REGIONS FOR ECONOMIC CHANGE CONFERENCE 2010

Workshop on Low Carbon Economy: Energy Efficiency in Regions and Cities
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Introduction

The European Commission’s Regions for Economic Change conference on 20-21 May 2010 focused on sustainable growth and looked at new challenges and opportunities for regional policy.

A workshop entitled ‘Low-carbon economy: Energy Efficiency in Regions and Cities’, which took place during the second day of the conference, was dedicated to exploring the challenges and opportunities that regions encounter when moving to a low-carbon, resource-efficient economy.

Such a shift is now widely recognised as a necessary step to guarantee the sustainability of Europe’s economic model.

It attracted a wide range of participants, ranging from regional policymakers, structural fund managing authorities and EU officials to representatives of civil society organisations. They discussed recent policy developments to promote renewable energies and energy efficiency and shared best practices from regions which have become front-runners in sustainable energy consumption.

EUROPE’S 2020 GOALS: A KEY ROLE FOR REGIONS

The EU has set itself ambitious goals for 2020 of reducing emissions by 20% compared to 1990 levels, increasing the share of renewable energies to 20% of its energy consumption and increasing energy efficiency by 20%. The aim is to move towards a sustainable, resource-efficient economy, create new green jobs and reduce Europe’s dependence on fossil fuel imports.

Speakers at the event were united in stressing that regions have a crucial role to play in fighting climate change by implementing European and national climate and energy legislation, as well as developing energy efficiency and renewable energy schemes tailored for local conditions. Moreover, it was acknowledged that local authorities are ideally placed to advocate for behavioural change as they are the closest level of administration to citizens.

EU INTEGRATED ENERGY AND CLIMATE POLICY

The climate and energy package, which was adopted in 2009 to help deliver the EU’s climate goals for 2020, has already provided regions with a policy framework with which to cut emissions and develop renewable energies.

A key element of the package is the new Renewable Energy Directive, which sets national targets for the share of energy to be sourced from renewables and will arguably be primarily implemented by Europe’s regions, where the majority of decentralised energy projects will be realised.

At the same time, the revised EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS), which covers the 2013-2020 period, and the Effort Sharing Decision, which sets caps on national emissions from sectors not covered by the EU ETS, require emissions reductions across the economy as a whole.

Energy efficiency was not addressed directly by the package, although energy savings represent one way of meeting the objectives. Instead, specific energy efficiency legislation has been developed under the EU’s Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2007-2012, which sought to offer businesses incentives to develop more energy-efficient buildings, processes, appliances, cars and energy systems.

Efficiency standards introduced in this context include the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and the Eco-design Directive, under which minimum energy performance standards for energy-using products like light bulbs, televisions and refrigerators have been adopted.

In the transport sector, the EU has set limits on CO₂ emissions from cars and introduced fuel efficiency labels for tyres.

The European Commission is currently preparing a new Energy Efficiency Action Plan.

Useful links

- European Commission: EU climate and energy package
  http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/climate_action.htm
- European Commission: Energy efficiency
  http://ec.europa.eu/energy/efficiency/index_en.htm
Challenges and opportunities

Energy policy specialists opened the workshop with a roundtable debating the main challenges and opportunities for energy efficiency in regions and cities.

The fact that over 70% of Europeans live in urban areas – generating over two thirds of the EU’s CO₂ emissions – highlights the crucial role played by cities in cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Speakers therefore pointed out that the battle against climate change will effectively be fought in cities.

While regions and cities were identified as the best level for delivering sustainable societies, participants singled out a number of obstacles that are preventing them from fulfilling their potential.

Pierre Calame, president of the council of the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation for Human Progress, argued that cities and regions have insufficient information about their energy flows, ecological footprint and overall ‘metabolism’. He thus called for an increased effort to improve knowledge of the way that cities function. He complained that regional administrations can be compartmentalised, preventing them from adopting comprehensive energy efficiency strategies.

