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# Interviews with SMEPlus regional stakeholders

Compilation



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# 1 Confindustria, Italy

**Interview with Professor Massimo Beccarello, Deputy Director for Industrial, Energy and Environmental Policies of Confindustria (Association of Italian Industries).**



Giovanni Scimemi from Invitalia, the National Agency for Inward Investment and Economic Development under the Ministry of Economic Development, interviewed Massimo Beccarello on behalf of the SMEPlus project and asked several questions related to energy efficiency in SMEs.

## ***SMEPlus: Why is energy saving important for industrial SMEs?***

**Professor Massimo Beccarello:** For the industrial world, energy saving is not only an option of cost containment, but also a great opportunity for improving a company's security, internal organization and production autonomy.

When we talk about energy saving, reference is made to a series of planning, planning, design & marketing actions which, for the same services offered, allow less energy to be consumed. Therefore, costs and needs are reduced, keeping the production constant.

## ***SMEPlus: What are the benefits of energy saving, apart from reduced energy costs?***

**Prof. Beccarello:** The new European decarbonisation targets make it even more challenging to achieve emission reduction targets through, above all, the efficiency of production processes that reduce energy consumption.

National proposals to achieve these objectives are of fundamental strategic importance for our country as they complement energy policy, climate policy and policy for sustainable industrial development.

As mentioned, in fact energy efficiency for an SME is not only a way to save energy, but has become a central element of the company's investment choices. Energy efficiency projects are increasingly a primary choice of the company that guarantees a safer and more efficient production system. Not only that. An efficiency of production and savings on the energy used have a positive impact on society as a whole, which benefits from the reduction of emissions associated with lower energy consumption.



In recent years, awareness of the importance of green turning has increased and more and more companies are embarking on a path towards a new vision of production, combining economic aspects with those of environmental sustainability.

***SMEPlus: Does energy efficiency have an impact on the public image of an industrial SME?***

**Prof. Beccarello:** There is no doubt that within a context, where consumer awareness of the environment is increasing and where individual choices are increasingly directed towards a green behavioural change, an SME that pays great attention to the need to generate and use energy, in a conscious way, pursuing the protection of the climate, the environment and the territory as well as the protection of people's health, will have a positive response from a reputational point of view and certainly an more quid in its products.

***SMEPlus: What are the most important incentives for SMEs to invest in the energy efficiency measures?***

**Prof. Beccarello:** Italian companies have several opportunities to access incentives for energy efficiency interventions. However, the framework of benefits is fragmented, divided between state and regional interventions, often bound by the prohibition of cumulation with other incentive instruments. The main incentive tools are:

- ◆ White Certificates: they represent a unique tool for the realization of efficiency interventions especially in industry. It is estimated that the final energy savings generated by new projects carried out from 1 January 2021 will continue to generate benefits until at least 31 December 2030, quantifying them at around 15.02 Mtoe of final energy in cumulative value.
- ◆ Thermal account: in order to promote energy efficiency interventions in the tertiary sector and maximise results, it is intended to specialize the thermal account mechanism for energy redevelopment and for building recovery in the non-residential sector, both public and private. There is an extremely positive trend for the mechanism. The results obtained from the activation of the instrument to date allow to make an estimate of the savings potential of the mechanism in the years to come and until 2030 equal to about 3.85 Mtoe of final energy in cumulative value.
- ◆ National Fund for Energy Efficiency: in order to increase the Fund's capacity to promote energy efficiency interventions, the financial envelope available today will be increased, favouring the payment of energy efficiency resources managed by central and local administrations (Structural Funds, European Investment Funds) and orienting the mechanism towards the promotion of interventions in the civil sector (both residential and tertiary) and transport. The additional annual savings, due to new interventions, are estimated on the basis of the mix of interventions provided for by the Fund and on the resources that the standard makes available, equal to about 2.75 Mtoe of final energy in cumulative value.



It is also possible to access regional calls, in many cases activated through synergies with European Structural Funds.

*More info about the Confindustria, Italy*

Confindustria is the main association representing manufacturing and service companies in Italy, with a voluntary membership of more than 150,000 companies of all sizes, employing a total of 5,437,488 people.

Interview was published at <https://www.interregeurope.eu/smeplus/news/news-article/11349/interview-with-a-stakeholder-confindustria-italy/> on 22.02.2021.

## 2 Forschung Burgenland, Austria

DI Johann Binder is working at Forschung Burgenland GmbH, a 100% subsidiary of Fachhochschule Burgenland (University of Applied Sciences Burgenland). Together with Forschung Burgenland, the university acts as a hub for research and development projects in the region. Johann Binder has been working as a project manager in the field of energy for many years and has profound knowledge of cross-border exchange within EU projects.



Dietmar Baurecht, Regionalmanagement Burgenland GmbH, interviewed Johann Binder and asked several questions related to energy efficiency in SMEs.

