



**CONCERTED ACTION
ENERGY SERVICES
DIRECTIVE**



SMEs: best practice in communication programmes and projects

WGR 6.3

Core Theme 6

Working Group Report 3 on tools for communication with industrial SMEs

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Article 7 of the Energy Services Directive requires Member States (MS) to ensure that greater efforts are made to promote energy end-use efficiency and that appropriate information and advice are 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 significant potential for energy saving among SMEs in Europe, but there are a number of barriers, including a lack of knowledge among SMEs about the possibilities for and the potential of energy efficiency. Communication measures are extremely important in order to overcome these barriers.

This research deals with two approaches which the EU and its MS are using to communicate with SMEs:

- Energy efficiency programmes and policy measures with a focus on communication
- Funding and delivering communication projects (which in turn also represent a type of policy measure)

The research looks at successful policy measures and offers insights on how to design or identify successful communication projects. The results build upon the findings of a previous report within the CA ESD: *Effective communication with SMEs on energy efficiency*.

Communication is not the same as information – this is an important statement for both programmes and projects. Communication is a two-way process, involving interaction and response in a personal encounter, which can include the provision of information. The use of communications in the SME sector can increase the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of energy policies and programmes, as well as increasing potential energy savings.

Successful Programmes

A combination of mandatory and voluntary approaches is needed when addressing the SME sector. This can help both governments and SMEs to take on their responsibilities and also stirs up a willingness to shoulder these responsibilities.

A number of policy measures have been found to be successful, all of which contain elements of human interaction and communication:

- Energy audit programmes
- Quick E-scans using a database¹
- Extensive network approaches
- Energy management tools within voluntary agreements

Successful Projects

The report identifies a number of evaluated energy efficiency projects which use communication as their main tool for targeting SMEs. The 12 projects represent practical examples of how communication can be used as a key measure in achieving energy efficiency. The projects target a variety of sectors and use different communication tools.

A general conclusion from researching communication projects is that *there are relatively few which have evaluated the effects* of communications on energy efficiency. Only 2 out of the 12 identified projects had figures on estimated energy savings as a direct consequence of their work.

However, most projects have evaluated effects in other ways. Many projects have launched webpages where it is possible to aggregate information and conduct surveys. These show that energy savings of 2-10 per cent have been reached by using information tools. Other projects have gained a greater understanding of the energy efficiency potential of different sectors by collecting and analysing information.

The majority of the 12 projects have evaluated effectiveness in terms of the number of communication activities and the number of contacts with different target groups. All projects evaluated the effectiveness of the methods and tools used and may offer important experiences when designing future communication projects aimed at improving energy efficiency. Energy systems are made from the interaction of both social and technological factors. Even if it is challenging to measure the effects of activities, communication remains a very important tool for influencing behaviour and decisions around energy consumption.

Some general recommendations can be drawn from the projects. These include:

¹ A *Quick E-scan* is a quick and simple, yet sophisticated, method where the relevant people within the company and an auditor conduct a structured conversation in order to find the most important areas for energy efficiency improvements.

- Adjust communications strategies and measures to fit your target audience group
- Develop sector specific tools
- Use simple and clear messages
- Use well-known channels to communicate to your target group
- Collaboration increases your chances of reaching your target audience
- International collaboration can be cost effective, but all direct communication with target groups should be done locally, to help address multilingual and multicultural challenges
- Find creative ways to gain interest
- Target top management to achieve long-lasting results
- Support information with action
- Consider long-term goals when planning and closing the project

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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).

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