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More commitment needed from Energy Council: Europe needs to walk the talk on climate and energy

Following the European Council meeting on 22 June 2017, the message could not be clearer: the EU is committed to implementing the Paris Agreement “swiftly and fully”. And if Europe is to deliver on this aim, it will be essential to take an approach that puts ‘Energy Efficiency First’.

A meeting of EU energy ministers on Monday, 26 June, would have been the ideal opportunity to show that Europe is capable of turning its strong words on climate change into action. The aim was to hammer out the Council’s general approaches on the first parts of the Clean Energy Package – the energy efficiency proposals under the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) and the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD). The fact that it was possible to reach agreement on general approaches can in itself be seen as a step forward. However, the outcome fell short of the ambition declared by heads of states a week previously: overall, results were too timid regarding the new energy efficiency target, in combination with the energy savings scheme or level of deployment of technical building systems. “Member States have shown that they can talk the talk when it comes to energy efficiency,” commented Adrian Harris, Director General of Orgalime, “but we have yet to see governments really walk the walk and commit to delivering on key actions.”

The fact that the new energy labelling regulation was finally adopted at the same meeting shows that ministers are aware of the importance of energy efficiency – at the level of individual products, at least. Yet the challenge facing Europe today is to go further and tackle the systems into which such products are incorporated. Great strides have been made at the product level, but, here, technical limits for improvement are now being reached. The key to boosting energy efficiency going forward lies in modernising and developing systems such as in buildings, electricity networks and transportation to unlock the significant potentials for energy savings within.

Against this background, Orgalime welcomes the decision to adopt general approaches on the EED and EPBD: it is a chance to focus on energy efficiency as a key driver of meeting climate change goals. And it must be recognised that a number of Member States – in particular France, Germany, Luxembourg and Ireland – have demonstrated strong support for a more far-reaching approach. However, the concrete outcome of the Council meeting has left much to be desired, as Adrian Harris underlines: “European leaders say they want to lead the way in energy efficiency globally – but this is not what leadership looks like. We must be more ambitious, and commit to decisive action now. In this case, this means pursuing stronger measures specifically in article 7 of the EED and article 8 of the EPBD.” In light of the countless benefits of energy efficiency, not only in terms of protecting our environment and slowing climate change, but also as a means to create jobs and growth, this an opportunity Europe cannot afford to miss. As negotiations progress, Orgalime is calling on the European Parliament to step up to the plate and raise the level of ambition to ensure this chance does not pass Europe by.

Ends

Orgalime, the European Engineering Industries Association, speaks for 41 trade federations representing the mechanical, electrical, electronic, metalworking & metal articles industries of 23 European countries. The industry employs almost 11 million people in the EU and in 2016 accounted for nearly €2,000 billion of annual output. The industry accounts for over a quarter of manufacturing output and a third of the manufactured exports of the European Union.

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Notes for Editors:

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