

Report reveals trends in energy efficiency measures for European SMEs

H2020 project LEAP4SME analyses best practices

BRUSSELS, 20 July 2022 – Nine national energy agencies through the [LEAP4SME](#) project have [released a report compiling and assessing policies and programmes](#) that encourage energy efficiency measures in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The project selected 43 practices in the EU and beyond, including 21 policies and programmes from the LEAP4SME partner countries that have been analysed in detail.

SMEs account for at least [13% of global energy demand](#) and energy efficiency improvements are estimated to provide 40% of the reduction in energy-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions over the next 20 years. This makes analysing and developing effective energy efficiency policies critical. The [Compilation of Good Practices](#) report achieves this by providing a quantitative analysis of national and local energy audit policies in Austria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom, comparing criteria such as the replicability of the scheme, the use of best practices in carrying out and delivering an audit, and support of the implementation of energy efficiency measures.

As Europe is home to 25 million SMEs – making up 99% of all businesses – analysing and developing energy audit policies is key to meeting the targets set out in the [EU Green Deal](#).

The identified trends reveal that SMEs' implementation of energy efficiency measures depends on whether the mechanisms are implemented at a national or local level, with national schemes tending to be mandatory more so than regional schemes. Furthermore, the obligation and implementation of energy performance improvement actions (EPIAs) has a correlation with more stringent energy audit requirements, such as the use of international standards or the obligation of certified auditors, for example.

Policies based on Article 8 of the [Energy Efficiency Directive \(EED\)](#) present a lower degree of obligation to implement energy efficiency measures when compared to policies not based on EED; however, the policies based on Article 8, which focuses on energy audits, tend to be more restrictive in terms of the quality of the audits due to the specific requirements set

out in the EED's minimum criteria for energy audits including those carried out as part of energy management systems.

In the LEAP4SME countries most of the good practices are voluntary schemes with financial incentives for energy audits. However, the implementation of at least one of the proposed EPIAs is mandatory only in 13 policies, and less than half of the mechanisms include the funding of the implementation. This is an interesting finding considering 87% of all SMEs are autonomous and make their own independent financial decisions. The analysis also found that very few programmes consider the use of multiple energy benefits.

The report builds off the project's previous register of 173 energy efficiency policies, programmes and projects for SMEs in Existing support measures for energy audits and energy efficiency in SMEs. The findings of the report will be used in forthcoming work to mobilise private stakeholders about existing energy efficiency opportunities, and will be further investigated by the project as it sets out to build a framework for the implementation of energy audit programmes and services for SMEs.

Through its analysis of energy efficiency policies, mapping of national energy audit programmes, and research of energy use assessments by sector, LEAP4SME will incorporate this data to develop innovative energy audit schemes with key stakeholders across Europe, helping the EU take steps to facilitate a more energy-efficient future.

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KEYWORDS

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), energy efficiency, energy savings, energy audits, energy efficiency policy, Energy Efficiency Directive, EED, Article 8, energy performance improvement actions, EPIAs.

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