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INFORSE-Europe Welcomes the EU Commission "Summer Package" to Reduce Energy Consumption & Emissions, but Calls for Further Actions

July 15, 2015

INFORSE-Europe, a network of 80 NGOs working for sustainable energy in the EU and beyond, welcomes that the European Commission in the middle of the financial crisis with Greece, continues to act to solve the much longer lasting climate crisis. Today's proposals for a better energy labelling and a better EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) are steps in the right direction. They will not solve the climate crisis alone, but they are some of the many steps needed to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to sustainable levels.

Probably the most important of the two legal proposals, the revision of the energy label directive, will help consumers to make an educated choice about the energy efficiency of the products they are going to buy. The revision to make the A-label the top class, and for most products rescale the label to avoid the plusses (A+, A++, A+++), can seem like a small change. However, the increasing difference of the top class labels is confusing consumers, making it harder to find the products with the highest energy efficiency. Today some products have A as the top class, while for other products, like refrigerators, the A-class is below the energy efficiency requirements, allowing only A+ and higher on the market. Such differences lead consumers to buy A+ believing that it has a high energy efficiency, even though it is the least efficient on the market today. While energy labels are a soft measure, only giving advice to consumers, experience from their introduction in the 1990's showed that consumers followed the labels and saved a lot on energy and CO₂-emissions with their purchase of white goods. In recent years, the success of energy-labelling has also been introduced to televisions and many other products

Now it is up to the European Parliament and the 28 EU countries to adopt the directive, and thereby improve consumer information. They must not cave in to industry pressure to maintain a misleading labelling system.

The revision of the ETS for the period after 2020 is also a step in the right direction, reducing the surplus of emission allowances. A surplus, which drove a massive drop in costs of CO₂ emissions. Increasing the price of emissions is therefore necessary for a well-functioning ETS. Since the ETS is the mechanism of choice in EU to set a price of greenhouse gas emissions, it is important that it actually set this price at an adequate level, to guide investments into low emission solutions. Unfortunately, the current system gives too low prices to guide investments, giving for instance coal plants, which have high emissions, a competitive advantage over alternatives with lower emissions. The new proposal is likely to increase allowance costs, but only slightly, probably not enough to guide investments. If the EU-countries shall do their part of emission reductions, stronger measures are needed. EU can either reduce ETS allowances considerably more than now proposed, or EU and the 28 countries can introduce other measures to reduce emissions, including smarter energy taxes, better energy planning, sectorial energy efficiency measures, and better support for renewable energy.

Now it is up to the European Parliament and the 28 countries to review today's ETS proposal and make it a real step in an efficient transition to 100% renewable energy, as needed for a stable climate, and called for by INFORSE-Europe and many others.

Energy efficiency and the transition to renewable energy is not just a climate issue. Greece has since the Euro was introduced spent more than 100 bill. € on oil and gas imports, equal to a large part of Greeces current dept.

For further comments information on INFORSE-Europe's positions to EU energy policies, see www.inforse.org/europe or call INFORSE-Europe ph. (+45) 86227000 or the coordinator Gunnar Boye Olesen, Mobile. (+45)-42300192, ove@inforse.org.