

by CEEweb for Biodiversity

Saving the Energy Saving Directive – the Council shall think innovatively instead of running away from problems

The Energy Saving Directive has long been negotiated among the EU institutions, suffering more and more attempts by the Council to water it down. Despite all historic evidence and scientific warnings, the EU MSs do not seem to have the commitment to take effective energy saving measures. However, CEEweb for Biodiversity suggests an innovative tool to achieve energy saving while preventing the negative economic consequences, the Council is so frightened of.

The energy use of Europe is not just an economic question, where energy infrastructures, energy dependency or energy efficiency of enterprises and households come into question. It is also a major pressure on environment, leading to the degradation of ecosystem services, such as climate regulation, to name only the most obvious. As scientific reports and international bodies have warned, we need to radically reduce our resource use in absolute terms¹ (including energy) in order to prevent catastrophic changes in ecosystems, which would be accompanied with unprecedented decline in human wellbeing.

Therefore, CEEweb is pleased that the European Parliament's relevant Committee (ITRE) voted in support of a binding 20% energy savings target in February, which would be a very modest, but unavoidable first step in the right direction.

However, the Council's attempts for greater flexibility (e.g. reducing the amount of building renovation required of public authorities) and several exemptions for Member States and utility companies seemingly do not take the challenge seriously at all.

In order to come round this opposition of positions, CEEweb together with its partners in the Resource Cap Coalition proposes the introduction of an innovative tool to deliver meaningful energy saving rate in the EU and bring economic and social benefits at the same time. It includes an energy quota scheme along with a secondary market for energy efficient products and services, as well as a revolving fund.

The energy quota scheme delivers non-renewable energy use reduction, while it boosts the demand for energy efficient goods and services and provides the necessary investment capital through a revolving fund and a secondary market. It also increases the long term global competitiveness of European businesses through stimulating energy efficiency, without putting an additional burden on EU and national budget in reaching these goals. But not only businesses (e.g. small and medium enterprises) benefit from the scheme: citizens can also use their remaining personal energy quotas for buying environmentally friendly goods and services on the secondary market in quota money – stimulating among others organic agriculture and green technology, while supporting a much needed shift in consumer behaviour.

"If we really want to make any meaningful progress towards sustainability and green economy, we cannot waste any opportunities, such as adopting a strong Energy Saving Directive. We need to use our brains to think innovatively, our heart to make true commitments for the future we want, and not our legs to run away from today's biggest challenges and problems." says Klára Hajdu, CEEweb's Deputy General Secretary.

Editors' note

¹See the Decoupling Report of the UNEP's International Resource Panel (2011), which says that "to make the transition to a more sustainable global economy, sustainable resource management strategies will be required that promote resource and impact decoupling, with an emphasis on absolute resource use reductions in developed economies and relative decoupling in developing economies (up to a certain point after which they must also shift into an absolute reduction mode)". Under its tough contraction and convergence scenario the European average metabolic rate of 16 tons/capita/year would need to be reduced to 6 tons/ capita/year by 2050, which requires unprecedented levels of innovation.

<http://www.unep.org/resourcepanel/Publications/Decoupling/tabid/56048/Default.aspx>

Further information about the energy quota scheme:

www.ceeweb.org/rcc

http://www.ceeweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/energy_quota_system.pdf

About CEEweb for Biodiversity

CEEweb for Biodiversity is an umbrella organization of NGOs in the Central and Eastern European region. Our mission is the conservation of biodiversity through the promotion of sustainable development.

About the Resource Cap Coalition

The Resource Cap Coalition (RCC) brings together European organisations advocating for a global resource use reduction, a precondition for sustainability. This shall be achieved for the aim of halting biodiversity loss and maintaining, as well as recovering ecosystem services, which underpin human wellbeing. But resource use reduction shall be realised hand in hand with poverty reduction and building a green economy. The [Policy document of the RCC](#), and the proposed [Energy Quota Scheme](#) and the [Rimini Protocol](#) offer integrated tools for resource use reduction, bringing social, environmental and economic benefits at the same time.

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