



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

Energy performance of buildings: EU must reach realistic compromise, say SMEs

UEAPME concerned with wording on "net zero energy buildings", certification, control; pleased on financing

Brussels, 3 November 2009 – The European institutions must come up with a workable and realistic set of rules on the future energy performance of buildings, according to UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers' organisation. On the occasion of today's "trialogue" meeting between the Parliament, the Commission and the Council on the issue, UEAPME spoke against the very narrow definition of "net zero energy building" and the stricter rules on the energy performance certification of buildings proposed by the Parliament. The SME organisation also suggested a more practical control system for energy performance. On the positive side, UEAPME backed all the financial support possibilities introduced by the European Parliament.

Environment Policy Director **Guido Lena** offered the following comments:

"The European Parliament's vision of all new buildings in Europe producing at least as much energy as they consume by 2018 is much closer to utopia than it is to reality. This strict definition of 'net zero energy buildings' is virtually impossible to achieve in such a short timeframe, especially in Member States lagging behind on the implementation of the first directive that the EU is currently revising. We hope that today's triilogue will revert to the original EC text, which suggested carbon dioxide emissions and primary energy consumption 'low or equal' to zero and set the implementation deadline to 2020."

"The certification procedure by independent experts must be kept as simple as possible to avoid red tape. If the point of the directive is ensuring that buildings are performing as requested, qualified experts are more than competent to do so. Adding compulsory experts' accreditation and a strict independence check as requested by the Parliament is an extra layer of complication that is redundant and may cause small operators in the building sector to lose an important market. Resources must be spent on fighting climate change rather than on pointless bureaucracy."

"The planned independent control system for energy performance certificates and reports is another source of unnecessary burdens. Member States that already have quality assurance systems in place should be allowed to use these structures rather than being obliged to set up new bodies ex novo. There is no need to reinvent the wheel on this point."

"The new rules will lead to more stringent and more widely applied minimum standards, as well as to higher benchmarks on the energy performance of buildings. Properly financing the shift towards energy efficient construction is therefore a crucial concern for SMEs. The Parliament has rightly suggested the creation of an Energy Efficiency Fund and an increase of the European Regional Development Fund resources allocated to support energy efficiency. We trust that today's meeting will approve these measures, which we fully support."

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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 84 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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