



The success of intelligent energy policies requires the involvement of the whole of society, local and regional authorities in particular

Declaration of the Board of Directors of Energie-Cités Heidelberg - 22nd June 2006

1. Over recent years, Energie-Cités has warmly welcomed the initiatives - directives and action plans - taken by the European Commission in favour of an "Intelligent Energy" Europe in areas such as: buildings, renewable energy sources, cogeneration, energy services, product eco-design or even biomass.

However, allowing for exceptions, the objectives are far from being achieved. Progression Curves are taking a long time to change direction; proving that "top down" approaches are showing their inability to be a catalyst for change.

2. Energie-Cités appreciated the commitment of the European Commissioner for Energy with the publication of the Green Paper on Energy Efficiency and its rather ambitious figure-based targets. The debate showed a wide consensus.

The Action Plan for Energy Efficiency promised for September 2006 is a unique chance to change both scale and pace by actually involving actors on all levels of society. If the Action Plan was to make do with extending earlier initiatives rather than reconsidering the way of dealing with the issue at hand, it would be another lost opportunity and the 20% objective would be well out of reach. The risk is there and we want to avoid it.

3. We do, of course, need technology, legislation and new forms of financing. **BUT, all that will never suffice if the whole of society** (citizens, professionals, community organisations, local authorities, etc.) – who have responsibility for enforcing said legislation and make use of said techniques and financial schemes – does not get involved in the process. It is a sure way of tapping unexplored potential, of giving initiatives impetus, of making people want to take action.

This is why Energie-Cités wants the Commission to direct the Energy Efficiency Action Plan, as a matter of priority, towards the involvement of all levels of society and all the actors concerned in accordance with a bottom up approach. It could be entitled "Action Plan for Energy Efficiency: All Actors Managing Energy Intelligently". An initial section could go by the name of "Empowering society" to demonstrate this willingness and transform it into action. This would be an excellent opportunity to give European citizens the chance to get closer to the Community institutions with regard to a subject they feel concerned about.

4. Amongst these actors, it is clear that local and regional authorities have a pivotal role to play because they are close to actual situations and local actors and have a significant influence on final energy consumption through the decisions they make. The conclusions of the Report on the debate of the Green Paper are incontestable in this respect.

However, in reality, the role left to local and regional authorities within the Community thought process and proposals remains marginal, despite some recent progress. Subsidiarity cannot be used as a pretext for status quo as the involvement of the local authorities is an absolute condition for achieving the Community objectives.

5. This situation has little chance of changing without an official reference document concerning the role of local authorities in the Community energy policy, in particular for energy efficiency, and renewable and decentralised energy sources. **We do not believe that the objectives can be achieved without the heavy involvement of local authorities.**

This is why Energie-Cités wants the Commission to prepare a Communication concerning the role of regional and local levels in the implementation of Community policies on energy efficiency, renewable and decentralised energy sources as well as sustainable transportation. Such a political signal would increase local authority action capacities tenfold.