***Dietmar Baurecht, Regionalmanagement Burgenland GmbH: Why is energy saving important for industrial SMEs?***

**Johann Binder, Forschung Burgenland GmbH:** Energy saving becomes more and more an economic factor also for SME within the framework of competitiveness.

***Dietmar: Why is energy saving important for your region?***

**Johann:** Because of huge regional production of volatile renewable energy savings strategies in combination with volatile productions in order to concentrate at energy consumption based at regional produced energy are useful.

***Dietmar: What are the benefits of energy saving, apart from reduced energy costs?***

**Johann:** Higher independency from energy imports and therefore more certainty to ensure energy supply within the region.

***Dietmar: Does energy efficiency have an impact on the public image of an industrial SME?***

**Johann:** Usually energy efficiency measures are going in line with better comfort, services or products of companies. Often these SME have also special certificates in that fields which ensure good qualities of SME.

***Dietmar: In your opinion, are good practices transferable between the regions and countries in the EU?***

**Johann:** At least good practices should be shown up if benefits and success are given to the SME. Of course, every SME and the regions can have different preconditions and therefore the need to develop their own fitting solutions.



***Dietmar: What are the most important incentives for SMEs to invest in the energy efficiency measures?***

**Johann:** To enhance the Quality of the own services or products and to reach a better position in competitiveness. Rather seldom are sufficient financial benefits by investing in efficiency measures.

***Dietmar: Which existing energy policies towards SMEs in your region are, in your opinion, the most efficient?***

**Johann:** Combined funding measures (e.g. Production measures combined with efficiency measures), which ensures an overall benefit to the SME.

*More info about the Forschung Burgenland GmbH and the Fachhochschule Burgenland (University of Applied Sciences Burgenland)*

Forward-looking control concepts for modern buildings, smart energy systems and security solutions for information technology are just a few examples for topics where the team of Forschung Burgenland together with the University of Applied Sciences play a key role in the development. To this end Forschung Burgenland operates 2 Research Centers and 5 so-called Pre-Centers, where trends and new research concepts are being worked out and developed. Their R&D activities take place in their facilities in Pinkafeld and Eisenstadt. At the University of Applied Sciences in particular we do research along the degree programmes of Energy and Environmental Management, Business, Information Technology and Information Management, Social Work and Health. The cross-linkage of research and teaching brings advantages especially for students, who gain an insight into the current state of scientific development through their active involvement in research projects. Their activities in the area of research, technology and innovation make them an attractive partner and regional driving force for the economy.

*Interview was published at <https://www.interregeurope.eu/smeplus/news/news-article/10530/interview-with-a-stakeholder-forschung-burgenland/> on 27.11.2020.*

### 3 Intermediate Body for the Regional Operational Program, Romania

Ovidiu Balan is the head of project monitoring and verification department from the Intermediate Body for Regional Operational Programme (ROP) 2014-2020 in the South-West Oltenia Region. The Intermediate Body manages the ROP and develops the regional development strategy. One of the Programme priorities is the improvement of the competitiveness of the SMEs, including the encouragement of SMEs to adopt energy efficiency measures and/or use of Renewable Energy Sources (RES).



Mihai Marian, regional implementation manager from the South-West Oltenia Regional Development Agency, interviewed Ovidiu about the regional energy efficiency policy measures related to industrial SMEs.

***Mihai Marian, South-West Oltenia Regional Development Agency: Why is energy saving important for industrial SMEs?***

**Ovidiu Balan, Intermediate Body for the Regional Operational Program:** Taking into consideration the EU goal of reducing the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 60% by 2030, we think that energy saving will play an important role in SMEs and will have a twofold impact on them, as it will:

- ◆ contribute to reduced costs and improved productivity, and
- ◆ help increase the competitiveness and brand image.

Although nowadays SMEs don't pay too much attention to this aspect, we think that this will change in the future because of the awareness of the direct and non-direct benefits that will be generated after implementing energy efficiency measures.

***Mihai: Why is energy saving important for your region?***

**Ovidiu:** The South-West Oltenia Region has an industrial profile. The energy saving benefits will represent a major factor in its future development. Even if the legislative framework is settled at national level with law enforcement only for big companies, still, SMEs receive aid especially through financing schemes and subsidies that support new investment measures for energy efficiency and use of RES. Also, the support provided to SMEs is complementary to other financing measures that target increased energy efficiency in residential and public buildings, public lighting and transport infrastructure for sustainable urban mobility.



***Mihai: What are the benefits of energy saving, apart from reduced energy costs?***

**Ovidiu:** The main are increased productivity, reduced interval maintenance of the production lines, higher lifetime of equipment, improved brand image of the SME and less CO2 emissions.

***Mihai: Does energy efficiency has an impact on the public image of an SME?***

**Ovidiu:** Yes, by targeting the environmentally neutral impact, the SME acknowledge an environmentally friendly image that will be associated with its products and can increase its sales.

