

## SUSTAINABLE HOUSING AND BUILDING TASK FORCE

### MULTIDISCIPLINARY VITO TEAM DEVELOPS TOTAL SOLUTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION

**The housing and construction sector is a pillar of our economy and our society. One faced with the requisite challenges in the area of sustainability: to be sustainable, our housing and construction must become social and affordable, make efficient use of raw materials and space, and have an eye for ecology. “VITO’s multidisciplinary expertise provides the answer to a total approach that includes sustainable building”, says Carolin Spirinckx, researcher at VITO.**



#### PEOPLE, PROFIT, PLANET IN CONSTRUCTION

Sustainable housing and building means integrating sustainable development in the housing and building sector. Or: finding a balance in construction projects and development between people, profit and planet as the three major pillars of our society. Sustainability in construction starts from the idea that we may not transfer the consequences of our way of living and building today to coming generations or to population groups elsewhere in the world. It comes down to account being taken, starting with the initial design stages of a building, of its impact on ecological, economic and social systems, and reducing this impact as much as possible. A transition process is underway around sustainable housing and building in Flanders, in which many organisations and instances are playing a role: from policy makers, through building contractors and other companies to knowledge institutions, NGO's and individuals. Its multidisciplinary expertise makes VITO an important knowledge partner for sustainable housing and building in Flanders.

#### TASK FORCE

“Energy, water, materials, space, noise, indoor air quality, mobility ... Sustainable building is a domain that encompasses many themes, and precisely here lies VITO's added value”, says **Carolin Spirinckx**. “Companies with building and renovation plans that they wish to realise in a scientifically based way, need a full range of experts and advisers. VITO has significant scientific experience related to transition, best available techniques, sustainability evaluations, building statistics, mobility scenarios... It also has technological expertise in the area of sustainable energy and intelligent energy networks, water management and full recycling, management of waste and raw materials as well as cradle-to-cradle solutions, indoor climate ...”

To optimise the benefit of these specialisations and to offer an integrated package to business, VITO established the Sustainable Housing and Building Task Force last year. This is a one-stop shop where companies and organisations can come for technological and expert advice on sustainable building. The Task Force offers a unique helicopter view that is absolutely tailored to the multi-criteria approach to sustainable building. It has direct links to all possible areas of expertise within VITO that can contribute to a sustainable construction project.

## DE NEKKER AND BALMATT

This past year, the Sustainable Housing and Building Task Force was able to help many companies and organisations with their construction projects. **Liesbet Van den Abeele**, VITO researcher: “For example, the Province of Antwerp wishes to renovate sports hall *De Nekker* in Mechelen in a sustainable way, and also to build a new indoor swimming pool at the same location. The Province wanted to examine which terms swimming pool and sports hall should fulfil to be sustainable, and called upon VITO's expert advice in this area. VITO defined ambition levels for the different aspects of sustainability. These resulted in recommendations related to energy and ventilation, the use of water and materials, acoustics, site accessibility ...”

“At the request of the Province of Antwerp, VITO also assessed the offers and designs of the construction candidates concerning their sustainability. The Province of Antwerp also called upon the sustainability expertise of VITO for renovation of the *Sportpaleis*. And VITO is also applying its expertise in sustainable building to its own construction plans for the new cleantech facilities at the former Balmatt site in Mol. In short: there is tremendous interest in sustainable housing and building among companies, local governments and other organisations. The integrated solutions offered by VITO's Sustainable Housing and Building Task Force are perfectly suited to this demand”, concludes Liesbet Van den Abeele.