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www.energy-advice.org

A review of the state of the art in energy advice throughout the European Union



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Summary of a report by the SErENADE partnership



Introduction

This brochure is a summary of the results of a review of energy advice in the EU27, carried out by the SErENADE partnership. The full report is available online at www.energy-advice.org.

SErENADE is a partnership of energy advice practitioners in seven countries of the EU. The partnership is carrying out a programme of work which aims to support the enhancement of the range, scope and quality of energy advice provision in the European Community, by reviewing existing provision, and enabling an effective exchange of knowledge, experience and tools.

Why does energy advice matter?

Access to good quality advice and information is essential to enable consumers to take the necessary steps to achieving a more sustainable use of energy. Advice is an essential accompaniment to most other energy policy tools to enable their effective implementation.

Independent and commercially impartial energy advice plays an important role in a number of ways, such as:

- A focussed process to help consumers to take the steps from an awareness of serious environmental problems to taking positive action in their everyday lives.
- Enabling consumers of all kinds to assess the impact of their actions and choices on the household, business and municipal economy, comfort and health, as well as the global environment.
- Facilitating the take-up of practical measures, by helping citizens to identify, prioritise, finance and practically implement the actions relevant to their situation.

- Ensuring that the potential savings from concrete measures are fully realised – such as understanding how to use a new heating system or adapt to lower heat requirements after insulation work.
- Helping consumers to understand how to combine technologies, in a market where many companies promote single technologies only.
- Providing impartial help in a market that is competitive both in terms of energy supply and the growing market for energy efficiency and related services.
- Helping consumers to take care of their homes, achieving the right temperature and humidity levels and avoiding damp and mould growth from condensation.
- Encouraging the development of job creation in sustainable energy by stimulating demand for sustainable energy measures.

Range and scope of existing energy advice provision

The study found a wide range of services and resources applied to the energy advice sector in different countries, and variation in the extent to which the need for advice is recognised.

Around one third of countries have no or very little energy advice, a third have fairly well developed services, and a third are somewhere in between (for example with services only in some areas, for specific client groups, or designed to provide only generalised information). Many of the existing programmes cater for the domestic and small business sector, while some are for only one of these sectors. Some services offer support for local authorities.

The types of energy advice programme that exist can be broadly categorised as follows:

- Networks of local delivery agents with central coordination
- Centralised, information-oriented services (usually phone or web based)
- Services for very specific target groups only
- Project based: localised and tending to be short term
- Ad hoc/occasional: such as energy agencies that have the expertise to give advice, but are not specifically resourced to do so, and therefore not able to cope with large numbers of clients

Quality of advice provision

The SEENADE group agreed a working definition of energy advice as: guidance on the consumer's specific situation as regards energy use, and actions that can be taken.

This is not the same as generalised information, such as in a leaflet, or the messages in an awareness campaign, and it requires some level of interaction with the consumer.

The provision of good quality energy advice able to achieve significant results requires attention to a range of issues including:

- The advice methodology used
- Medium and location for communication of advice
- The topics covered
- The depth of advice offered
- Marketing and outreach
- The application of quality standards
- Training of advisers and information resources
- Evaluation and review procedures

Energy advice and supporting activities

| Activity | Working definition | Examples |
|--|--|--|
| Awareness-raising Outreach Marketing | Raising general awareness of and attracting attention to the issues. Methods for reaching the advice target group, and bringing them into contact with advice providers. | Brief items in press and media; poster campaigns; events; competitions; flyers; websites; direct mailing; links with and referrals from other services; contact with community and trade groups. |
| Information | Explanation of problems and relevant actions with general applicability to any client. | Leaflets; websites; fact-sheets; guidebooks. |
| Advice | Guidance on specific situation and actions that can be taken. Requires some level of interaction with client. | Interaction with client by telephone; interview at advice office or other venue; visit to home or business premises; advice stand at public events; written reports with specific recommendations. |
| Education | Raising level of knowledge, with a longer term perspective, not necessarily intending to achieve immediate action. | Inclusion of sustainable energy in school or further education curricula; professional or vocational training; community-based adult education. |

Belgium

Advice about what?