***Mihai: In your opinion, are good practices transferable between the regions and countries?***

**Ovidiu:** The exchange of experience and know-how plays a key role, especially for less developed regions. They can “import” good practices successfully tested and implemented in other regions. Of course, it is necessary to adapt the practices to local legislative, business and cultural environment.

***Mihai: What are the most important incentives for SMEs to invest in the energy efficiency measures?***

**Ovidiu:** Most likely the better rated ones are the grant schemes or subsidies that are non-refundable. Still, in order to have a real impact we think that the expected results related to how much the taken measures have improved the SME energy efficiency, need to use some instruments & tools to help to better quantify the expected results. In our case the most important incentives for SMEs regarding energy efficiency measures are the one offered through the Regional Operational Program 2014-2020.

***Mihai: Which existing energy policies towards SMEs in your region are, in your opinion, the most efficient?***

**Ovidiu:** In the South-West Oltenia Region there is no direct legal framework that supports SMEs and helps them identify & implement energy efficiency measures such as energy audits, energy management, trainings for energy efficiency etc. The most efficient instrument is the Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020, Priority Axis 2 which improves the competitiveness of SMEs, by:

- ◆ upgrading/purchasing of specific energy-saving installations / equipment as well as systems that use renewable (alternative) energy sources,
- ◆ optimization of operating installations and technological flows; minimizing waste and increasing level of waste recovery and recycling, and
- ◆ using renewable energy sources: solar, wind and geothermal energy, hydropower, biomass.



**Mihai:** *Which policies from other regions could be implemented in your region?*

**Ovidiu:** E.g. a legal framework at national or regional level that can support SMEs in taking energy efficiency measures. But this would be a major structural policy change that needs to be established at national level. Still, we think that in the actual context an improvement for the monitoring phase of the investment measures could be useful.

*Interview was published at <https://www.interregeurope.eu/smeplus/news/news-article/10477/interview-with-a-stakeholder-romania/> on 24.11.2020.*

## 4 Government of La Rioja, Spain

Iván Moya Mallafré is in charge of the Regional Directorate for Energetic Transition and Climate Change of the Government of La Rioja (Spain).



Susana Mangado, Economic Development Agency of La Rioja (ADER), asked Iván several questions related to energy efficiency in SMEs.

***Susana Mangado, Economic Development Agency of La Rioja (ADER): Why is energy saving important for industrial SMEs?***

**Iván Moya Mallafré, Director-General for Energetic Transition and Climate Change of the Government of La Rioja:** Well, first of all from an economical point of view reducing costs is of paramount importance in a globalized economy and if SMEs are to play a role in this new scenario, then becoming competitive is a must for any of them. On top of this, there are many other advantages, as energy efficiency is one of the main EU targets, which means that economical support coming from EU will have to be linked to this issue.

***Susana: Why is energy saving important for your region?***

**Iván:** I understand that it is important for any region in Europe. As a country, Spain is committed to certain percentages of energy efficiency increase. As, a) we have a strongly decentralized administration and b) the energy issues in Spain are dealt at a regional level, we must fulfil Spain's commitment.

But I would also like to add that La Rioja Government has the vocation of becoming an example of commitment and adherence to the Green Deal. Because of our size, there are many ideas and projects that can be tested here at the prototype level. This gives us a huge amount of opportunities in the near future.

***Susana: What are the benefits of energy saving, apart from reduced energy costs?***

**Iván:** It is already accepted by European citizens that our future has to be sustainable. There is no choice on that. And this sustainability must come from a fact that technology has only been able to provide on as from the 21st century. I mean that, for the first time in history, it is possible to grow economically and reduce energy consumption at the same time. This is the core of sustainability in the long term.



**Susana: Does energy efficiency have an impact on the public image of an industrial SME?**

**Iván:** In our everyday tasks, we talk to many SMEs. At different levels, yet all of them are willing to extend their markets and to become global. Well, these new markets, formed by well off countries that can afford to pay for high-quality products, are also very sensitive to the sustainability issues. Consumers see great value in knowing about the production process and whether or not they respect the environment in every aspect. If the consumers are not convinced in this sense, they will not buy the product.

**Susana: In your opinion, are good practices transferable between the regions and countries in the EU?**

**Iván:** Of course. This is the basis of learning. Every region or country will have their own particular features, but I am convinced that most of the processes are common. So, any improvement, any efficient measure, any idea employed in one place will be able to be transferred and used in another. This is the way we have built our societies since ancient times.

**Susana: What are the most important incentives for SMEs to invest in the energy efficiency measures?**

**Iván:** I think they have already been mentioned: cost saving, access to government and EU programs, market expansion.

**Susana: Which existing energy policies towards SMEs in your region are in your opinion, the most efficient?**

**Iván:** Current regional energy policy is conducted through the La Rioja Regional Operational Programme of the European Regional Development Fund 2014-2020 and implemented through regional grants for promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy use in enterprises, especially SMEs. Indeed, these EU funds have contributed to raise private investments in the field of energy efficiency among regional SMEs, even though we have not had specific oriented energy policies in our region so far.