Calame also called for more focus on governance, arguing that multilevel governance is still not the general rule despite the need for a common strategy involving both the national and local levels.

He warned that energy-efficiency policies are at risk of turning into yet another sectoral policy, when instead a crosscutting approach is needed.

Nevertheless, he stressed that each of the challenges actually represents an opportunity.

BUILDINGS’ POTENTIAL FOR SAVINGS STILL UNTAPPED

Participants noted that this holds particularly true for energy-efficiency improvements, which require both incentives for retrofitting houses, for example, and raising awareness among citizens for cost-effective measures to save energy.

Buildings use 41% of all energy consumed in Europe, more than both transport and industry. Participants therefore identified the buildings sector as a priority area in which regions can play a major role in bringing about energy savings.

Indeed, the workshop concluded that the sector’s huge potential for energy-efficiency improvements is still untapped.

The European Commission estimates that a 30% reduction in the energy consumption of buildings could be achieved by 2020, and yet the sector has improved its energy efficiency only very slowly: by just 9% since 1990 compared to 24% for industrial installations.

Europe’s housing stock is renewed at a rate of around 1% per year, which makes it necessary to concentrate on existing buildings, participants noted.

Indeed, according to Tom Brookes, head of the Energy Strategy Centre at the European Climate Foundation (ECF), retrofitting buildings can offer very quick returns on investment. But the challenge lies in packaging a large number of retrofits together to make a compelling revenue case, he said. The solution lies in organisation, which cities are good at, he said, urging them to take on an advocacy role.

In addition to regional efforts, Brookes called for legislation to set binding energy-efficiency standards in order to provide incentives for businesses to develop greener products and services.
Stephan Singer, global energy policy director at WWF, pointed out that some cities and regions have successfully implemented standards for buildings even without any national legislation in place, arguing that these examples could provide templates for policymakers to emulate.

Singer referred to Germany in particular, where the ‘Passivhaus’ standard has allowed very low-carbon houses to be built without the need to develop new standards via national legislation.

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<th>THE ENERGY PERFORMANCE OF BUILDINGS DIRECTIVE</th>
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<td>The main piece of EU legislation in the buildings sector is the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), the recast of which was approved by the European Parliament in May 2010. The recast aimed to set tougher efficiency standards to help the EU to meet its 2020 goals and help European consumers to cut their energy bills.</td>
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<td>The new directive requires all new buildings to comply with high energy-efficiency standards by the end of 2020. Public authorities will assume a leading role here, as they must implement the new requirements two years earlier than the private sector. The energy performance of existing buildings will also have to be improved when major renovations are made, provided that the improvements are cost-effective.</td>
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**Harnessing Cohesion Policy for Energy Efficiency...**

The roundtable was followed by a policymaking discussion exploring sustainable energy policy from the different perspectives of the EU, regions and cities.

One of the main challenges explored was how Cohesion Policy can respond to new challenges and sustainable energy priorities. Doing so was deemed crucial in the midst of the economic crisis, which was identified as a window of opportunity for Europe to move towards a sustainable economic model and gain a competitive advantage in the field of green technologies.

A common theme running throughout the discussions was that cities and regions are the best places to design and implement comprehensive retrofitting programmes. To give the local authorities the tools to this, the EU and member-state governments were urged to provide a favourable legislative framework to target energy efficiency and provide direct funding for improving it.

**...At EU Level**

The European Commission presented changes made to EU Cohesion Policy in response to the financial and economic crises and the resultant shifting priorities, which allow all member states to use their regional development allocations to fund energy-efficiency and renewable energy projects also in existing residential buildings, supporting social cohesion.

In the 2007-2013 programming period, the share of planned Cohesion Policy spending allocated to energy represents €10.8 billion, or 3.1% of the total. Most of this (€9 billion) is assigned for sustainable energy, while €1.8 billion has been set aside for investments related to traditional energy and interconnectors.

