

Energy certification becomes mandatory to sell or rent a property

The A-to-G efficiency scale reaches buildings as a requirement to operate in the property market. An informational label that places energy consumption and emissions at the centre of the buying decision.

Since the start of 2013, energy certification of buildings has become a requirement for selling or renting a property. The measure brings to housing a logic that consumers already recognise from other areas: an efficiency scale from A to G, where the letter A marks the highest performance and G the lowest. It is the same classification that has appeared for years on fridges, washing machines and televisions, now applied to a building's envelope and systems.

An informational label, not a minimum threshold

The scope of the obligation is worth clarifying. Certification is mandatory in order to rent or sell, but no specific grade is required to do so. The classification is indicative: it informs the buyer or tenant of the property's real energy behaviour without blocking any transaction. Its value lies in making visible a variable that until now fell outside the calculation, the building's energy consumption and the associated CO2 emissions.

This transparency has market consequences. Two properties with similar characteristics cease to be equivalent if one holds an A rating and the other a G, because the first translates into energy savings and the second into a monthly extra cost. According to the Spanish Association for Quality in Building (ASECE), the difference in energy spend between homes at opposite ends of the scale can reach 70%.

An incentive for retrofit

The measure is designed to raise awareness and activate the retrofit sector. The reference figure is clear: an investment of around 5,000 euros in improvements can be recovered within five years, after which net energy savings begin. The rating stops being an administrative step and becomes an economic argument for intervening on the existing building.

Who issues the certificate and what it analyses

The study and certification fall to an authorised technician, that is, an architect, technical architect, engineer or technical engineer, who must also submit a proposal of possible improvements to raise the building's efficiency. The analysis is not confined to a single parameter but runs across the whole energy system of the home:

- Heating, cooling and domestic hot water.
- Lighting and energy generation systems.
- Energy class of the appliances.
- The envelope, covering walls, floor slabs, windows, floors, roofs, doors and chimneys.

The rating obtained must appear in listings published in magazines or online, so that a property's level is available information before any visit.

Cost, validity and management

The price of the certificate depends on the certifying company chosen and is not regulated by the State, although an administrative fee of around 30 euros is expected. The document is valid for ten years, and the autonomous communities are responsible for managing its inspection. The measure initially entails an increase in expenditure, but the long-term balance is projected in terms of savings: the equivalent of 13,400 tonnes of oil per year in avoided energy consumption.

The PAPIK Group reading

At PAPIK Group we welcome the initiative and trust it will help internalise the importance of energy efficiency in construction, both for the economic saving and for the reduction of environmental pollution. Mandatory certification sets a common floor of transparency, and its main merit is educational: it accustoms the market to valuing a building's energy behaviour. That same criterion is what carries standards such as Passivhaus further, standards that are not content to classify consumption but reduce it from the design stage.

A label does not make a building efficient; it only names what already is. The real leap in quality begins when efficiency is decided in the design, not in the certificate.