



EEB - The European Environmental Bureau



CECODHAS - The European Liaison Committee for Social Housing



ETUC - The European Trade Union Confederation

Green Housing and Green Jobs

- Setting the pace for a decade of green and social growth -

Monday 9th February 2009, as part of the EU Sustainable Energy Week 2009

Conclusions:

John Hontelez - Secretary General

EEB - The European Environmental Bureau

- First thank Cecodhas and ETUC for organizing this event together with us. Continuation of cooperation in this field since 2004 when we together launched a manifesto on Investing in Sustainable Development in housing and in transport. Clear that investing in energy efficiency is a social, environmental and employment interest, with a positive macro economic impact. Impressed by the practical contributions of Cecodhas members to achieving our common objectives.
- Emphasize urgency of climate policies: average temperature increase goes faster than scientists expected even recently. Global agreement that this increase should not go beyond 2° compared with pre-industrial times. Long time it was expected that this would mean 450 ppm CO2 equivalent concentration. But more recently doubts, 400 ppm's or even 350 ppm's is now in the picture. Meaning that the current concentration should no longer increase at all, and the total GHG emissions of the world should start decreasing within the next decade.
- That is a very difficult task. And while the EU is definitely progressive in comparison, its recently adopted Energy/Climate package is not the kind of contribution we need to lead the world. Its 20% reduction is not even 20% inside the EU, given the inclusion of Joint Implementation and Clean Development Mechanism investments in it. Absolutely not the kind of example we need. The right example is to reduce, at home, at least 30%, or even 40% in the next decade if the more pessimistic researchers are right.
- Most controversial are measures towards the energy sector, the large users, transport. Most attention is also on the supply side. But still the cleanest energy is the energy you do not use. However it is commercially less interesting to promote energy savings. That therefore needs a clear political framework, with push and pull factors, such as mandatory requirements for new and existing buildings, for construction materials (yes, away from concrete given its huge ecologic rucksack) and for energy using household appliances, with subsidy and cheap loans arrangements for investments in this sector, complemented with environment taxation on energy (except from renewable sources), with personal advisory

services, schemes for training architects, retailers, workers about energy efficiency in housing, etc.

- We heard about a potential of 1 million extra jobs in the EU. These are a lot of jobs, and with quality and societal purpose. We heard examples of the kinds of jobs involved, in particular also in advising, assisting individual owners, commercial and non-commercial
- Energy Efficiency in EU only has a soft target of 20% energy efficiency increase from 2006 to 2020. not the same a absolute saving, as against the background of tendential growth of energy use.
- Commission's new Energy Performance in Buildings Directive potentially great step forward. But the Directive needs to be simplified and improved: in our view new buildings need to be GHG-neutral by 2015, and for existing stock energy efficiency rules need to apply as soon as renovation costs go above 5% instead of 25% of the value of a building.
- Today showed that there are a lot of good examples of initiatives to increase energy efficiency. These examples show what can be done, create motivation, challenge those that do not act, and last but not least, reduce GHG emissions and improve quality of living. But we need from good practice to common practice indeed.
- Big bottle neck is the lack of interest from authorities that decide on national development programmes: potential for EU co-funding underused. Not sexy, administratively complicated: intermediary's necessary, but definitely political will and determination. Civil society needs to push for this.
- Increasing funds are available, but if we would really take off for a zero-energy building stock, we would need much more, Windfall profits and later ETS revenues form a big potential

Finally: Climate change is not going to go away. We need drastic measures. Responding to the need for vision: starting from setting a zero-GHG emission level for new buildings by 2015, we could set a target of the entire housing stock to be, on average, carbon neutral in 25 years from now, with nett energy using houses being compensated by nett producing houses. That would be a great project for the EU!