

Commissioner Piebalgs: Europe could save 20% of its energy by 2020

The European Commission adopted today a Green Paper on Energy Efficiency that seeks to put energy savings higher on the agenda. Faced with increasing oil prices and the prospects of having 70% of its energy needs covered by imports by 2030, the European Union needs to start a discussion on how to save energy .. The Green Paper lists a number of options to save 20% of energy consumption by 2020 in a cost effective way through changes in consumer behaviour and energy efficient technologies. These savings would allow the EU to save an estimated €60 billion on its energy bill. This will in turn represent investments in the EU economy where European industry can strengthen its lead. "This energy efficiency initiative will help Europe achieve two fundamental goals of the Lisbon Strategy: creating more growth and better jobs. It will also help Europe meet its Kyoto commitments", said Commissioner Andris Piebalgs in charge of energy. "The European Union needs to explore all the possible avenues to reach the goal of 20% savings"

Using energy saving lamps, replacing an old boiler, getting rid of the old fridge, checking the pressure of car tyres, insulating the roof: these are just some of the things that many consumers can do to save energy. Industry can also improve its production processes. Both citizens and industry need to be stimulated by public authorities to do these energy savings.

Current trends point indeed in the direction of ever increasing energy use with a level of consumption in the EU that could increase by 10% in the coming 15 years if nothing is done. With this Green Paper, the Commission is proposing to reverse the trend and explains how it is feasible to reach 20% energy savings by 2020 in a cost-effective way. The text emphasises that half of the savings could be reached through a full implementation by Member States of already adopted legislation (or about to be adopted) on buildings, domestic appliances or energy services. To save the other 10%, Europe now needs to be imaginative and proactive.

The options listed by the Green Paper embrace all sectors – production and end-use, industry and services, households and buildings, transport and international relations. They concern all stakeholders, from national, regional and local decision-makers, to banks, international institutions and individual consumers. The Commission suggests a wide range of policy tools, including financial incentives, regulations, setting of objectives, information and training and international dialogue.

Examples of actions include: establishing Annual Energy Efficiency Action Plans at national level; improving energy pricing and taxation to ensure that the polluter really pays;; using public procurement to kick-start new technologies; extending the scope of the European Directive on buildings and finding new and improved way of financing.

The Green Paper is the point of departure for a broad debate involving all stakeholders. In 2006, at the end of the consultation process, the Commission will come forward with a comprehensive Action Plan which will identify measures which should be put forward. In order to prioritise the options mentioned, thorough cost-benefit analysis will be carried out.

For more information, please visit:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/efficiency/index_en.htm