Nevertheless, the European Commission’s Strategic Report 2010, published in March, showed that implementation of Cohesion Funding dedicated to energy is lagging behind and that the global recession has impacted negatively on the implementation of programmes.
Maud Skäringer of the European Commission said that substantial funds are still available during the remainder of the current Cohesion Policy programming period, and encouraged member states to seize new opportunities to invest in efficiency.

...REGIONAL LEVEL

Jean-Luc Sadorge, director for agriculture, forests, tourism and the environment at the Regional Council of Alsace, then presented a regional vision of sustainable energy in the French region of Alsace.

Sadorge said that the programme had promoted the rapid uptake of collective wood-burning boilers and photovoltaic solar panels. He emphasised the positive impact of synergies between EU funding in support of the initiative, since ‘Energivie’ not only draws on ERDF funding but also on the CIP (Intelligent Energy Europe) and FP7 programmes.

REGULATORY CHANGES TO COHESION POLICY TO FUND ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND RENEWABLE ENERGIES IN HOUSING

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Regulation was amended in May 2009, in order to allow all member states to use EU regional development funding for energy-efficiency and renewable energy investments in housing, previously allowed only in EU-12.

Up to 4% of national ERDF allocations can now be used for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in existing housing in all member states. Member states must define the eligible categories of existing housing in national rules, in order to support social cohesion. The Commission estimates that this could represent an investment of up to €8 billion. However, this money is not new and is instead generated by shifting priorities within the existing budget.

Useful links

• 6 May 2009 amendment to ERDF regulation

‘ENERGIVIE’ PROGRAMME

Alsace developed the ‘Energivie’ programme to encourage the development of renewable energies and low-energy buildings in the region and set quantifiable objectives. The programme provides technical assistance through its four regional support officers, supports pilot projects and provides administrative and financial assistance.

The second stage of the programme saw the region refocus its efforts on developing low-energy buildings, accompanied by a training scheme to provide professionals with the necessary skills to do so.

Alsace Energivie represents an effort to mobilise businesses in a competitiveness cluster focused on “positive energy” buildings. The innovation hub today comprises 42 projects, worth some €211 million.

Useful links

• Energivie [official Alsace region website]:
http://www.energivie.fr/

• European Commission: Energivie:
He argued that the competitive hub created by the programme has the potential to cooperate with similar clusters, both nationally and internationally, stressing that the initiative offers a way of bringing together companies, students and researchers from across the region.

...AND CITY LEVEL

Joan Antoni Baron, deputy-president of Diputació de Barcelona, presented an example of municipal-level action on sustainable energy in the Barcelona Provincial Council, carried out via the Covenant of Mayors.

The Province of Barcelona is a ‘Supporting Structure’ under the Covenant, promoting it and offering technical and economic support for the development of Sustainable Energy Action Plans (SEAPs) to the municipalities in the province which have signed the Covenant. 130 of Barcelona Province’s 311 municipalities have already signed it.

The model chosen by the Province of Barcelona allows the municipalities to create economies of scale, as photovoltaic equipment can be purchased en masse and maintenance costs can be shared, Baron explained. He added that with the Council acting as a single intermediary between municipalities and banks, better loan conditions are available.

THE COVENANT OF MAYORS

of Mayors since it was launched in 2008, and all have committed to reducing their CO₂ emissions by more than 20% by 2020.

Upon joining the initiative, local authorities must agree to submit a Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP) detailing the action they intend to take to meet the target and commit to regularly reporting on implementation. They also commit themselves to organising Local Energy Days.

Assistance is provided by ‘Supporting Structures’, which are public administrations able to provide technical and strategic assistance and financial support to municipalities which are willing to sign up to the Covenant of Mayors, but lack the necessary skills and resources to prepare and implement a SEAP.

Useful links

- Covenant of Mayors

http://www.eumayors.eu/home_en.htm
Examples from the regions

The second part of the workshop presented best practices on how regions are financing energy efficiency improvements. The Czech Republic, for instance, takes advantage of its success in emissions trading to invest the funds generated from selling emissions allowances in housing, explained Jan Kriz, director of the department of EU funds at the Czech Environment Ministry.