I would also mention support actions related to energy savings in buildings and also those dealing with mobility. The first ones include thermal isolation of facades, RREE, mainly PV in the roofs, etc. From last year Spain allows the possibility of selling your own energy to the network at particular level. This has raised a lot of interest both for companies and private persons. As well as mobility, although in this field, manufacturers must make another step forward regarding autonomy and price of the vehicles. Storage research will become key in these improvements.

**Susana: Which policies from other regions could be implemented in your region?**

**Iván:** The creation of a Regional Energy Agency could be something crucial for La Rioja. We have also identified some good practices based on energy audit tools. These could be very useful for us and companies as instruments that “measure” energy efficiency of SMEs.



Interview was published at <https://www.interregeurope.eu/smeplus/news/news-article/9899/interview-with-a-stakeholder-government-of-la-rioja/> on 06.10.2020.

## 5 RKW Hessen, Germany

Sasa Petric is a project manager at the RKW Hessen, a consultancy that provides SMEs with advisory services. Aim of the guided consultancy is to enable, in particular SMEs, to manage current and future challenges and to improve their competitiveness. Sasa Petric coordinates the Hessian initiative for energy consulting in small & medium-sized businesses. He is encouraging companies to make use of the existing consultancy offers and shows tangible options for activities.



The House of Energy and the RKW Hessen have been working together and learning from each other. Christian Engers, House of Energy, interviewed Sasa Petric and asked some questions about the energy efficiency in industrial SMEs.

### ***Christian Engers, House of Energy: Why is energy saving important for industrial SMEs?***

**Sasa Petric, RKW Hessen:** Many SMEs struggle with rising energy and material costs. Saving resources such as energy, water, raw-materials or auxiliary materials not only leads to financial savings but also to environmental protection. Thus, a more sustainable production will reduce CO2 emissions and will secure the future of the company. Jobs can be preserved and the whole region will benefit from the efforts the industrial SME has taken.

**Christian:** Does energy efficiency have an impact on the public image of an industrial SME?

**Sasa:** One aspect which becomes more and more important is the public interest in topics such as sustainability and climate change. Accordingly, SMEs have to develop strategies on how to handle these topics. But not only customers and clients put pressure on the SMEs. The job market also becomes more important. An industrial SME can emphasise its ecological awareness by investing into energy efficiency measures and thus attract qualified employees.

### ***Christian: Which existing energy policies towards SMEs in your region are, in your opinion, the most efficient?***

**Sasa:** A very efficient energy policy in my region (Hesse) is, in my opinion, the PIUS programme. PIUS stands for production-integrated environmental protection (“Produktionsintegrierter Umweltschutz”). This support system comprises of two parts. The first part is the advisory scheme PIUS-Beratung. This advisory service funds external expertise for SMEs. Advisors point out how to optimise production processes and identify potential savings in order to improve energy and resource efficiency. The second part is the funding scheme PIUS-Invest. Here, innovative investment projects which improve the



resource efficiency of SMEs and save CO2, are subsidised. The two parts are interlinked, but they also can be applied separately. They are intended to help SMEs save energy, water or raw-materials and consequently lead to financial savings and environmental protection.

More info about the PIUS programme is available online at [www.technologieland-hessen.de/hessen-pius](http://www.technologieland-hessen.de/hessen-pius).

*Interview was published at <https://www.interregeurope.eu/smeplus/news/news-article/9701/interview-with-a-stakeholder-rkw-hessen/> on 14.09.2020.*

## 6 Province of Drenthe, Netherlands

Rein Bouwer is project manager at the Province of Drenthe, the southern neighbour of the Province of Groningen. In the past four years the Provinces of Groningen and of Drenthe have been working together and learning from each other.



During one of the meetings, Maya Janssen, project manager at the Province of Groningen, asked Rein Bouwer several questions.

**Maya Janssen, Province of Groningen: Why is energy saving important for your region and for industrial SMEs?**

**Rein Bouwer, Province of Drenthe:** From the national and regional governments' point of view this is important because of our CO2 reduction goals. We also have regional ambitions for green and sustainable mobility, buildings and economy, which help us towards a higher quality of life in the region. We can't achieve these goals without the contribution of SMEs.

**Maya: What are the benefits of energy saving, apart from reduced energy costs?**

**Rein:** SMEs have different drivers to save energy. Money is usually not one of them, because of the low energy prices. But efficient and innovative companies have better chances in the future because the focus of governments and consumers will shift more and more to a green, circular, low carbon and energy efficient economy.