We discovered a wide range of topics covered, and where these were limited by the funding agreements or by the training and resources provided, advisers often mentioned the need to widen their approach.

Topics include:

- Thermal insulation
- Heating, air conditioning and hot water appliances
- Cooking, lighting, laundry, refrigeration, consumer electronics and other electrical appliances
- Heat and power from on-site renewables, including heat pumps, solar thermal, photovoltaics, hydro, wind, biomass, geothermal
- Ventilation and condensation
- Choice of fuel suppliers and tariffs, including buying and selling electricity from renewable sources
- Consumption and payments (meters and bills)
- Grants, tax incentives and other subsidies
- Carbon calculation and 'footprint'
- Low carbon building design
- Energy used in production of appliances and building materials
- Ecological building materials and finishes
- Carbon impact of different mobility options
- Efficient driving habits
- Environmental impact of different vehicle models
- More environmentally friendly transport fuel options
- Travel plans

Some examples of the energy advice services that currently exist are given on the next pages.

The Guichet de L'énergie programme has been running in the Wallonia region of Belgium since 1985, providing free and impartial advice on energy efficiency and renewable energy to households through a network of 12 local advice centres. Advice is given by phone, post, email, appointments in the advice offices, home visits and public events.

The service is funded by government and the regional administration, with current activity levels of around 65,000 clients a year. The advice centres also administer government grants for energy efficiency and renewable energy measures, reaching around 1,700 households a year.

In Brussels the local energy agency provides a variety of advice services to the residential sector, including an energy advice desk, energy audits, awareness-raising activities and training. Energy advice forms part of a service that also covers restoration and acoustics. The energy advice mission is funded by the Brussels Region Environment and Energy Department, and has 11 full time and four part time advisers, reaching more than 10,500 people a year, with around 600 visitors a day to the website.



Czech Republic

Established in 1995, the EKIS CEA programme is run by the Czech Energy Agency and funded by the government, as part of the state programme for the support of energy savings and the utilisation of renewable and secondary sources of energy.

Free advice on energy efficiency and renewables is provided through a network of certificated advisers, either self-employed or within environmental organisations. 189 advisers are based in 45 local offices, located all over the country. Each centre has at least three advisers and is open a minimum of two afternoons a week, with advice available by phone, post, email or in the advice office. In some cases, the energy adviser can visit the client, for example to discuss a home renovation or for specific technical queries.

The advice given is impartial and customer-led, with a written advice sheet produced at the end of the verbal sessions. Around 7–9,000 consulting hours are carried out in a typical year.



Denmark

The Energitjenesten (Energy Service Centres) programme was started in 2005, building on the experience of an earlier energy advice network which closed in 2003. It is managed by the Danish Organisation for Renewable Energy (OVE), and funded by a levy on electricity use (being extended to gas and heat).

Advice is free to households, SMEs and municipalities, and provided by phone, post and email, with some energy service centres open to visitors. The network currently consists of 13 regional centres, with each centre serving a population of a quarter to one million. There are around 50 advisers in total. Advice is customer-led, rather than following a set pattern. The main focus is on energy efficiency, but the centres also cover renewables, and to a lesser extent transport.



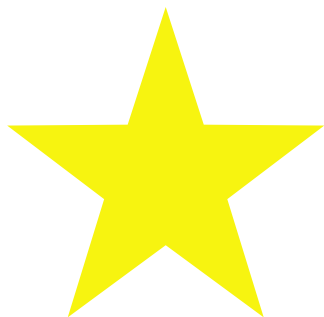
France

The Espaces Info Energie network is funded by government and managed by ADEME, the national energy agency. It has been providing energy advice to households and SMEs since 2001.

