

Just the first step on the road?

Andrew Warren of EuroACE argues that Europe should move to quickly strengthen the Directive

Far from setting an example to the world on how to implement cost-effective measures, the EU risks achieving far less than promised, whilst also putting our economies in danger.

Energy use in buildings accounts for almost half of all CO₂ emissions in the EU. Yet measures exist today that could slash this figure by one third. The evidence is striking.

EuroACE funded the international management consultants **CALEB** to examine the potential available from savings. They concluded that, using existing technologies, Europe could reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the building sector alone by 400m tonnes – easily more than the total EU commitment made at Kyoto.

To put this into context, to achieve equivalent levels of emissions reductions from other measures, we would need to:

- take six million cars that currently circulate in London off the road for 15 years
- plant forests three times the size of France

The *European Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings* (2002/91/EEC) is the most significant measure that has been adopted by the EU to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from buildings. The Directive's focus is on new buildings, whilst also proposing certain measures that encourage energy efficiency improvements for existing large buildings (greater than 1000m²).

An important first step

Although an important first step, the Directive only taps into a fraction of the potential that exists to reduce emissions. The new research demonstrates that 90% of the potential to reduce emissions from buildings lies outside the current EU rules. The findings show that the current legislation fails to cover two key aspects:

- Although the EU Directive provides a good first framework for new and large buildings, most emissions come from existing small buildings – it is here that the real potential for significant emissions reductions must be seized.

- Energy efficiency in buildings is generally associated with heating, but as temperatures and incomes rise, so does the use of air conditioning – especially in central and southern Europe. Proper energy efficiency measures concerned with improving the building fabric can be used to combat the energy needed to cool homes.

Smaller existing buildings

Smaller existing buildings such as homes and offices (less than 200m²) alone account for over half the potential emissions savings that remain untapped in the European building sector. These buildings are less likely to be renovated and their energy efficiency is less likely to be improved, without strong government support and incentives.

As Europeans increase the use of air conditioning, energy use is set to rise dramatically unless property energy efficiency measures are implemented. With this comes the threat that any reductions in greenhouse gas emissions achieved by the current legislation on buildings will be significantly undermined.

The evidence

What the evidence tells us:

- the warmer the climate, the more impact energy efficiency measures can have
- energy efficiency measures, in particular reducing heat load, can reduce the cooling demand of a building by up to 70%

That is why the Commission has to enact Article 11 of the Directive – which instructs them to recommend further upgrading measures. It should implement this article very swiftly.

EuroACE is the European Alliance of Companies for Energy Efficiency in Buildings

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