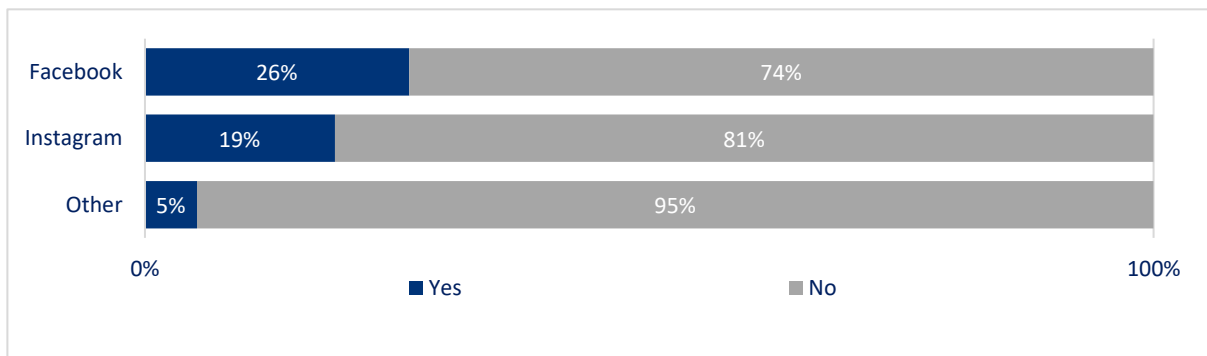


Figure 21. Which of the following channels would you like BUILD UP to use? (N=85); source: survey carried out within the study

3.4. Summary of BUILD UP performance and SWOT analysis

A major strength of BUILD UP is that it is a unique source of EU-level information, and the surveys and interviews carried out for this study showed that this is appreciated. The portal is considered to offer quality, reliable content. However, the portal does not promote these unique selling points.

The portal is reaching a broad audience across sectors, without it being possible to say what an appropriate split would be. It is also reaching a broad range of countries. To the extent that it is an objective of the European Commission that EU energy efficiency standards in buildings be a model for other countries and for international standards, having a significant audience in the UK or the US is a bonus.

However, there is no consistency in the balance between the international audience and the EU-27 audience, and the EU-27 audience is very unevenly spread, and even the audience in Germany is smaller than that in the UK.

There is a significant following on the social media most used in the business world, i.e. Twitter and LinkedIn. Engagement levels are low, but the absolute numbers compare favourably with sites on similar topics.

The design of the portal is a major weakness. The portal is working with a design from at least a decade ago, as it was developed by the previous contractor to the current one. It is thus clearly showing signs of age. The portal is accessible on mobile phones but was not optimised for that purpose. These weaknesses were identified by users and in our dedicated analysis.

The portal does not make the most of social media channels, e.g. by tailoring content to the respective user habits of Twitter and LinkedIn, and not using Facebook – as some similar portals do. Nor are analytics collected and used as comprehensively as they could to understand the audience and fill gaps.

News is the most popular feature on the site, but the news items include items which are new to the site, but not necessarily news. This is not standard practice and contrasts with the practice of some similar sites. The news section is also not as prominent on the homepage as standard practice would suggest it should be; it does not immediately catch the eye of a user.

The result is a portal of high quality that could be under threat from less comprehensive and less reliable, but more user-friendly sites. However, a redesign that also leverages interest in climate change and the recast Energy Efficiency in Buildings Directive is a major opportunity.

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats are listed below.

Strengths

- Unique source of EU-level information
- Quality of content
- Good spread across sectors / user categories
- Good performance on Twitter / Moderate performance on LinkedIn
- Strong interest in video materials
- Strong presence in some major Member States
- Strong presence in the US and some other third countries

Weaknesses

- Outdated/inherited web design / Mobile responsiveness not of standard of some competing sites
- Uniqueness as source of EU information not promoted
- Name not distinctive enough for search engine optimisation

- News items not prominent enough / Timeless items included as news items
- A need to develop (use of) web and social media analytics
- Social media items do not differentiate between Twitter- and LinkedIn-type posts
- No presence on Facebook / Poor performance on YouTube
- Geographic imbalance in membership and usage

Opportunities

- Collect and use more analytics (web and social media)
- Leverage forthcoming recast of Energy Performance of Buildings Directive
- Leverage increased awareness of climate change implications for buildings (particularly in countries with low awareness)
- Focus on EU-level news, including Horizon Europe/LIFE project results / promote BUILD UP as unique one-stop shop
- Differentiate in style between Twitter and LinkedIn posts to maximise following and engagement
- Rectify geographic imbalance through targeted promotion
- Promote benefits of membership / develop interactive community as source of news and information
- Assess potential for Facebook, Instagram, podcasts
- Define what constitutes a news item
- Drop language translation functionality, but include links to more detailed material in other languages
- Fill audience gaps with targeted promotion (by sector, age group and country)
- Change name to one more suited to SEO / more distinctive (e.g. 'Buildupeu', with redirect from buildup.eu)