Free advice on energy efficiency, renewables and transport is provided through a network of around 300 advisers in 175 centres. Advice is given by phone (using a national number which directs people to their local centre), in the advice office, in the home, and at public events and 'surgeries'. Some centres have mobile advice units. Advice is customer-led, and ranges from simple information to detailed project support.

In 2005, 1,060,000 clients were advised, of which 85% were households, 9% companies or professionals, and 6% other types of organisation.

An evaluation in 2003 indicated investments in sustainable energy by clients to a value of €110 million, including solar hot water, changes of heating system, insulation, new boilers, photovoltaics and heating controls. Six months after receiving advice, one in four clients had implemented an energy saving measure.

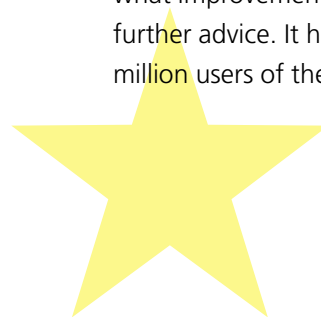


Germany

The German Consumer Organisation has provided energy advice to households since 1978, with funding from the Federal Ministry of Economy and Technology. Qualified energy advisers work on a fee basis, providing advice either on the telephone, in the office (consumer advice centre or one of the 455 federal advice centres) or on-site. Initial advice is free, but if there is a further requirement for more specialist help (such as on insulation or heating) this is given at a subsidised cost. In 2005 there were more than 75,000 office or telephone energy advice sessions (a 10% increase on the previous year), and 480 on-site.

The national energy agency, dena, run a free 24 hour telephone advice hotline on energy efficiency and renewables. Funded by the Federal Ministry of Economy and Technology, and EON Ruhrgas AG, they received 23,000 calls and 1,600 emails in 2005, a significant increase on the previous average of around 9,000 enquiries a year.

A relatively new initiative is the CO₂ online service provided by a private company, with funding from the German Federal Ministry for Environment. Started in 2005, it is a website which enables customers to carry out a basic assessment of the efficiency of their heating system and what improvements they might consider. It also offers contact details for further advice. It has more than 700 partners' portals. There were over a million users of the website by 2007.



Italy

There is no single comprehensive provider of energy advice in Italy, but advice and information is available from a number of organisations, including local and regional energy agencies.

Italian Consumer Associations give free advice and information to citizens, including energy. An example is Adiconsum, who distribute 'Consumer Guides' on energy saving and renewable energy through their 250 local offices, seminars and mobile exhibitions, as well as providing an energy advice desk three days a week.

Confartigianato, a major Confederation of SMEs and Crafts, has opened 75 energy counter services for SMEs in local offices around the country.

The Centri di Consulenza Energetica Integrata are energy advice offices, established by the national energy agency, ENEA, in 11 towns.

Fuel utilities provide advice on energy efficiency in a variety of ways, for example the AEM 'House of Energy' centre in Milan and the 'Sportello Energia' in Brianza.

Some provincial administrations give energy advice, for example the 'energy shops' established by the Province of Milan.

Netherlands

Started in 1997, and funded by government, Milieu Centraal is a national information centre for consumers about what they can do in daily life to protect the environment. It covers energy, transport, waste reduction and recycling, gardening and food. Initially a phone service, the majority of users are now through the website, with the phone service now aimed more at lower income households. There are around 20–30 calls and 5,000 visitors to the website per day.

The linked 'Meten is Weten' (to measure is to know) programme loans 'energy check' meters to households, to raise their awareness of the electricity consumed in their homes at different times. They have to pass them on after using them for three weeks. At the end of 2005 there were 4,000 meters in circulation and 19,000 households had participated. A survey of 2,750 of these indicated households taking action as a result which would lead to savings averaging 250kWh/year per household (7% of electricity bills).

