



**CONCERTED ACTION  
ENERGY SERVICES  
DIRECTIVE**



# **The importance of trust in informing and advising citizens**

## **Executive Summary**

**WGR 6.1**

**Core Theme 6  
Working Group Report 1**

**Daniel Lundqvist, Swedish Energy Agency, Sweden**

**Andy Deacon, Energy Saving Trust, UK**

**Date: 1 December 2011**

In accordance with Article 7 of the Energy Services Directive, Member States (MS) shall ensure that greater efforts are made to promote energy end-use efficiency and that appropriate information and advice is provided to final consumers. Citizens and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) should be supported to make better informed decisions with regard to individual energy consumption and to change their behaviour accordingly.

This Working Group focuses on one particular aspect of communicating energy efficiency that may have the greatest impact on results: *trust*. MS use numerous activities, organisations and channels to inform and advise citizens and SMEs about efficient energy usage and energy efficient investments, all of which may have an impact. This report indicates that this impact can be multiplied or ruined depending on the level of trust that citizens have in the source and the provider of the information.

Tailored information preferably provided in a one-to-one meeting, personally or by telephone, has the biggest potential impact. The results are strongly dependent, however, upon how trustworthy the advisor is from the recipient's point of view. The municipal energy and climate advisers in Sweden are examples of such a trustworthy service with a high level of advice implemented among citizens who received advice. General, static information on the internet or in brochures can also have an effect. It may have lesser potential impact but, if the source is well-known and trusted, the impact can be multiplied. This was the case when the Croatian government launched an information campaign. It was conducted with the support of UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), a factor that multiplied the credibility of the campaign.

Despite the significance of trust, there has been little direct research within the EU that specifically describes whether households and citizens have trust in energy efficiency advisors or in public information. Perhaps the most significant finding presented in this report is that there is a genuine need for this kind of feedback. Lack of information about who is trusted – and what it is that makes the information trustworthy - is a weakness for many MS that want to promote energy efficiency through information and advice. If we are to change behaviour, then new techniques of analysis need to be brought to bear alongside the traditional understanding of energy efficiency. This report seeks to bring together current research about consumer attitudes with an understanding of the elements of high quality energy efficiency advice.

Advisors on energy efficiency are generally trusted, provided that they are perceived to be skilled, independent and local. The impact of their work can also be multiplied if the advisors are participating in training programmes conducted or supported by a national body.

Independent accreditation of suppliers and retailers can, to some extent, bridge the lack of trust in commercial advisors. The Energy Saving Trust (EST) in the UK provides such an Endorsed Advice Service for third party organisations which work to achieve the quality standards required for approval by EST.

Energy saving advice from energy suppliers has a built-in conflict in that citizens tend to distrust such advice from organisations that profit from selling energy.

The power of neighbours' actions and expected reactions must not be underestimated. People tend to trust information and providers when they see results from others' actions. This fact has been successfully applied in several projects across Europe. Many more MS and local advisors could benefit from these experiences.

Table 3 below outlines the key factors identified by this Working Group that significantly affect citizens' trust levels firstly with respect to the individual advisors giving face-to-face advice and also in information materials disseminated (e.g. online, mail, events, etc.).

**Table 3: Significant factors for trust**

Advisors	Information material
Local	Accurate and specific
Perceived as skilful	Well known and highly trusted publisher
Independent or accredited by authority or a trusted independent brand	Consistency and continuity
Tailored and specific advice	Containing examples from people's experiences

**For more information please email**  
[daniel.lundqvist@energimyndigheten.se](mailto:daniel.lundqvist@energimyndigheten.se)

#### **Legal Disclaimer**

The sole responsibility for the content of this report lies with the authors. It does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Union. Neither EACI nor the European Commission are responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

The Concerted Action for the Energy Services Directive II (CA ESD II) was launched by Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) in May 2011 to provide a structured framework for the exchange of information between the 29 Member States during their implementation of the Energy Services Directive (ESD).

For further information please visit [www.esd-ca.eu](http://www.esd-ca.eu) or contact the CA ESD Coordinator Lucinda Maclagan at [lucinda.maclagan@agentschapnl.nl](mailto:lucinda.maclagan@agentschapnl.nl)

