



Acknowledgement and Opinion of Energie-Cités: Aligning the 'Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European City' and EU decisions on Energy and Climate

Energie-Cités (www.energie-cites.eu) warmly welcomes the German Presidency's initiative on the '**Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European City**' and it is with satisfaction we read the final draft of the Charter of 2nd May 2007.

These recommendations, which aim to support a sustainable development of our cities and provide them with economic prosperity, social balance and a healthy environment are especially appreciated.

Energie-Cités especially acknowledges the intention to *implement holistic strategies and coordinated actions involving every level of government* – local, regional, national and European – having a common responsibility for the future of our cities.

These concerns that underline on one hand the *importance of the role of the cities* and stresses *the need for integrated urban development policies*, as well as broad partnerships for their implementations (integrating energy issues in sectoral policies) echo Energie-Cités' concerns as stated in all our opinion papers and publications.

Energie-Cités congratulates the German Presidency on its initiative as well as the European Council's decision of 8-9 March 2007 dedicated to ambitious European climate and energy goals. Our common challenge now is to achieve these goals aligned and supporting each other.

1 – Energie-Cités especially welcomes the following sections lying within our field of competence:

- Energy efficiency and economic use of natural resources in public utility services
- Energy efficiency in buildings and its impact on social cohesion, reducing fuel poverty and improving quality of life
- Promotion of compact settlement structure, emphasizing the role of urban planning to prevent urban sprawl
- Sustainable, accessible and affordable urban transport with coordinated links to the city-region transport networks
- Finally, low carbon development modes to prevent climate change

More particularly, Energie-Cités welcomes the fact that support for improving energy efficiency in housing stock built during the communist era ('pre-fabricated housing') is considered necessary. It is, in fact a strong sign of social inclusion, a sign given to the most deprived European citizens that Europe is also made for them.

Energie-Cités insists also on the question that energy efficiency should not be considered as a "sectoral" issue concerning only infrastructure, public utilities, urban mobility and housing issues. On the contrary, it should be an integral part of any urban policies from treating fuel poverty or deprived neighbourhood via local development, urban design and education.

In fact, nothing would be more harmful than to dedicate significant sums to the support of "non-sustainable projects" from the energy point of view. This would pose the burden on the future generations obliged to carry the consequences of non-optimal choices we do now.

2 – For a successful implementation of the Charter we remain concerned about the following:

2.1 Energy falling outside the Community's and local governments' legal obligations, national and regional authorities responsible for the environment are predominantly concerned with updating their countries and cities in areas of waste, water and wastewater management; all areas that relate to community legal obligations.

2.2 Integration of energy efficiency, distributed generation and demand side measures in national, regional and local programmes. National Authorities responsible for energy – who are also involved in allocation of budgets and preparing programmes related to cohesion and structural funds in eligible countries – are predominantly, and sometimes even exclusively concerned with questions of supply (energy production and large electricity and gas supply networks). They rarely consider energy efficiency, distributed generation and demand-side management as an important means of sustainable urban development and social cohesion.

2.3 District heating systems - as recognised in the Leipzig Charter - represent an extremely important potential via biomass and cogeneration to handle energy security as well as to fight against fuel poverty and climate change. However, the worn out infrastructure leading to poor energy efficiency and rising prices in New Member States are often neglected by national and local policy makers and replaced by less sustainable individual gas heating.

2.4 Financing municipal energy efficiency remains also a challenge. Demand side projects are often small while European and national financial institutions and managers of European funds prefer large-scale projects. For this reason, energy efficiency projects are often disadvantaged for purely administrative constraints. Thus, designing the needed support framework and engaging financial intermediaries at European and national levels are inevitable.

2.5 The above comments highlight another shortcoming: the lack of human resources capable of drafting policies, guidelines, proposing projects, and of leading actions efficiently. Where measures related to energy efficiency do exist, they are above all directed towards physical investments. Programmes often neglect the underlying actions; raising public awareness, training, communication and audits – which could ensure that our local governments can 'lead by example' for 'doing more with less'.

Conclusion

We strongly hope that the German Presidency and Council of Ministers will be dedicated to dealing with the above mentioned problems, and will have the human means available to implement recommendations of this Leipzig Charter both at national, regional and local levels.

Energie-Cités is committed to support local governments in their sustainable development to become MODELS for their citizens and the whole society in designing and implementing sustainable energy policies as well as to IMAGINE the energy future of their territories (www.imagineyouenergyfuture.eu).



Mr. Eckart Würzner
Lord Mayor of the City of Heidelberg
President of Energie-Cités