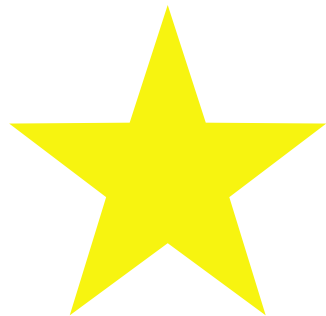


Spain

Information and advice is provided by the Spanish Institute for Energy Diversification and Saving, IDAE, through a centrally run free phone number (available weekdays) and a website, supported by an energy saving guidebook, mass media awareness activities, and distribution of free low energy lights (200,000 distributed in 2006, with potential savings of 192GWh and 128,000 tonnes of CO₂).

IDAE run a creative programme of awareness-raising activities, which has included a TV series which had an average of 1.5 million viewers per episode (cumulative total 36,770,000 viewers). The website has an interactive programme enabling building, heating and appliance details to be entered, and the recommendations for improvements to be relevant to the specific home.

The Centre for Energy Efficiency run by Union Fenosa offers a free online energy audit for businesses, with a detailed audit by an expert available for a fee. The 'Observatory' collects and publishes data about energy use by SMEs, and companies participate free of charge, providing their own data and receiving an energy diagnosis and pre-feasibility study in return. Energy management training is also given (much of it free).



Slovakia

The Slovakian energy advisory network is a relatively small capacity service which has been provided by the Energy Centre Bratislava since 2004. It is supported by a fuel utility (Zapodnoslovenska Energetika), equipment suppliers (Wuestenrot, Viessman, Technosolar, Baunit, Nobasil, Phillips), and seven media partners.

The service provides free and impartial advice on energy efficiency and renewables to the residential sector. Advice is both verbal and written, and is available two afternoons a week at advisory offices located in the eight regional capitals. The main clients are housing associations and apartment owners. The advice can at times be technically complex, but the aim is always to present it in an understandable way that is tailored to the client.



Slovenia

ENSJET is the Slovenian energy advisory network, managed by the Building and Civil Engineering Institute ZRMK and funded by the Slovenian Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning. Set up in 1991, it provides free and impartial advice to households on energy efficiency and renewables through a network of 75 licensed part time energy advisers based in 35 municipal energy advisory offices, distributed throughout the country and open twice a week. Clients make the first contact by phone, followed by a 45 minute advisory session in the office, and receive a written report confirming the advice given.

ENSJET also assists citizens to obtain state subsidies and soft loans for renewables and energy efficiency measures.

Around 90% of the advice given is about existing buildings, and 10% about the design of new buildings. 80% of clients are owners of single family houses, and 20% live in apartment buildings.

In 2005, nearly 6,000 advice sessions were carried out, and evaluation indicated that 70–90% of recommended measures were implemented, with potential savings of 19% of energy consumption.



Sweden

Advice on energy efficiency and renewables to Swedish households has been delivered since 1998 through a government funded programme run by the national energy agency, Energimyndigheten. Municipalities are required to provide energy advice free of charge to households, SMEs and other organisations, and apply to the national programme for funding. Some municipalities add their own funding to this. They provide advice either by employing advisers directly, hiring consultants, or by funding a regional energy agency to provide the service. The agencies are also funded to coordinate the regional teams of advisers.

There are around 200 advisers, mostly part time, in the 290 municipalities of Sweden. Often two or more municipalities cooperate in employing one or more advisers in a shared service – as for example in the joint service for the 22 municipalities in the Stockholm area. Advice is mostly by phone or appointment in the office.

336,000 households were advised in 2005, and evaluation has indicated that 37% of inhabitants know about the energy advice service. Around 150,000 (8%) of one family households who took energy saving measures in 2005 had used the service and said that the advice was important for their decision.