Further examples were provided by regions which use financial engineering instruments to leverage additional private investment on top of EU funds to improve energy efficiency.

COMBINING GRANTS AND LOANS

The speakers agreed that public funds must be used intelligently to ensure that they have a catalysing effect. It was suggested that Regional Policy should increasingly move towards combining grants with innovative financing mechanisms, such as revolving funds, to ensure the sustainability of funding given that public finances are tight at times of economic and financial crisis.

Here, the potential to use ERDF allocations as the basis of a revolving fund to leverage private funding was explored. This approach adds longevity to the benefits of Regional Policy funding, as returns on investment can be re-used for future energy efficiency projects rather than simply spent as a one-off grant, the speakers suggested.

In practice, repaid loans will thus be recycled and will continue to contribute to regional efforts to save energy and increase the competitiveness of local economies.

CZECH REPUBLIC: FUNDING ENERGY EFFICIENCY MEASURES IN BUILDINGS

The Czech Republic uses a combination of the Cohesion Policy programme and revenues from emissions trading to channel resources to reducing emissions from the buildings sector. The potential energy savings of households are estimated to represent 30.5% of the energy savings achievable in the Czech Republic.

In addition to using its Operational Programme Environment allocations for increasing the share of renewable energy to 13% of the final energy consumption, the country has developed the Green Savings Programme to finance energy-efficiency measures. The scheme focuses on support for heating installations using renewable energy sources, refurbishing buildings to improve energy efficiency and building houses with passive energy standards.

The programme is financed by funds raised from selling emissions credits under the Kyoto Protocol. It is expected to provide 25 billion Czech crowns for energy efficiency by the end of 2012.

Useful links

- Green Savings Programme: Czech Republic
  http://www.zelenausporam.cz/sekce/582/about-the-green-savings-programme/
ESTONIA: REVOLVING FUND INVESTS IN ENERGY EFFICIENCY OF HOUSING

The Credit and Export Guarantee Fund KredEx was founded in 2001 by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications with the aim to improve the financing of enterprises in Estonia, decrease export-related credit risks, enable people to build or renovate their homes and promote energy efficiency in Estonia. Since 2009 KredEx also provides long-term renovation loans to renovate apartment buildings and improve energy efficiency by a minimum of 20-30%.

The revolving fund replaced a previous grant scheme, which covered 10% of renovation costs. Among the reasons for moving away from grants were problems such as insufficient funding, the fact that they supported single works rather than complex renovations and the fact that the grants were only available after the beneficiary had already paid for the costs.

The revolving fund is made up of €17 million from the ERDF and additional funding from the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB). It grants favourable funding to two commercial banks, which are then able to give out loans with longer repayment periods and lower interest than normal loans.

Useful links

- Credit and Export Guarantee Fund KredEx
  http://www.kredex.ee/2

REVOLVING FUND FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY

1. ERDF to equity of the fund
   ERDF 17 Million €

2. Additional funding up to 50% of total
   KredEx (Fund) 49 Million € (+15% self-financing, total 57 mln €)

3. Favorable funding to the commercial banks, interest 4% to end-beneficiaries
   Development Bank (CEB) 29 Million €
   State guarantee

4. Loan to the apartment associations. Commercial Bank takes the risk of the lenders
   Swedbank
   SEB
   Apartment Building
   Apartment Building
   Apartment Building
Estonia chose to move from a grant scheme to a revolving fund to support energy efficiency improvements in the housing sector precisely as a result of the loan scheme’s ability to provide more substantial funding, said Mirja Adler, head of the housing division at the KredEx. State support granted through the loan scheme is in fact bigger than the 10% support offered via the previous grants, and loans are often needed for renovations in any case, she explained. Administrative costs and increased opportunities to renovate smaller buildings, she said.

