



“The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe”

Energy efficiency: trialogue deal can hinder small retailers, warns UEAPME

UEAPME welcomes support to SME users, service providers; worries remain for SME producers, retailers, distributors

Brussels, 15 June 2012 – The agreement reached this week between the EU institutions at their “trialogue” meeting on the Energy Efficiency Directive is a step forward towards the 20% energy savings target, although it leaves too much room for manoeuvre to Member States, according to UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers’ organisation. On the positive side, the association welcomed the assistance measures foreseen for SMEs to cover the costs of an energy audit and of the implementation of the arising recommendations. It also praised the plans to promote access for small and medium-sized providers to the energy services market. On the negative side, the support for energy co-generation, a promising sector for SMEs, took a clear step back compared to the original proposal by the European Commission. Moreover, the agreement leaves Member States free to decide which energy distributors or retailers will be obliged to save 1.5% of their annual energy sales among their end users, while small companies in this field were actually exempted under the original text. This will make it harder for these small players to enter the market and to survive in this very competitive arena, warned UEAPME.

Sustainable Development Director **Guido Lena** offered the following comments:

“The deal reached this week on the Energy Efficiency Directive acknowledges SMEs’ huge potential to help achieve the objectives of the text. It also has the merit of ending uncertainty and bringing about new rules in the field for the future. As far as SMEs are concerned, the deal contains positive developments for small companies as users and service providers, but also some steps back for SMEs active in the energy production and distribution sectors.”

“On the positive side, the agreement contains several provisions that will facilitate a better energy efficiency performance by SME users. In particular, we appreciate the possibility for Member States to set up support schemes for SME to cover the costs of an energy audit and above all the implementation of the recommendations made during these audits. We are also pleased with the clear indications given to Member States to promote access for small and medium-sized enterprises to the energy services market, and to watch closely any possible abusing dominant positions in the sector.”

“The picture for SME producers is unfortunately less rosy. The impetus on energy-cogeneration is lost in the deal, as Member States are no longer obliged to lay out national plans to develop high-efficiency cogeneration, but are simply ‘invited to assess the possibility’ to apply these alternative forms of energy production, which are very appealing for SMEs.”

“Small energy retailers and distributors will also be worse off as a result of this week’s deal. While the original EC text exempted these SMEs from the obligation to save 1.5% of their annual energy sales among their end users, this week’s agreement leaves it up to Member States to decide. Small players may face the same energy obligations of big energy companies. This will create an uneven playing field in the single market, and make it much harder for small companies to enter and to compete in the energy production and distribution sectors. We hope that today’s Energy Council will give a reassuring message to SMEs in this respect, and we trust that Member States will keep the exemption for SMEs in place.”

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EDITORS’ NOTES: UEAPME is the employers’ organisation representing exclusively crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 80 member organisations covering over 12 million enterprises with 55 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner. For further information: <http://www.ueapme.com/>

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