

A large teal circle containing the text 'Information kit 11' and 'Energy-efficient SMEs'. The background of the entire page is a photograph of a wind turbine in a field of tall green grass under a blue sky with white clouds.

Information kit 11

Energy-efficient SMEs

Small is sustainable

Small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make up some 99% of businesses in Europe. Although each of these smaller firms consumes relatively small amounts of energy – with a correspondingly minor impact on the environment – collectively, their effect is massive. Moreover, with rising energy prices and uncertainty over the security of future supplies, boosting energy efficiency makes business, as well as environmental, sense.

Although most environmental policies focus on big industry, SMEs can also boost their energy efficiency and introduce renewable energy technologies, which are often local and small-scale by nature. However, SMEs often lack the resources, information and expertise to benefit fully from the opportunities offered by sustainable energy.

The European Union and its Member States are working to improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy among SMEs – both to boost their viability and meet environmental targets. However, given the relative inelasticity of energy supplies and the inability of alternative energy sources to replace conventional ones in the short term, more efforts to boost energy efficiency are needed.

The SME energy challenge

In fact, many smaller businesses are actually unaware that they can reduce their energy consumption – and energy bills – by lowering their carbon footprints.

In order for SMEs to be able to adapt, they need to be aware of the latest energy-efficient technologies and other means of cutting their energy consumption. In addition, they require training and access to expertise.

The Change project, funded by the Intelligent Energy Europe programme, aims to do just that. Coordinated by Eurochambres, the European association of chambers of commerce, the project seeks to help SMEs optimise their energy use by developing a European network of intelligent energy advisers at chambers of commerce and industry (CCIs) and by kick-starting or enhancing concrete assistance to enterprises.

About 60 CCI staff members from 12 EU Member States will undertake training and exchanges of experience to obtain basic knowledge about energy efficiency and cost-efficient



applications of renewable energy sources, with an underlying assumption that firms can realise 10-20% energy savings through no-cost or low-cost measures.

More information:
<http://www.eurochambres.eu/Content/Default.asp?pageid=232>

Intelligent energy management in SMEs

A wide range of actions can be undertaken in an SME to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. It can range from turning off lights when you are not in a room or buying more energy efficient office equipment, to establishing sustainable mobility plans for employees. Fostering intelligent energy behaviour in the company can lead to energy savings and lower emissions, often at very little cost.

Office equipment, such as computers and printers, need to be used efficiently and turned off at night. In addition, air



conditioners consume a lot of energy. During the summer a company, could set the A/C to a higher temperature while allowing a lighter dress code for employees.

Reducing emissions should also not only cover the in-house activities of employees. Indeed, a company can decide to set up an employer mobility plan with the aim of reducing its transport impact and influencing the travel behaviour of employees, suppliers, visitors and customers. This strategy encourages the use of alternatives to the car, such as public transport, walking, cycling, or working from home, by its staff and sometimes its visitors. Other examples are the use of car sharing and car-pooling by employees. The measures chosen by the company have to suit its and its staff's circumstances. For instance, encouraging cycling to work is unrealistic if all the employees live a great distance away from the company.

Concrete examples of mobility plans can be found at:
http://www.eltis.org/cs_search.phtml?search_start=1&concept_id=14

Promoting a responsible energy use at the office is not only good for a company's image, it can also encourage employees to take home the same behaviour.



Opportunities for SMEs

Rationalising energy consumption is a challenge for SMEs, but it also presents them with opportunities. The growing interest in energy efficient and environmentally friendly technologies has led to a growing market for eco-products. Eco-innovation is a major focus of the EU's Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (2007-2013), with support for smaller businesses a priority.

Certain initiatives can help develop low-carbon businesses in urban areas. One example of this is the Europe-wide Covenant of Mayors which seeks to create sustainable energy cities which can, in turn, generate local business opportunities. Enterprises can also reap more indirect benefits from boosting their energy efficiency and reducing their ecological footprints, namely proving that they are socially and environmentally responsible firms.

Efficiency in co-operation

Enhancing the energy efficiency of European SMEs requires close co-operation and coordination on numerous fronts. The Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) has expertise in providing support to enterprises, including in the field of sustainable energy. EEN plays a valuable role in communicating to SMEs and raising their awareness of EU sustainable policies and targets. In addition, the services of local and regional energy agencies can also address directly or indirectly, small and medium-sized businesses. As an example, local and regional energy agencies may help SMEs implement a mobility plan for their staff.

Development of synergies and co-operation between local and regional agencies and EEN members could provide SMEs with knowledge and high-value expertise. Joining forces in this way would also help involve SMEs in the issues related to sustainable energy and allow them to benefit from the opportunities created by the switch to a low-carbon economy.



Good practice SME energy toolkit

Figures suggest that a typical craft SME can realise energy savings of up to 30% if they implement the right efficiency and other measures. However, very few of these small enterprises are in a position to take advantage of these potential savings. Funded by Intelligent Energy Europe's SAVE programme area, 'E-Check in Craft SME' developed an easy-to-use energy checking tool for specific SME sectors in five European countries: carpenters in Bulgaria, bakers in Germany, bricklayers, glass producers and paint manufacturers in Greece, food producers in Ireland and meat producers in Spain.

In total, more than 300 SMEs were involved, receiving practical help to reduce their energy consumption by identifying easy energy saving measures.

The project also trained 180 entrepreneurs to conduct energy audits in their area of expertise. They carried out more than 260 of these. This not only benefits the businesses being checked, but also creates new business opportunities for the auditors.

<http://www.energy-check.org/the-project>

Good practice

Energy efficiency benchmark

Funded by Intelligent Energy Europe's SAVE programme area, the BESS project helps food and drink SMEs in to enhance their energy efficiency through the implementation of energy management systems targeted at their sector.

Easy-to-use web tools have been developed, such as an 'energy management implementation model' and an e-learning system. The project is also creating an international benchmarking scheme for energy consumption, enabling SMEs to compare their performances with other companies in the same sector. The tools have been tested in more than 60 SMEs in 11 European countries.

In March 2007, the project released the final version of its handbook for the e-learning scheme. It is available for downloading on the project's website. In September 2007, a follow-up project, exBESS, was launched. It seeks to expand BESS's reach to eight more countries and a number of additional sectors, including textiles, carpets and machinery.

http://alpha.cres.gr/bess/servlets/bessStatic/en/ex_index.html



What is ManagEnergy?

ManagEnergy is an initiative of the European Commission Directorate-General for Energy and Transport. It aims to support local and regional actions on energy efficiency and renewable energies through training workshops and on-line events. In addition, information is provided on case studies, good practice, European legislation and programmes.

ManagEnergy is also a European network of local and regional energy agencies (LEAs). These agencies promote the introduction of good energy management practices, support sustainability, provide information and guidance, and offer other services depending on local needs.

www.managenergy.net

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