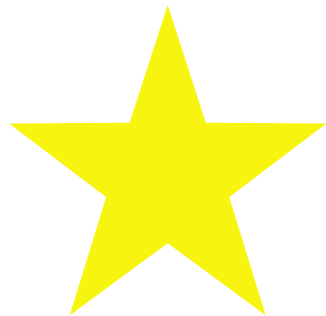


United Kingdom

The Energy Saving Trust network of local advice centres gives free independent energy advice to households, and has been funded by government since 1994. Previously covering only energy efficiency, the network is being developed to include renewables and sustainable transport. 740,463 households were advised in 2005–6.

Fuel suppliers are required to advise domestic customers on energy efficiency as a condition of their supply licence. In 2005 they directly advised 215,587 customers. Six major suppliers also sponsor the Energy Retail Association to run the Home Heat Helpline, a service targeting vulnerable customers who are worried about their fuel bills, which took almost 30,000 calls in its first eight months of operation.

The Carbon Trust gives energy efficiency advice to commercial customers. There is a telephone helpline and website for smaller energy users, giving generalised information and written materials tailored to different sectors. This is backed up by a call-back service for more detailed technical enquiries, interest-free loans for measures, and free on-site surveys for companies with energy bills over £50,000 (approximately €73,000).



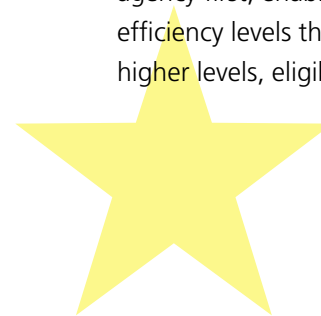
Upper Austria

Ober Österreichischer Energiesparverband (ESV), the Upper Austrian Energy Agency provides energy advice services on energy efficiency and renewables to companies and households.

Funded by regional and national government, energy advice for companies is initiated by telephone, and includes a site visit and a written report outlining the recommended actions. More than 1,000 clients have been advised since the programme started in 2002.

The advice programme for households is funded by regional government and has been running since 1991. The energy agency is the first point of contact, and manages a network of trained advisers, who are self employed or work for small engineering companies. Free advice is given by telephone, email, in the advisory office, at advisory sessions held regularly in 11 public buildings in the region, or in the home. It covers energy efficiency and renewables, ranging from simple questions to details of renovation or construction. An energy performance certificate is provided when advice is given in the home.

Home owners applying for a building subsidy must come to the energy agency first, enabling the agency to explain the minimum energy efficiency levels they must achieve and to encourage them to aim for higher levels, eligible for higher subsidy.



Future developments

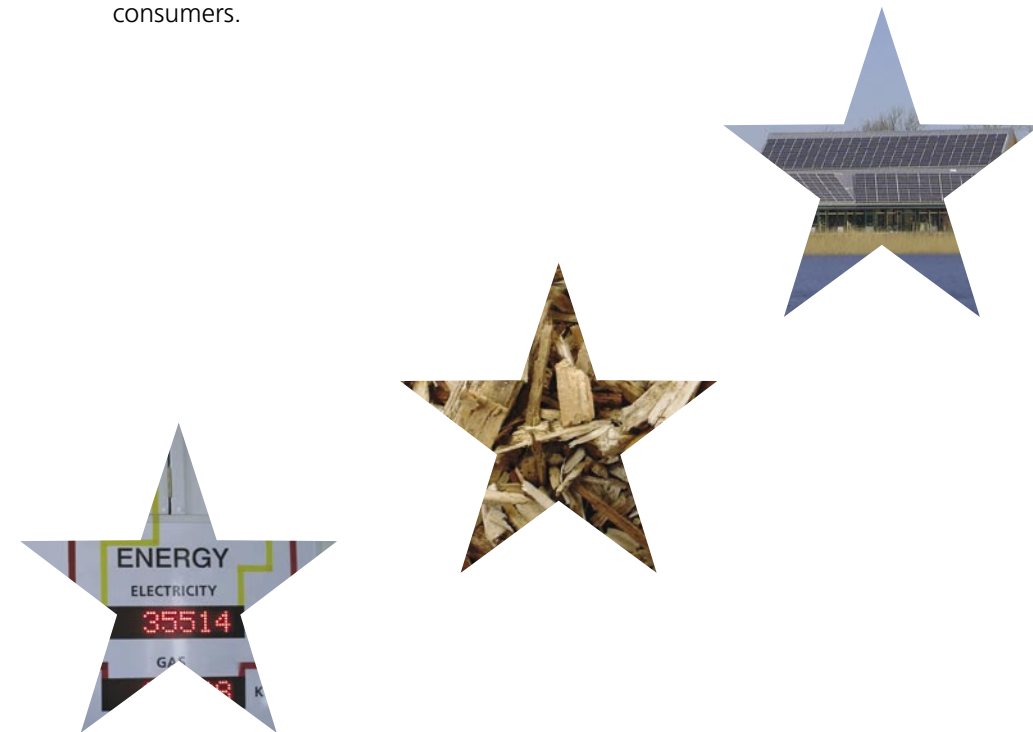
The importance of advice for the realisation of sustainable energy targets is not fully realised across the European Community. To motivate and enable action across the community requires a skilled and targeted approach and will not be achievable through mainstream promotional campaigns alone.