Threats

- Overlap with Cordis, E3P, Construction21
- Loss of audience to other sites from current website design / lack of mobile responsiveness irrespective of content
- Other portals offer EU content which is less comprehensive but more attractive to users
- Non-EU countries do not look to EU standards as a model for international standards (loss of audience in non-EU countries)

4. Next steps: looking forward – scenarios for the future

4.1. Introduction

Based on the study findings presented above, the study team identified four different options for the future development of BUILD UP. The options are the following:

1. **Option 0** – status quo, a continuation of the current portal, without any significant changes in the design and functionalities of the portal.
2. **Option 1** (2022-2024) for the forthcoming service contract, which foresees a migration of BUILD UP to europa.eu. It foresees a general continuation of the current role of BUILD UP, but with significant improvement of its accessibility and attractiveness for users, building engagement and extending reach. This should include better reach of users in countries which are currently underrepresented, and in Associate Countries to the extent that financial and human resources allow. The timeline of the forthcoming contract (2022-2024) corresponds to the phase of interinstitutional negotiations of the proposed revision of the Energy performance of buildings directive (EPBD) and the first phase of implementation of the Renovation Wave Strategy.
3. **Option 2** (2022-2027) foresees an expansion of the portal's reach. Implementation of this option can start with the next contract, but should be conditional on BUILD UP being on track with achieving its annual KPIs and addressing weaknesses addressed within this study. It is likely that implementation of this option will need to continue during the subsequent three-year contract.

This option includes expanding the coverage of the EU's role in energy efficiency of buildings and developments in the Member States (and in Associate Countries to the extent that financial and human resources allow). The timeline of this scenario (2022-2027) may partly overlap with Option 1 and would also cover the phase of implementation of the revised EPBD.

4. **Option 3** (2025-2030) is a further expansion with a broader coverage of developments at Member State and Associate country level activities. In this timeframe, there will likely be new regulatory measures under preparation at the EU-level for the two decades to carbon neutrality in 2050. In addition, the portal could promote the EU as a model for other countries and complement the external dimension of the Green Deal.

Option 0 is a status quo baseline, which would mean continuation of current BUILD UP role and design. However, we acknowledge that BUILD UP has already been contracted for migrating to europa.eu and implementing improvements.

Overall, Option 1 focuses on solving the main issues of BUILD UP identified in this study. It is a sine qua non condition of any development of BUILD UP. Compared to Option 1, Options 2 and 3 envisage a progressively more ambitious further development of BUILD UP. These two scenarios are not mutually exclusive, but modular, both of them can be implemented depending on resources available. Effective implementation of Options 2 and 3 requires first the implementation of recommendations of Option 1, as well as successful migration to europa.eu environment.

Three criteria structure the discussion and comparative assessment of these different scenarios, namely:

- The financial resources
- The appropriate level of human resources
- The steering and policymaker involvement required from CINEA and DG ENER.

As illustrated in the figure below, the implementation of Options 2 and 3 require more financial and human resources. The timeline of Options 0 and 1 covers the 2022-2024 period, in line with the current tender for the new BUILD UP contractor. The exact timeframe of Options 2 and 3 is more open. It will depend on effectiveness of implementation of recommendations of Option 1 and meeting BUILD UP annual KPIs. Options 2 and 3 open up the possibility for further development of the platform in the next three-year

contracts until 2030. The figure depicts an indicative relation between time and effort required. The size of the blocks does not necessarily indicate the level of funding required.

