



**CONCERTED ACTION  
ENERGY SERVICES  
DIRECTIVE**



# **Effective communication with SMEs on energy efficiency**

## **Executive Summary**

**WGR 6.2**

**Core theme 6  
Working Group Report 2**

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## Introduction

In accordance with Article 7 of the Energy Services Directive, Member States (MS) shall ensure that greater efforts are made to promote energy end-use efficiency and that appropriate information and advice is provided to final consumers. Citizens and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) should be supported to make better informed decisions with regard to individual energy consumption and to change their behaviour accordingly.

There is major potential for energy savings among SMEs in Europe. But the challenges are extensive. One of the most important barriers is the lack of sufficient knowledge among SMEs about the possibilities and potential of energy efficiency. Communication measures are therefore extremely important in order to overcome this barrier, but this is genuinely difficult. Information or communication activities alone are generally not sufficient; they must be supported by other activities to have an impact.

This research looked at a number of key factors that should be taken into account thoroughly when designing and executing communication schemes, strategies and activities to promote energy efficiency among SMEs. The findings derive from both scientific research and practical experiences.

First of all, we must realise that SMEs, as well as individuals within the SMEs, *cannot be considered as homogenous groups*. Any communication activity needs to have specific target groups, going through specific channels, using specific language and so on.

It is essential to establish a *trusting relationship* between the sender or conveyor of information and relevant individuals within the SMEs. This can often come into place if the sender makes use of trusted intermediaries, such as trade associations, chambers of commerce or sector specific consultants. An example of this comes from a Danish trade association that equipped some of its consultants/advisors (not energy advisors) with an energy screening tool to easily assess the energy performance of a company. From the simplified screening, the advisor could find those companies with an energy saving potential big enough for a larger energy audit to be profitable.

When this relationship is established, a number of successful approaches can be applied. Communication should be sector-specific and address sector-specific challenges. Knowledge transfer, with descriptions of successful examples from similar companies, should be supported. Interaction with existing networks and clustering of companies with common goals are effective. A major success factor is identification and appointment of an “energy champion” within the company, particularly if he/she has access to a network of professionals within other companies.

Messages must be customised to the target group and often simplified. They must connect to the challenges and drivers that exist as a high priority for companies:

- The argument of profit and economy is always important when promoting energy efficiency. But for several reasons, it is wise to put more emphasis on the risk of losing money rather than the potential of gaining money.
- Energy efficiency measures can also be used to increase the productivity of the company. Specific examples from real companies in the same or a similar sector provide a great opportunity to introduce energy efficiency activity.
- Simplify and give SME's secure and sector-specific advice and models. This will save them time and make them feel secure with trustworthy, concrete advice. One example of this is benchmarking websites, where companies can anonymously compare their energy use (after an audit) with other companies within the same sector. This is being developed within a few industrial sectors in Sweden, and also within the European project BESS (<http://www.bess-project.info/>).

The transfer of customised knowledge about energy efficiency to the SMEs is a major key to success – knowledge that can easily be transferred into practical action. As the potential for profitable energy efficiency is very big within the SMEs of Europe – especially the industrial SMEs – we should make every effort to expand cooperation and communication with them. But we need to do it with accuracy and intelligence, with “big ears” and a humble attitude. We must remember that *energy efficiency probably isn't perceived as the most important issue* among the majority of companies and this must be considered when attempting to communicate with them. But, importantly, they do have a lot to gain from practical and devoted energy efficiency action.

For good practices from Member States on this topic and other similar topics please refer to the CA ESD website: <http://www.esd-ca.eu/private-area/good-practices/good-practice-factsheets/information>

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The Concerted Action for the Energy Services Directive II (CA ESD II) was launched by Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) in May 2011 to provide a structured framework for the exchange of information between the 29 Member States during their implementation of the Energy Services Directive (ESD).

For further information please visit [www.esd-ca.eu](http://www.esd-ca.eu) or contact the CA ESD Coordinator Lucinda Maclagan at [lucinda.maclagan@agentschapnl.nl](mailto:lucinda.maclagan@agentschapnl.nl)

