

Press Release

Brussels, 22 June 2011



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For immediate release

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“Individual measures on energy efficiency will not make a difference without a long-term vision” says Eurima

Eurima, the European Insulation Manufacturers Association, thinks that the proposal for a Directive on Energy Efficiency, adopted today by the European Commission, has developed into a disappointing enumeration of individual measures while failing to contribute to a long-term vision on the strategic role of energy efficiency in future EU energy and resource policy.

“We do not disagree as such with the proposed measures, especially those targeting the building sector” said Jan te Bos, Director General of Eurima “but this was supposed to be a “guiding” Directive, providing a common framework and a clear way forward for increased energy efficiency implementation. Instead, the tabled proposal bitterly demonstrates the European Commission’s reluctance to accept that the EU must lead the way in a global transition towards a new energy model, where energy efficiency and renewables will be the principle building blocks”.

Recently, the Commission was giving more signs of recognition to energy efficiency as a catalyst for a competitive, sustainable, low carbon economy. “But apparently”, continued te Bos, “when-push-comes-to-shove other forces and interests linked to the *old energy model* prevail. Such an attitude will clearly jeopardize the Union’s ability to reach its 2050 climate goals”.

Eurima encourages the Commission to feel confident to pursue, at high political level, all recent messages calling for a bigger role for energy efficiency and savings, especially in the building sector, which consumes 40% of EU’s final energy and as such provides the greatest potential for energy savings. Also, the EU executive body should team-up with Member States that are already taking the lead in this area while feeling encouraged by a recent European Parliament poll confirming that 80% of EU citizens are actually favouring more constraining Energy Efficiency policy.

According to Eurima, there are several examples in this proposal that illustrate the discomfort of the Commission:

- Article 6 and Annex V ignore the possibility for utilities to deliver energy savings through investing in deep renovation of buildings. This means that the proposal is actually disregarding the first most cost-effective energy efficiency measure, that could provide up to 90% energy savings in the building sector;
- Energy savings are not even defined. This is a regressive move as compared with the previous Energy Services Directive, which included a clear definition);
- The established target of 3% renovation of public buildings has been weakened from what is set out in the Energy Efficiency Plan adopted in March: Only buildings of more than 250 m² are covered.

Additionally, the vivid last-minute debate on the possible negative consequences of the proposed Directive on the EU ETS system is quite symptomatic of the lack of ambition surrounding energy efficiency: instead of focusing on how the enormous potential of energy savings can be deployed to the benefit of the EU, we seem to be only looking for reasons why it can’t be done.

Energy efficiency is the priority-tool to ensure independence from external energy suppliers, to combat fuel poverty, to stimulate the economy and employment, while combating climate change. It is the most cost-efficient way to get there; in times of economic hardship it is difficult to understand that policy makers are reluctant to engage.

“Planting a few trees and then sitting and waiting for them to grow into a forest simply is not good enough” concluded te Bos “We need to plant the entire forest right now and in an increasingly narrow time-frame. The money is available, individual Member States have proven it!”

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Eurima

- Eurima is the European Association of Insulation Manufacturers and represents the interests of all major mineral wool insulation producers throughout Europe. Eurima members employ over 20,000 people across Europe with the installation of insulation products accounting for an estimated 300,000 man-years
- Eurima members manufacture mineral wool insulation products. These products are used in residential and commercial buildings as well as industrial facilities. Glass and stone wool insulation secure a high level of comfort, low energy costs and minimised CO₂ emissions. Mineral wool insulation prevents heat loss through roofs, walls, floors, pipes and boilers, reduces noise pollution and protects homes and industrial facilities from the risk of fire.

2. Energy Use in Buildings

- Currently over 40% of all Europe’s energy is used in buildings, this is more than is used in either transport or industry.
- Measures such as roof and wall insulation can cut this energy use in half and save the EU the equivalent of 3.3 million barrels of oil a day.

3. Cost Savings from Action

- A concerted effort to reduce energy use in buildings across the EU 25 would save Europeans approximately 270 billion EURO a year in energy costs.
- This figure is based on a finding of the Ecofys VI (2006) study, which used the “then” peak price of 70 USD a barrel of oil as a basis for the calculation; the most recent peak price was just over 110 USD a barrel. The cost savings potential is therefore even higher.

4. Environmental Benefits

- The major environmental benefit from reducing energy use in buildings is a decrease in carbon dioxide emissions.
- The technical potential from buildings across the EU is a CO₂ emission reduction of 460 million tonnes (Mt) per year, which is more than the EU’s total Kyoto commitment.

5. Job Potential

- Improving energy efficiency in buildings would require a major effort to renovate existing homes, which has the potential to create significant jobs across the EU.
- Reducing energy demand in buildings has the potential to create 2 million new jobs and pave the way to sustainable growth across the EU.

For further information on energy efficiency in buildings, please visit www.eurima.org or contact:

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