**Maya: Does energy efficiency has an impact on the public image of an industrial SME?**

**Rein:** Yes, of course. And this will only increase in the future. The focus of the national government is on buildings and houses while the industry and SME's use a lot more energy and fossil fuels. House owners have to invest a lot of their own money in energy saving and have the feeling that companies have to do less. Companies, therefore, have to take the initiative to tell their suppliers and consumers that they are also taking responsibility. Only this way they will have a future in a low carbon economy.

**Maya: In your opinion, are good practices in energy saving transferable between the regions and countries in the EU?**

**Rein:** Yes, in general. Of course, there are cultural and economic differences. Yet it is helpful and important to know and share what the different EU members are doing.



**Maya: What are the most important incentives for SMEs to invest in the energy efficiency measures?**

**Rein:** To be compliant with the national environmental law, to have a “green” image, to be a reliable chain partner with corporate social responsibility.

Especially corporate social responsibility, because this is something many companies want to be associated with, because it gives them a “greener” image.

The financial incentives appeal only to the biggest industrial companies; for them the energy costs constitute a large percentage of their total costs.

**Maya: Which existing energy policies towards SMEs in your region are, in your opinion, the most efficient? And which policies from other regions could be implemented in your region?**

**Rein:** The first question is, what is efficient? Is this only how much money you invest versus the amount of CO2 reduction you achieve?

Our policy, the Climate Route, which started in 2017, financed energy scans and helped companies take the right measures. The costs in the past years were EUR 350.000. Up to now a reduction of 7.000 tons of CO2/year has been realized and this will increase in the next years, because not all companies have taken all the measures yet. Also, these companies are now more likely to take extra measures because they know more about energy efficiency and what it can bring them.

Last, but certainly not least, the measures taken by SMEs resulted in investments in the local economy worth EUR 9 million! For us this was, and is, a successful and positive approach.

Also, the provinces of Groningen and Drenthe are working together to approach business-parks (through their park management), to assess their energy usage and their potential for solar panels. Business-parks are already better organised, so it is an efficient way to reach many companies at once and stimulate them to work together.

Interview was published at <https://www.interregeurope.eu/smeplus/news/news-article/9653/interview-with-a-stakeholder-province-of-drenthe/> on 07.09.2020.

## 7 University of Gävle, Sweden

Ida Johansson is PhD student at the department of Building Engineering, Energy Systems and Sustainability Science at the University of Gävle. Her role in the SMEPlus project is to support the coordination and monitoring of project activities as well as provide expert consultation regarding policies during the project.



Anna Näsman, Regional Communication Manager for SMEPlus at the University of Gävle, asked Ida to answer several questions related to energy efficiency in SMEs.

**SMEPlus project:** *Why is energy saving important for industrial SMEs?*

**Ida Johansson, University of Gävle:** Energy efficiency is important for SMEs, not only to reduce energy use and costs, but also to improve the company image and competitiveness. SMEs have a relatively large potential to improve the energy efficiency, and this potential should not be neglected.

**SMEPlus:** *What are the benefits of energy saving, apart from reduced energy costs?*

**Ida:** There are non-energy benefits of energy efficiency improvements. Reduction of maintenance, improvement of lighting and improved quality of products are examples of these types of benefits.

**SMEPlus:** *Does energy efficiency has an impact on the public image of an industrial SME?*

**Ida:** Energy efficiency improvements can have a positive impact on the public impact of an SME. In some cases customers favor “green” products, and certificates or energy program participations are mentioned on the companies public websites.

**SMEPlus:** *In your opinion, are good practices transferable between the regions and countries in the EU?*

**Ida:** Sharing experiences between the countries are important and showing off good practices is one way. SMEs in different countries faces different challenges and the preconditions may vary, the policies and activities must be designed to specifically target that group.

**SMEPlus:** *What are the most important incentives for SMEs to invest in the energy efficiency measures?*

**Ida:** Improving the competitiveness, by improving the company image, reducing maintenance and production disruptions, and improving the quality of the product offered to the customer.



**SMEPlus:** Which existing energy policies towards SMEs in your region are, in your opinion, the most efficient?

**Ida:** Energy efficiency networks seem to be an efficient mean to improve the energy efficiency in SMEs. The networks also increase the general knowledge on energy efficiency in the companies.

Interview was published at <https://www.interregeurope.eu/smeplus/news/news-article/11702/interview-with-a-stakeholder-university-of-gaevle/> on 31.03.2021.

## 8 Confartigianato Imprese, Italy

Ms Valentina Bagozzi is the Head of the Energy and Utilities Market sector of Confartigianato Imprese (Association of artisans and small businesses). She is responsible for relations with Institutions, Regulatory Authorities, Associations of non-domestic consumers, domestic consumers & market operators. Valentina deals with analysis of European, national & regulatory legislation with particular reference to the retail market, consumer protection regulations, networks and distribution, renewable sources & energy taxation. She is also in charge of drafting of strategic and trade union positioning documents and regulatory proposals.