Lithuania had a similar experience as it chose to move away from a previous government grant scheme to continue renovating the country’s housing stock with the help of a holding fund using the JESSICA financial mechanism developed by the European Commission, the EIB and the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), said Arūnas Remigijus Zabulėnas, Lithuanian vice-minister for environment. The idea was to reinvigorate efforts to address the concerns of the 57% of households that are dissatisfied with their homes, revive the construction industry in the midst of the economic downturn and reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels, he said.

The experts pointed out that some of the challenges with the innovative approach included a general aversion to borrowing during an economic downturn, suggesting that the self-financing part could in fact be matched with grants.

RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS

They also stressed the need to carry out public awareness campaigns to provide people with information about the new opportunities. Adler pointed out that setting up a revolving fund can thus be time-consuming and require long negotiations.

Nevertheless, the financial engineering products are expected to deliver significant energy savings, Zabulėnas stressed.

Adler said that since the fund started operating in 2009, there has been a lot of interest in using it. Zabulėnas, on the other hand, said that Lithuania planned to modernise 24,000 houses by 2020, halving the energy consumption of each and saving 125 MWh per year.

LITHUANIA: HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF JESSICA

Lithuania makes use of the EU’s JESSICA financial instrument to support renovations for energy efficiency. The JESSICA holding fund set up in Lithuania amounts to €227 million, with €127 million coming from the ERDF and €100 million from national co-financing. 20 house-owner associations have already said that they are ready to make use of the instrument as soon as the contracts have been signed. The first contract between the EIB and a financial intermediary was signed in June.

JESSICA will provide long-term loans with a fixed 3% interest rate for the implementation of all modernisation measures, including such energy efficiency measures as the replacement of windows and external doors, fitting insulation and installing renewable energy technologies. Additionally, 50% of costs incurred in preparing technical documentation are reimbursed - along with 15% of the loan principal - if a certain level of energy efficiency is achieved.

Useful links

- JESSICA holding fund in Lithuania: Presentation by Lithuanian Vice-Minister for the Environment Remigijus Zabulėnas

ELENA SUPPORTS PROJECT PREPARATION

Although substantial investments will be required to increase the energy efficiency of buildings and the renewable energy used in them, only limited action to improve the situation is currently being taken, said Juan Alario, associate director of the EIB. To bridge the gap, the Commission and the EIB have developed the ELENA technical assistance facility, which provides grant support to regional and local authorities to mobilise investment in efficient ways which can then be replicated, he said.
Alario noted that the conditions required for launching a city energy programme are willingness to tackle a new challenge, preparation of a plan involving a large enough programme to attract investors and cut transaction costs, and early action on thinking about how to make projects bankable and involving investors and financiers.

The EIB associate director argued that some renewable energies and around a fifth of the energy-efficiency potential can also be developed without grants in cities. However, these are needed for building envelopes and sustainable transport, for instance, he said, pointing to difficulties experienced by cities in financing expensive programmes.

Alario argued that the challenge lies in explaining how ELENA works, as it is an innovative approach. It makes a link between actual investment and technical assistance by requiring the ratio between investment and technical assistance to be a minimum of 25.

The facility has raised significant interest, mostly in cities which have signed the Covenant of Mayors, as they have the drive to cut emissions, Alario said. Currently, most of the ELENA pipeline is in public buildings using energy service companies (ESCOs), he pointed out. He added, however, that ELENA could be complemented by financing instruments to expand to other sectors, such as transport projects as well as social and private buildings.

The EIB director stressed that project preparation support needs to be complemented with an appropriate legislative framework and financial support.

**LITHUANIA**

**SUCCESFULLY IMPLEMENTED PROJECTS (TELŠIAI)**

**BEFORE**

45 apartment multi family building

**AFTER**

- Insulated external walls and roof
- Windows replaced
- Glazing of balconies
- Modernization of the heating substation and the heating systems
- Energy efficiency improvement - 60%
The European Investment Bank (EIB) offers a number of instruments to provide financial support for improving the energy efficiency of buildings in Europe’s cities and regions.

