

Summary of Conference Outcomes

European Conference on Local and Regional Energy Management Agencies on 6 November in Centre Borschette, Brussels.

1. INTRODUCTION

In general, the basic concept of the conference in inviting all local and regional energy management agencies to a single one-day start-up event was received very positively by conference participants. Also the two main objectives of the conference were generally welcomed:

- to launch future **co-operation and transfer of good practice among all interested energy management agencies and networks** for the promotion of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources, including clean urban transport, at local and regional level, and to foster the link between the local and regional energy management agencies and the European Commission;
- To involve local and regional energy management agencies in **the design of the local action within the new programme Energy Intelligent Europe** and to clarify the role of energy agencies within the new programme.

Comments that have been received thus far show that the energy agencies are committed to work together in a European Partnership with the Commission (Obs.: the analysis of conference evaluation forms is still underway and supplementary evaluation forms are arriving).

2. CONCLUSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE

Green Paper approach confirmed

- (1) Issues and approach of the Green Paper on security of supply were confirmed to be relevant at local level.

Need and character of local action: better co-operation, best practice database, commitment of local authorities

- (2) Local level action is crucial for energy efficiency and for the development of decentralised renewable energy production. The necessity of better co-operation between agencies and facilitation of access to good practice and other relevant information was repeatedly mentioned throughout the conference. Establishing a single reliable data base with information on existing good practice, local actors and other locally relevant energy data is an important tool in order to develop and implement local action.
- (3) Local action can only be successful if there is a joint approach between the agencies and local authorities. Strong support from the local authorities is crucial in order to establish framework conditions and an environment that allows agencies to act successfully. This aspect is also important for future pilot projects at local level supported under the EU energy programmes.

New priorities for EC-support of local action: concrete projects instead of start-up subsidies

- (4) In the EC financial support to local action, a new approach should be applied: instead of pure start-up subsidies for local agencies in the future, we will support concrete local action within broad transnational partnerships on priority issues, for example, within the buildings and transport sectors. Exchange of experience and good practice together with information, training of installers and awareness raising were considered to be the most important issues that should be addressed. Facilitating the co-operation of energy agencies e.g. with help of thematic groupings focused on key issues helps to avoid reinventing the wheel. There is a huge potential among the agencies to learn from each other.

Further legal initiatives are needed

- (5) Support programmes are necessary but not enough; further legal initiatives are needed, such as the directives on buildings, biofuels, CHP, public procurement, minimum energy efficiency standards or labelling.

Local action on Transport

- (6) Transport is an issue of increasing importance regarding energy consumption and environmental effects. Energy demand of transport need also to be taken into account when making a global assessment of the energy demand of buildings, offices, holiday resorts etc. A change in transport patterns like modal split, number and length of journeys etc. is often decided at local level. Introduction of clean vehicles with low consumption, alternative fuels and driver behaviour but also transport-planning and -organisation are important issues at local level. Local transport plans and energy plans should be co-ordinated and good practice widely replicated.

Local action on buildings

- (7) Energy efficiency in buildings and in the tertiary sector can provide huge benefits and fast results. Many local actions on rational use of energy in buildings have a pay-back period of less than two years. Also, integration of decentralised production of renewables in these sectors provide an important potential. Apart from energy aspects, these activities enhance also the quality of life e.g. via better indoor climate conditions. A priority initiative on local action to improve buildings should complement the proposal on the buildings directive and thus amplify the effects.

Candidate Countries have a huge saving potential and should participate in local activities

- (8) Candidate Countries have a huge potential, particularly in energy efficiency. However, their starting point is often a different one (e.g. in transport). Candidate Countries should be supported to build up a network of local actors that allows them to participate fully in the foreseen European activities at local level, including the action on transfer of good practice. This requires awareness raising and sensibilisation of the governments of Candidate Countries and their local authorities on energy issues at large. This should allow them to leap frog, which would prevent Candidate Countries from repeating the mistakes of the EU countries in the past.

3. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS OF VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

In order to work efficiently with hundreds, maybe with thousands of actors at local level, we need to exploit the potential of modern technologies. This will allow us to meet more regularly with local actors on specific questions with corresponding low cost and savings in travelling time.

The virtual conference was divided into two parts: to an audio-video streaming and to an Internet chat. As far as the audio-video streaming is concerned, 393 successful streams were handled in total during the day involving 40 different external PCs with 11 simultaneous connections at maximum. Although energy agencies were interested in this new way of working, the low number of participants shows that there are important barriers to be addressed before next events.

Some of the 'virtual attendees' followed the streaming during the whole day without participating actively in the chat. These cases have been identified as coming from the CEE Countries.

As far as the Internet chat is concerned, there were in total 114 comments/questions/replies forwarded during the conference from some 25 active participants. The content of the questions ranged from technical ones to the future of local agencies and energy policies discussed during the day.

The Commission needs to work closely with a group of voluntary collaborators among the energy agencies and other energy actors that are ready to invest on this new tool and that can demonstrate the usefulness of the technology in achieving concrete objectives. During the coming year before the next annual conference, at least one thematic group (e.g. on buildings) should aim at using mainly virtual conferencing facilities to develop their work. Learning from this exercise can then be demonstrated in the next annual conference. This action will be facilitated by the service provider.

4. IMMEDIATE FUTURE ACTION

On the basis of the Conference outcomes, the Commission would like proposed that concrete action be taken before the next year's annual conference as follows:

- Include the suggestions received during the conference and those that will be received in written format during the coming few weeks into the work programme for the new programme 'Energy Intelligent Europe';
- Develop a web site and a database on good practice and other relevant energy data for the needs of local actors on energy efficiency, renewables and local transport, including a full list of all European energy agencies with descriptions of their main expertise, address details, etc;
- Start-up of first thematic workshops within the coming six months, including at least one which would function mainly on the basis of the modern information tools tested during the conference;
- Identification and analysis of the first 30-50 good practice cases, loading of these cases into the database and the realisation of a pilot test on the user-friendliness of this tool within a number of local and regional energy management agencies and other relevant actors as well as within a sample of local governments.

More information on this action will be available on this web page within soon. Conference participants will be informed through e-mail when this information is available. Meanwhile, you are welcome to send you evaluation form to Ms. Veronique Dumont (veronique.dumont@cec.eu.int).