**SMEPlus:** *Why is energy saving important for industrial SMEs?*

**Valentina Bagozzi, Confartigianato:** In our country, a distinction has to be made between energy-intensive SMEs, for which there is a general relief linked to consumption, and non-energy-intensive industrial SMEs not eligible for this relief. The latter have an interest in making energy savings because by using the same energy to produce more, efficiency represents a cost reduction. In general, for all industrial SMEs, energy efficiency is linked to an increased public appreciation of the rational and environmentally sustainable use of resources. Finally, industrial SMEs participating in public tenders see in the green public procurement rules an incentive for energy efficiency in the form of a bonus in the tender score.

**SMEPlus:** *Why is energy saving important for your region?*

**Valentina Bagozzi:** Lazio is home to an important chemical-pharmaceutical cluster, a sector characterised by a fairly high level of consumption. In addition, since the region is home to Italy's capital city, there is a sector of public service companies in buildings such as public administration, schools & health. In this sector there are several large public hospitals serving the central-southern Italy (Gemelli, San Camillo-Forlanini, Sant'Andrea, Fatebenefratelli, Tor Vergata).

**SMEPlus:** *Does energy efficiency have an impact on the public image of an industrial SME?*

**Valentina Bagozzi:** It can have an impact due to the greater attention paid by the community to environmental sustainability issues, of which efficiency is a component. Some events involving major industrial sites, such as the ILVA plants, have had the effect of bringing the relationship between environment and work back to public attention.

**SMEPlus:** *Can good practices be exchanged and implemented in different regions and countries of the EU?*



**Valentina Bagozzi:** In general, yes. There is a need to adjust practices to the economic context in which they will be applied, but in general the circulation of good ideas always leads to positive results.

**SMEPlus:** *What are the most efficient energy measures implemented in your region?*

**Valentina Bagozzi:** Italian companies can access incentives for energy efficiency measures in several ways. The framework of incentives is unfortunately fragmented, divided between state & regional measures, which are not always easy for companies to access and understand.

*National measures.* Those who intend to equip their company with a system of electricity production from renewable sources must refer to the so-called RES Decree 1, in force since July 2019, which provides incentives for four types of plants: newly built photovoltaic, "on shore" wind, hydroelectric and sewage gas. The 2021 tenders will open on 31 January, 31 May and 30 September.

Another incentive mechanism for those who carry out energy efficiency measures is that of white certificates, which are negotiable securities, each equivalent to a saving of one TOE (tonne of oil equivalent), assigned to companies by the Manager of the Electricity Market on the instructions of the GSE. White certificates can be traded and valued on an exchange platform and cannot be accumulated with other incentives, with the exception of local, regional or EU incentives, such as ERDF ROPs provided by the Regions.

An incentive for companies to improve their efficiency is also provided by the [National Energy Efficiency Fund](#), managed by [Invitalia](#). The application may concern interventions to reduce energy consumption in production processes, energy requalification of buildings as well as the creation of district heating networks and the efficiency of public services and infrastructure, including lighting.

*Regional measures.* It is also possible to access [regional tenders](#), in many cases activated through synergies with European structural funds provided by the 2014/2020 ROP ERDF programme.

[Lazio](#) has set up subsidised financing channels or loans for micro-enterprises and SMEs that invest in energy efficiency or the production of energy from renewable sources, and has published a POR FESR call for tenders to promote and enhance the [Ecologically Equipped Productive Areas \(APEA\)](#) with the aim of supporting investments to reduce energy consumption, CO2 and greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts of businesses.

*Interview was published at <https://www.interregeurope.eu/smeplus/news/news-article/11721/interview-with-a-stakeholder-confartigianato-italy/> on 07.04.2021.*

## 9 Confederazione Nazionale dell'Artigianato e della Piccola e Media impresa (CNA), Italy

Ms Barbara Gatto is the Head of Environmental Policy Department at CNA, Italian Confederation of Craft Trades and Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises. The CNA represents artisans, business owners, professionals, the self-employed and small and micro businesses in the tourism, services and industrial sectors.



### ***SMEPlus: Why is energy saving important for industrial SMEs?***

**Barbara Gatto, CNA:** Investing in energy efficiency measures is essential for SMEs to cut energy related production costs. A small Italian company pays 8x more for energy than its European competitors: an onerous fixed cost that contributes to a loss of competitiveness & growth. This is where the tendency of SMEs to make their production processes more efficient and to invest in the self-production of renewable energy has arisen over the years, an attitude that has succeeded in maturing into a culture of sustainability, thanks also to the continuous awareness-raising and support that CNA has always given its members.

### ***SMEPlus: Why is energy saving important for your region?***

**Barbara Gatto:** Italy has a better energy intensity than the EU average, due to its temperate climate and fairly sober household consumption habits. But also, due to the efforts made over the years to improve the efficiency of production activities and, lastly, in the key sector for the national economy such as construction. But there is still much to be done to reach the national energy efficiency targets, made even more challenging by the recent European Climate Act.