**JESSICA**

JESSICA, or Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas, was created by the European Commission, the European Investment Bank and the Council of Europe Development Bank as a financial engineering instrument to support investment in sustainable urban development. It combines financial products such as subsidies, loans and guarantees to leverage additional investment.

JESSICA is a new way of using the Structural Funds, as member states can use some of their allocation to make repayable investments in projects which are part of an integrated plan for sustainable urban development. The investments, in the form of equity, loans or guarantees, are then delivered to projects by transferring funds from the Operational Programmes into an urban development fund or a holding fund.

**ELENA**

EIB funding is also available via the EU’s new European Local Energy Assistance (ELENA) facility, which is designed to help local and regional authorities make investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Eligible investment programmes include energy efficiency improvements and the integration of renewable energies in buildings, sustainable urban transport and more efficient local infrastructure, such as the development of smart grids or infrastructure to refuel alternative fuel vehicles.

ELENA aims to mobilise investment by covering some of the cost of any technical support needed to prepare, implement and finance the investment programme. This includes feasibility studies, energy audits, tender and contract preparation and additional staff for project implementation units.

Technical assistance is financed through the Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) programme, which funds projects aimed at delivering the EU’s energy and climate change objectives. Involving partners from at least three EU countries, they are expected to act as catalysts for projects in other countries, making technologies widely available and creating favourable market conditions for their adoption.

**Useful links**

- JESSICA
  http://www.eib.org/products/technical_assistance/jessica/index.htm

- ELENA
  http://www.eib.org/products/technical_assistance/elena/index.htm
Further information

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Regional Policy http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index_en.htm
Intelligent Energy Europe http://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent/
The EU climate and energy package http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/climate_action.htm
Covenant of Mayors http://www.eumayors.eu/home_en.htm
EIB
ELENA http://www.eib.org/products/technical_assistance/elena/index.htm
JESSICA http://www.eib.org/products/technical_assistance/jessica/index.htm
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/climate_action.htm
REGIONS
Energivie (official Alsace region website) http://www.energivie.fr/
KredEx credit and guarantee fund http://www.kredex.ee/2
Green Savings Programme: Czech Republic:
http://www.zelenausporam.cz/sekce/582/about-the-green-savings-programme/
Workshop programme

09:00 - 10:45
WORKSHOP SESSION, PART 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

CHAIR:
Katarina Mathernová, Deputy Director General European Commission, Regional Policy DG

Round table discussion moderated by Frederic Simon, Editor of Euractiv.com

• Tom Brookes, Head of Energy Strategy Center (ESC), European Climate Foundation
• Stephan Singer, Global Energy Policy Director, WWF
• Pierre Calame, President of the Council of "Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation for Human Progress"

POLICY MAKING DISCUSSION

• Maud Skäringer, European Commission, Regional Policy DG
• Jean-Luc Sadorge, Director for Agriculture, Forest, Tourism and Environment at Regional Council of Alsace
• Joan Antoni Baron, Deputy-President of Diputació de Barcelona & Mayor of Mataro

11:15 - 13:00
WORKSHOP SESSION, PART 2: RESPONSES AND GOOD EXAMPLES FROM THE REGIONS

CHAIR:
Fabrizio Barbaso, Deputy Director General, European Commission, Energy DG

SPEAKERS:

• Jan Kriz, Director, Department of EU funds, Ministry of Environment (CZ), "Energy Efficiency Measures in the Building Sector – Czech Experience”
• Mirja Adler, Head of Housing Division, KredEx (ET), “Energy investment in Housing – Estonia”
• Arūnas Remigijus Zabulėnas, Vice-Minister of Environment (LT) “Lithuania: Modernisation of multifamily buildings using the JESSICA financial instrument”
• Juan Alario, Associate Director, European Investment Bank (LU), “ELENA: A project preparation scheme”