



## Reflection Group

**Report of Informal Meeting with Dick Roche TD,  
Irish Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach,  
with special responsibility for European Affairs**

**3<sup>rd</sup> May 2004, 15:30  
Arklow Bay Hotel, Co Wicklow, Ireland**

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### **1. Briefing Note to Minister Dick Roche, TD**

#### ***Communication: ICTs, Language, Translation and Localization***

The European Commission expects that ICT and streaming media may facilitate better communication between people from different countries and languages.

It has developed an innovative application to enable viewers from remote locations to follow events in multiple languages. The application integrates streaming video, speakers' slides, and chat into one interface for live events.

This new ICT tool is being pioneered through the ManagEnergy Initiative of DG Energy and Transport, which aims at promoting energy efficiency, renewable energies and clean transport at local and regional levels. [www.managenergy.net/refgrp.html](http://www.managenergy.net/refgrp.html).

The 'Reflection Group' offers strategic advice to the ManagEnergy Initiative from a local and regional perspective. We normally meet at the European Commission in Brussels but the next meeting, however, will be held in Dublin in celebration of the spirit of the 'Day of Welcomes' for the 10 new member states, in their formal accession to the EU.

One concern of the group is efficient communication with the high number of geographically dispersed localized actors, in different languages particularly in the enlarged Union and I am certain that Minister Dick Roche, T.D., will have a great deal of wisdom to offer the group on this subject.

The question arises of how to communicate with local actors, such as local energy agencies, located anywhere from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, including the remote regions which are now accessible by internet.

## 2. Minutes of meeting

Gerry Wardell: introduced Dick Roche to the Reflection Group and explained the busy schedule that the Minister had over the weekend because of his role in the formal accession of the 10 New Member States to the EU, which had just taken place in Dublin on May 1<sup>st</sup> during the Irish Presidency of the EU. Gerry expressed thanks to the Minister for taking the time to join the Reflection Group today.

Dick Roche: began with emphasising the importance of Communication issues within the European Commission – emphasising the importance of virtual / computer based network systems in all areas of business and at community level. He emphasised the importance now for 450 million citizens of the EU to know what is going on at the Commission. It is important for people to be able to plug into and participate in the Commission – it is a logical use of IT - and is an asset for the Reflection Group.

Engaging people in policy is important and the European Commission has failed in communicating many of the facts to its citizens in the past. Promoting Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy technology – according to the Lisbon Agreement – can be achieved through intelligent use of the information at a local level – as local actions can contribute more to these European-wide objectives than action at any other level.

Gonzalo Molina: Promotion of Sustainable Energy can be achieved at a local level through local / regional energy agencies with co-operation from the European Commission. He noted that citizens are the Architects / Engineers / Professionals who can direct sustainable energy at the local level.

Advanced communication system is important for networking within the Commission – live events benefit real-time information and therefore facilitate real communication.

Q from Dick Roche: Why deal with local Energy Agencies?

A from Gonzalo Molina: The European Commission develops Community Law – therefore the bottom-up approach is best suited for CEMR, the Council for European Municipalities and Regions.

Dick Roche: It's important for the network of communities to contribute to the Community possession/ownership of any Policy etc.

Q from Dick Roche: How is Wind Energy perceived by the various countries or what is the opposition to it?

A from Ian Byrne: (UK perspective) It is important to promote wind energy as community-based ownership. Problems occur where planning is conducted without direct involvement of Municipalities – i.e. decision-making governance through the community is important.

Legislation: e.g. preparation of proposals for Directives in wind energy - experience has shown that the time taken for top-down approach (i.e. through Governments) is very time consuming and nothing happens during this time - therefore during this time the vested willingness to proceed with the process is lost - i.e. the momentum is lost. It is therefore a better approach to gather the interest via bottom-up (community interest) thereby capturing positive activity without any lag-time.

Q: from Grzegorz Wisniewski (Poland) – could there also be a possible ‘help-desk’ (person to person via telephone instead of email or internet) organised through ManagEnergy to facilitate partner searches for the new agencies? – much time is spent by new agencies trying to locate information – when what they really just want is a person to tell them specifically where they need to find their information.

Gerry Wardell asked for any conclusions drawn from this session:

**1.** Applying the energy scenario to all sectors – transport / Agriculture / Education – is governance through the authorities or through the citizens? – Citizens need to understand the problems and authorities need to understand the citizens.

Q: What is an example of ‘good governance’?

A: ManagEnergy is a good example – because it is a tool for members to use and transfer knowledge and participate in the community work.

**2.** The reason why the local energy agencies are so important is that the European Commission is community law – where the community is the citizen and therefore the bottom-up approach to issues becomes most effective.

**3.** Public enquiry forums in Renewable Energy planning (eg. wind energy) are usually at the end of the procedure and the problems arise from lobby groups – there is a danger in generalising situations and scenarios to give ‘false witness’ to projects – it is important to make impact assessments independent and objective.

End of meeting:

Gerry Wardell thanked all the associations of energy agencies who attended the meeting; Pamela Walsh from Airtricity for the site visit to the Arklow Bank offshore wind park; and thanked the Minister for participating in the round-table discussion. Gerry Wardell also thanked the Association of Irish Energy Agencies for hosting the meeting in Arklow. Geraldine Cusack, on behalf of the AIEA, acknowledged that the Association appreciated that the Reflection Group accepted the invitation to hold their meeting in Ireland to tie-in with the weekend of Accession County membership events.

### 3. List of Participants

<b>Dick Roche TD</b>	Irish Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach, with special responsibility for European Affairs
<b>Gerry Wardell</b>	Chairperson, ManagEnergy Reflection Group (AIEA – Association of Irish Energy Agencies)
<b>Boris Papousek</b>	Vice-Chairperson ManagEnergy Reflection Group (Austrian Association of Local Energy Agencies)
<b>Gonzalo Molina Igartua</b>	European Commission, DG Energy and Transport
<b>Ronald Bailey</b>	European Commission, DG Energy and Transport
<b>Mikko Ahonen</b>	NAFEA - National Association of Finnish Energy Agencies
<b>Ian Byrne</b>	AUKEA - Association of UK Energy Agencies
<b>Geraldine Cusack</b>	AIEA – Association of Irish Energy Agencies
<b>Roman Doubrava</b>	Energy Centre Bratislava, Slovakia
<b>Priit Enok</b>	REC - Regional Energy Centres in Estonia
<b>Michael Geissler</b>	FEDARENE - European Federation of Regional Energy and Environment Agencies
<b>Ralf Goldmann</b>	EaD - Association of German Energy Agencies
<b>Gian Mario Varalda</b>	RENAEL – National network of Local Energy Agencies, Italy
<b>Irene Menéndez</b>	ENERAGEN - Association of Spanish Energy Management Agencies
<b>Radan Panacek</b>	TCASCR - Technology Centre of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic
<b>Grzegorz Wisniewski</b>	Association of Polish Energy actors at local and regional level
<b>Christopher Walden</b>	STEM – Swedish Energy Agency (ManagEnergy Service Provider)