### ***SMEPlus: What are the benefits of energy saving, besides lower energy costs?***

**Barbara Gatto:** Energy saving investments make it possible to make the production process more efficient also in terms of wear and tear of the machinery and the maintenance of the plants. These interventions, in the medium term, improve the quality of the company's production cycle.

### ***SMEPlus: Does energy efficiency have an impact on the public image of an industrial SME?***

**Barbara Gatto:** The interest of SMEs in energy efficiency was mainly born out of a practical need, but over time it has turned into a greater awareness on environmental & sustainability



issues, also driven by a greater demand for green goods & services. Businesses have grasped this demand from users and are responding well, aware that being attentive to the rational use of resources and the environmental impact of their activities improves their image to the outside world and opens up new market opportunities. We believe that, in strengthening national policies on energy sustainability, the role of the consumer should be addressed to a greater extent, as his or her behaviour is fundamental to pushing the market towards greener and quality consumption, capable of enhancing the value of small Italian businesses.

***SMEPlus: Can good practices be exchanged and implemented in different EU regions and countries?***

**Barbara Gatto:** Exchanging ideas and projects is always a good idea. However, this may be easier between countries with similar characteristics in their economic or production system.

***SMEPlus: What are the main incentives for SMEs to invest in energy efficiency measures?***

**Barbara Gatto:** Italy has many instruments to support investments in energy efficiency, aimed at both the public and private sectors. At the moment, Italian SMEs can only benefit from a part of these instruments, which in general have not been formulated at SME level. These companies still face difficulties, especially in the start-up phase of the investment, either because of the complexity - including bureaucracy - of the instruments or because of difficulties in accessing credit. For this reason, it would be useful to revise these instruments to make them more accessible and precisely "SME-friendly", and the Interreg project is certainly an appropriate opportunity to point out the critical points to be removed.

***SMEPlus: What are the most efficient energy measures implemented in your region?***

**Barbara Gatto:** Among the tools that Italy has provided to support energy efficiency, the most successful have been the tax measures for the energy upgrading of buildings that citizens can access. A tool that has supported the 'home' sector and increased employment. It is precisely these measures that have been further strengthened in order to accelerate the trajectory towards national targets in this area.

***SMEPlus: What measures from other regions could be implemented in your region?***

**Barbara Gatto:** I find interesting the measures taken in some countries to provide SMEs with free public tools to carry out energy audits in their own facilities. This is a tool that would allow companies, particularly the smallest ones, to know the energy characteristics of their company and to act accordingly to improve its performance. At the moment, this is something that is missing in Italy and that SMEs badly need.

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## 10 LandesEnergieAgentur (LEA), Germany

Robert Weicht is Head of Electromobility and Energy Efficient Companies at the LandesEnergieAgentur (LEA) – State Energy Agency of Hessen. The House of Energy and the LEA Hessen have been working together and learning from each other.



Christian Engers, House of Energy, interviewed Robert Weicht and asked questions about the energy efficiency in industrial SMEs.

**Christian Engers, House of Energy, partner in SMEPlus project: Why is energy saving important for industrial SMEs?**

**Robert Weicht, LandesEnergieAgentur (LEA):** The topic is important for several reasons. Most important is saving money, because an SME that saves energy will reduce its costs. Another relevant aspect is the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub>. Most entrepreneurs nowadays are aware of the negative impacts of the climate change – not only on a global level. Some even are directly affected and feel the consequences themselves. They know about their responsibility and would like to save CO<sub>2</sub>. This is connected with a growing environmental awareness, addressing the next generation and finding future employees who want to work in decent companies.

**Christian: Why is energy saving important for your region?**

**Robert:** Saving energy also means protecting the climate. As mentioned above, climate change is a global issue, but we deal with the consequences on a regional level. Extreme weather events, such as flooding production sites, can have direct impacts on regional SMEs. Or they affect them indirectly via disruptions in the supply chains and causing short supplies of commodities. Both can weaken the company, while resilient and healthy companies are important to preserve jobs in any region. From a regional perspective, the electricity delivery also has to be considered. On the one hand, power lines have certain limits, while on the other hand more and more consumers emerge on the market (e.g. data centres). I know about several SMEs who could not install new machines because their power supplier was not able to provide enough electricity. This was yet another a reason for the SMEs to start saving energy.

**Christian: Does energy efficiency have an impact on the public image of an industrial SME?**

**Robert:** Yes of course. Therefore, many SMEs put it on their agenda. Further aspects of sustainability will become more and more important in the future.



**Christian: Which existing energy policies towards SMEs in your region are, in your opinion, the most efficient?**

**Robert:** In our region, we created the „Hessische Initiative für Energieberatung im Mittelstand – HIEM“ (Hessian initiative for energy consulting in the mid-sized sector). The idea is to offer free consultations for SMEs in Hessen: around 150 meetings per year take place. The advisors visit the SMEs and support them with technical questions. In addition, they present suitable funding opportunities.