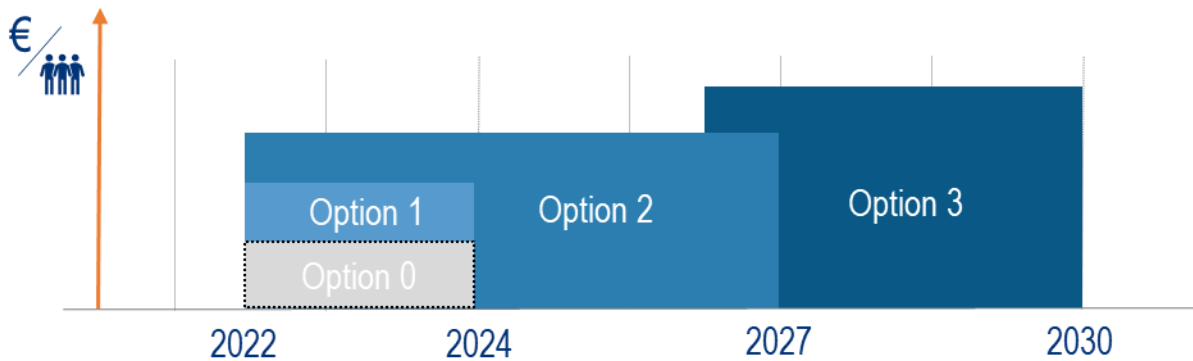


Figure 22. Three scenarios for BUILD UP - timeline and costs (indicative)

4.2. Options for the evolution of BUILD UP

The options are summarised in the table below and described in detail underneath.

Table 3. Summary of BUILD UP Options for the future

| Scenario | Objective | Timeframe | Financial resources required | Human resources required | Policymaker involvement required |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 0 baseline scenario | Status quo | 2022-2024 | € | + | + |
| 1 | BUILD UP upgrades its functionalities and content, strengthening its position as a powerful awareness-raising platform to promote the EU's role in regulating and promoting energy efficiency in buildings, in particular within the Member States | 2022-2024 | € € | ++ | + |
| 2 | BUILD UP becomes the key platform for awareness-raising and knowledge-sharing with EU and Associate country building sector professionals interested in the EU's role in energy efficiency in buildings | 2022-2027 | € € € | +++ | +++ |
| 3 | BUILD UP is the key platform for awareness-raising and dialogue with building sector professionals worldwide interested in the EU's role in energy efficiency in buildings, proactively promoting that role in synergy with the external dimension of the European Green Deal. | 2025-2030 | € € € € | ++++ | ++++ |

Option 1 (2022 – 2024)

Objectives

General objective

BUILD UP upgrades its functionalities and content, strengthening its position as a powerful awareness-raising platform to promote the EU's role in regulating and promoting energy efficiency in buildings, in particular within the Member States

- Specific objectives**
- Solve key issues with BUILD UP identified in this study
 - Reach a balanced audience across the Member States geographically and per sector

Key recommendations¹³

Technical features

- Solve main technical and other issues of BUILD UP identified in the study, including:
 - Outdated/inherited web design
 - Mobile responsiveness not on par with some competing sites and other user experience issues described in detail in section 3.2 and Annex 5 to the final report (for the Commission services only)
 - Passive use of social media (“push” not “pull”)
- Better promote the uniqueness of the platform as source of EU information, including a name change to something more suited to SEO / more distinctive (e.g. ‘Buildupeu’)
- Collect and use more analytics (web and social media), regularly carrying out surveys of the audience and user experience testing
- Improve SEO on EU-specific topics, e.g. BUILD UP should be in top three when searching for ‘revision of EPBD’
- Survey target audience once a year

¹³ Specific technical recommendations to improve BUILD UP online features and social media performance are also included in sections 3.1.1 and Annex 4 of this report.

Content

- Focus on EU-level information, including Horizon Europe/ LIFE project results / promote BUILD UP as unique one-stop shop on EPBD revision and related areas, e.g. work of DG ENV on sustainability in buildings and the Renovation Wave
- Focus on knowledge-sharing elements (webinars, interviews, etc.)
- Take a “less is more” approach to news coverage, focusing on original content and progressively reducing the role as an aggregator of news from other sources, which have other target audiences/different content priorities
- Use analytics to adapt news coverage to needs
- Drop language translation functionality, but include links to more detailed materials in other languages
- Take a “less is more” approach to the top bar with BUILD UP sections. Sections, which are regularly updated, such as publication, news and events, should have their substantial space on the home page with links to subpages with all news/publication/events. This would allow removing these sections from the top panel. The same applies to the ‘Topic of the month’ section. Section, which in fact compile news and publications, should be removed (‘Explore’, ‘Learn’, ‘Practices’). The top panel could subsequently be reorganised into: About BUILD UP, Resources, Members Area. ‘Topic’ section could be removed and replaced with an effective search engine (with filtering per topics).

Channels

- Use social media to publish news related to BUILD UP, e.g. advertising new content, webinars, etc.

