

## PRESS RELEASE

17 April 2019

### Report to the Walloon Parliament

#### *The Walloon Region's public policy to improve the quality of private housing*



**The Belgian Court of Audit has carried out an audit on the Walloon Region's public policy to improve the quality of private housing. As a matter of fact, the Region devotes annually over 50 million euros to achieve this purpose through grants, loans and tax reductions. The Court has examined on the one hand whether the Region's policy is efficient and effective and on the other hand if it is subject to assessments leading, if necessary, to adjustments.**

Obviously, 20 % of the dwellings do not meet comfort standards and almost 10 % are even unfit for habitation.

Generally speaking, the measures that help improve the quality of private housing are barely assessed although they are subject to frequent adjustments. This undermines the policy's effectiveness: the Region cannot fully estimate the effects nor the administrative costs of awarding grants for improving the energy performance of dwellings. The energy saving measuring method relies on the assumption that improvements are exclusively due to the grants from the Region.

From a financial point of view, the Region does not have a clear vision of the budgetary cost of the renovation strategy endorsed in 2017 and therefore does not know its feasibility.

There has been no impact assessment or cost-benefit analysis of the grants revaluation enforced since 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018. Besides, the endorsed renovation strategy has not yet been incorporated into the regulations on grants and on energy performance of buildings. Yet, not only does this strategy set a long-term course, but it also links the regional actions with the climate and energy objectives imposed by the European Union. According to this strategy, 85 % of dwellings should have an A, A+ or A++ label by 2050 in order to reduce by five the energy consumption of the housing stock. One should know that today, only 1 % of the housing stock is eligible for one of these labels. Yet, the requirements imposed on citizens are far too modest in this matter and have even been lowered compared to the standards of 2014. In other words, neither the current regulations on energy performance, nor the regulations that will be in force as from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 will allow the Region to achieve the objective it committed itself to, i.e. reducing its greenhouse gas emissions.

As for public health, the improvement policy of the housing quality does not take sufficient account of the risks related to radon gas pollution: sanitation works are not a prerequisite for allowing grants to other kinds of works improving the quality of housing.

***Information for the press***

*The Court of Audit controls federal, community, regional and provincial public finances. It contributes to improving public management by providing parliamentary assemblies, managers and audited services with useful and reliable information, resulting from an adversarial examination. As a collateral body of Parliament, the Court operates independently of the powers it controls.*

The report “The Walloon Region’s Public Policy to Improve the Quality of Private Housing” (*La politique publique de l’amélioration de la qualité de l’habitat privé*) to the Walloon Parliament and a press release are available in French only, as well as this summary on : [www.courtofaudit.be](http://www.courtofaudit.be).