The LandesEnergieAgentur also helps SMEs to identify the most suitable funding programmes. Due to the wide range of funds, it is hard to keep the overview. The experts from the LEA and the HIEM are happy to guide the SMEs and make sure that the best programme is found. In general, I would say that supporting SMEs in achieving energy efficiency goals is an important task, since small companies often are too busy with their daily business and just do not have the time to do it on their own.

**Christian: Which policies from other regions sound interesting to you?**

**Robert:** The Good Practice from the Netherlands (Province of Groningen) about law enforcement is very inspiring. According to the law, SMEs have to take energy-efficiency measures with a return of investment of 5 years or less. The province hired specially trained law enforcers who visited the SMEs and informed them about the obligations and presented possible solutions. The mixture of demanding and promoting measures sounds very reasonable to me. Many companies do not want the government to come up with further obligations. But I have also heard the opposite: The appreciation of clear regulations which apply to all companies because this facilitates a fair competition.

*More about Robert Weicht*

Robert Weicht (born in 1965) studied chemical engineering and has more than 30 years of professional experience in the environmental sector. He was working for different consulting firms and public authorities, including 12 years as head of the unit Resource Efficiency at the state agency for the environment at the state of Rhineland-Palatinate. Today he is head of the thematic fields Electromobility and Energy Efficient Companies at the LandesEnergieAgentur (LEA) – State Energy Agency of Hessen. Regarding the Hessian SMEs, Robert Weicht likes to emphasize that energy efficiency is not only beneficial, but can indeed be fun.

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## 11 Dr. Bohrer Lasertec, Austria

**Dr. Markus Bohrer is the founder of the Dr. Bohrer Lasertec GmbH. Markus Bohrer is convinced that there is a way for sustainable development and to make sound business as well. At the end we'll need an environment where we can live. Basically, for all of us and especially for his three young daughters, born in Burgenland.**



The Regionalmanagement Burgenland GmbH and Dr. Markus Bohrer have been exchanging experience. Dietmar Baurecht, Regionalmanagement Burgenland GmbH, interviewed Dr. Markus Bohrer and asked questions about the energy efficiency in industrial SMEs.

***Dietmar Baurecht, Regionalmanagement Burgenland GmbH: Why is energy saving important for industrial SMEs?***

**Dr. Markus Bohrer:** Energy saving is an important method to avoid waste. What is not wasted has not to be produced. And by the way, running costs are reduced.

***Dietmar: Why is energy saving important for your region?***

**Markus:** Burgenland is a model region in Europe with its own green energy production. And again, the amount of energy saved has not to be produced.

***Dietmar: What are the benefits of energy saving, apart from reduced energy costs?***

**Markus:** It is a global responsibility for all of us to take care of our world, otherwise the day might come, where we can't even exist here any longer.

***Dietmar: Does energy efficiency have an impact on the public image of an industrial SME?***

**Markus:** Of course, it does! I changed my personal behavior to buy from local producers. And there are more and more customers which are aware of our image which has a strong focus on energy efficiency and they buy from us.

***Dietmar: In your opinion, are good practices transferable between the regions and countries in the EU?***

**Markus:** I had the privilege to have some courses in Stanford USA and there I could speak with some entrepreneurs from Silicon Valley. As they explained, until now nobody could transfer the spirit of this region anywhere, not even a few miles to the other side of the bay. I



think this is also true for our region. We should act globally but think locally, and establish our own models.

***Dietmar: What are the most important incentives for SMEs to invest in the energy efficiency measures?***

**Markus:** For me personally as a researcher it is curiosity at the beginning and success at the end. If I can do something better it makes me happy and gives me the feeling, that I could contribute. This gives importance to my live, which is the best incentive for me.

***Dietmar: Which existing energy policies towards SMEs in your region are, in your opinion, the most efficient?***

**Markus:** There are two major aspects: number one, green energy production - mainly with solar energy and wind mills - and number two, an awareness for sustainable development in general.

***Dietmar: Which policies from other regions could be implemented in your region?***

**Markus:** What is needed locally should be produced locally. For me, establishing a university in Burgenland is the foundation of a successful future. If enough people are well educated and start their own local business, we will save a lot of energy.

*More about Dr. Markus Bohrer*

Markus Bohrer, born in Tyrol in 1960, for the first time became aware about the environmental challenges as a young boy in school when the Club of Rome report "The Limits to Growth" has been published. In the late 70s Dr. Bohrer started to study radio and communication electronics at Vienna University of Technology. It was there, where he began to program an old Digital Equipment PDP11 computer with punch cards with a cybernetic model of our earth - established by Jay Wright Forrester at MIT. Later in 1984 he joined the people in Hainburg watching how we treat nature. In the 90s he spent some years as CTO in a Swiss company owned by Stephan Schmidheiny, founder of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) and who organized the Rio Summit 1992.

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