Building community and networking

- Abandon Kudos scheme
- If feasible with the migration to europa.eu, keep members area / login feature to other existing community-building features: possibility of uploading content, organise webinars and face-to-face meetings

Promotion and advertising

- Actively promote BUILD UP website and content with desired target audiences
- Include paid targeted social media advertising of BUILD UP in underrepresented countries and within underrepresented categories of users
- Use other means of promotion, for instance organise or contribute to events in selected countries
- Create a Facebook account
- Actively use Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. Differentiate in style between each channel to maximise following and engagement

Main benefits of Option 1

- Improve the quality of BUILD UP
- Overcome main BUILD UP technical shortcomings and issues for users
- Develop modern, quality knowledge-sharing platform for professionals
- Balance BUILD UP target audiences and better reach different categories of users
- Become authoritative one-stop source of information on revision of EPBD (discussion in EP and Council, build-up to implementation)

Option 2 (2022 – 2027)

| Objective |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BUILD UP becomes the key platform for awareness-raising and knowledge-sharing with EU and Associate country building sector professionals interested in the EU's role in energy efficiency in buildings <p>Within this option BUILD UP further upgrades its content and functionalities subject to financial and human resources being available. Effective implementation of Option 2 requires first the implementation of recommendations of Option 1, meeting annual KPIs, as well as successful migration to europa.eu environment.</p> |
| Recommendations <i>(in addition to recommendations included in Option 1)</i> |
| Technical features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up an effective search engine |
| Content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage professional journalistic and editorial team with sectoral expertise to create quality and relevant news content which is attractive and engaging for the audience, and is targeted to their needs based on survey results and use of analytics Create external editorial advisory board to provide quarterly feedback on content Focus on EU-level news, including Horizon Europe project results; promote BUILD UP as unique one-stop shop. Only publish unique news or news uniquely tailored, i.e. written/re-written for the audience/a specific audience, e.g. related to EU policies, or the building efficiency aspects of broader news, e.g. IPCC reports, i.e. use material from other sources for inspiration but do not use as such or redirect to other portals. |
| Channels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare and publish podcasts based on webinars and re-assess if podcasts should be further developed Introduce VR/AR embedding Actively monitor use of Instagram and other social media by the sector (review six-monthly) |
| Building community and networking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively develop BUILD UP community on social media, actively engage with the community, publish engaging content, encourage interaction, moderate and contribute to discussions, reply to comments (most likely by the DG), create groups and actively moderate them |
| Promotion and advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use targeted promotion of BUILD UP in underrepresented EU countries by organising events in those selected countries in cooperation with local stakeholders (government authorities, industry associations, EC representations) Promote BUILD UP outside the EU, including in Associate Countries in the framework of the external dimension of the European Green Deal |
| Main benefits of Option 2 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on uniqueness of BUILD UP as a source of reliable EU-level information that can be regarded as a primary source as it is on the europa.eu domain Leverage increased awareness of climate change implications for buildings (particularly in countries with low awareness) so that the sector is Fit for 55 |

- Active and engaged community of users, mainly active on social media, but also contributing to BUILD UP

Option 3 (2025 – 2030)

| Objective |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BUILD UP is the key platform for awareness-raising and dialogue with building sector professionals worldwide interested in the EU's role in energy efficiency in buildings, proactively promoting that role in synergy with the external dimension of the European Green Deal. <p>Effective implementation of Option 3 requires first the implementation of recommendations of Option 1 and 2, meeting annual KPIs, as well as successful migration to europa.eu environment</p> |
| Key recommendations to implement in this scenario (in addition to recommendations included in Options 1 and 2) |
| Technical features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add further innovative modes of producing engaging content, such as meetings in virtual reality Add automatic translation technologies to provide multi-lingual content |
| Content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complement EU news with original content from Member States and Associate Countries, focusing on implementation of revised EPBD and technologies supporting effective implementation |
| Channels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish original podcasts (with unique content, not related to webinars) |
| Building community and networking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop features and tools for active users' engagement on BUILD UP platform, so that they can use it to contribute to the platform, establish networks, share knowledge and information (in place of Kudos scheme) Engage actively and daily in the moderation of the discussions and encourage users' engagement Establish channels of communication between the users and the agency/DG, so that users can contribute to policy-making / interact with policy makers (involvement of DG ENER) Promote benefits of membership / develop interactive community as source of news and information Assist Member States in awareness raising and sharing knowledge, provide regular and on demand online training and workshops for officials and other stakeholders from the Member States |
| Promotion and advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperate with influencers on social media Actively promote BUILD UP outside the EU, including in the US, the UK and China, and any other countries with a leading role in international standard-setting |
| Main benefits of Option 3 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build an active community of professionals sharing knowledge and information, so that they are prepared for carbon neutrality Boost EU industry by influencing standards internationally so that EU businesses can apply the same standards in operations in other countries as they find in the EU |

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