There is clearly a great deal of potential for a wider geographical availability of effective independent energy advice services, as it scarcely exists in much of Europe. There is also scope for further development of those services that already exist, in terms of breadth of subject matter, and effective outreach and communication to a wide audience. Much could be gained from learning from each other.

The significance and need for impartial energy advice is growing, with increasing relevance in areas such as:

- Supporting the aims of energy performance certification, as required in the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive. These are unlikely to be realised without accompanying or subsequent advice about how to implement the recommended measures, costs and payback times, subsidies and adaptation of behaviour.
- The improvement in information in metering and billing, required in the Energy End-Use and Energy Services Directive, has a 'customer feedback' objective to raise consumer awareness of their consumption – potentially raising the demand for impartial advice on how to reduce consumption.
- The liberalisation of fuel supply markets brings with it a new area in which consumer support is required, with regard to changing supplier, understanding different tariff structures and energy taxes.

- The emphasis on technological innovation means a wider range of technologies that consumers will need help with. Examples are new types of heating, fuel metering, less environmentally damaging cars.
- Microgeneration and the issues around export of electricity is a growing area requiring customer support and advice.
- The growth of consumer electronics and the range of domestic electrical appliances in general has brought with it a whole new range of energy-consuming equipment and the need for an awareness of its efficient use and to purchase the most efficient appliances.
- As fuel prices rise, the issue of fuel poverty becomes more crucial, which brings another level of urgency to the need for effective advice, and for the wider skill sets required to reach and help the more vulnerable consumers.



SERENADE

This brochure is a summary of the results of a review of energy advice in the EU27, carried out by the SERENADE partnership.

The SERENADE project runs from January 2006 to February 2008, and aims to contribute to the enhancement of the range, scope and quality of energy advice provision in the European Community, by reviewing existing provision, and enabling an effective exchange of knowledge, experience and tools.

SERENADE objectives are to provide

- Information for the first time about the real scope of energy advice provision throughout the European Community.
- Increased awareness of the benefits of energy advice, the skills and tools required and the methodologies that may be used.
- A resource to enable quality provision of energy advice to be extended across the Community, through provision of a toolkit and links to established and successful services.
- The establishment of an ongoing platform for exchange of information and experience on energy advice.

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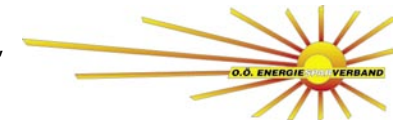
Associazione Rete di Punti Energia, Italy



Prioriterre, France



O.Oe.Energiesparverband (ESV), Austria



Energiråd Väst, Sweden



Building and Civil Engineering Institute ZRMK (BCEI ZRMK), Slovenia



Sofia Energy Centre, Bulgaria



Comité de Liaison Energies Renouvelables (CLER), France

