



Brussels Bulletin

Global Product Efficiency 2008: Getting Global Agreement on Defining Energy Efficient Products

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The objective of this conference was to identify and propose solutions to achieve global agreement on defining energy efficient globally traded products which could make an important contribution to tackling climate change. The conference participants recognised the significant role that the expanded use of energy labelling and minimum energy performance standards could play in reducing greenhouse emissions in a cost-effective fashion. Equally important was the need to do this on a timescale commensurate with the urgency of the climate change problem and the conference felt confident that this was achievable with continued political support.

eceee and the participants (identified in Attachment) called for greater global co-ordination and cooperation in the creation and operation of national and regional energy efficiency programmes on end use equipment, and in the exchange of information and methodologies between stakeholders. This call was targeted toward multinational and multilateral organisations which have this leadership obligation. While participants recognised their expertise would be called upon to deliver “*global agreement on defining energy efficient products*”, they also recognised that the absence of agreed global policy frameworks and targets for market transformation continued to constrain the delivery of the long-promised greenhouse abatement opportunities offered by end-use equipment.

Seventy participants from 17 countries and the European Commission representing government, energy efficiency agencies, manufacturers, consumer interests and environmental NGOs discussed practical endeavours that will facilitate global agreement on the future directions to align energy efficiency programs in order to speed-up policies and energy savings to meet the challenge of halting climate change. In a two-day workshop environment, participants discussed the need for positive and effective energy efficiency policy responses on three levels: national, regional and global.

Participants gained an enhanced awareness of the issues through a series of plenary sessions and participation in workshops on the following subjects:

- The path towards global harmonisation
- The importance of compliance and verification
- Energy labelling and related programme issues

Consensus issues raised at the meeting

Why it is important to maintain the integrity of energy labelling and performance requirement programmes?

Conference participants from all sectors and from many nations reinforced a common message on compliance throughout the conference. The conference agreed that reinforcing and maintaining the integrity of energy efficient product programmes underpinned the realisation of future energy savings and called for greater enforcement of the energy labels and minimum energy performance standards (MEPS). Without this, there is a risk of undermining the integrity and consumer confidence in these

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programmes. Lack of enforcement also undermines manufacturers that have made investments to achieve improved energy efficiency in the products that they supply to the market.

Participants from developing countries present also confirmed that enforcement of laws and regulations is big issue. Moreover, voluntary labelling program compliance is often more difficult than with a regulatory one, since there is no law to enforce. These participants also pointed out that where there are no energy labelling or performance standards in place, some may consider 'international alignment through the use of common product test procedures and comparable definitions and approaches' as another trade barrier.

It was recognised that there was a shortage of resources to tackle the vast workload that was coming for appliance standards and this pointed to the need for quickly adopting other countries' research, test procedures, and even MEPS. In this context, concerns were raised about the practicability of the proposed EU approach in this area..

The meeting called for programme administrators to plan for:

- Regular verification testing of suppliers labelling and performance claims, using third party independent and certified testing facilities wherever possible.
- Meaningful enforcement actions which provide an effective deterrence against misrepresenting product energy performance.
- Global co-ordination of verification efforts and the sharing of intelligence derived from such programs between government agencies and amongst government agencies and industry.
- Informing the continuous development of standards with the practical information and experience gained from verification testing.
- Close collaboration and dialogue among analogous national projects, such as the BRESL, should be developed in parallel to prepare practical grounds for standard and labelling functioning thereby fully involving developing countries.

Why labelling & performance standards as tools for international alignment?

As a common goal into the future, energy labelling and energy performance programmes should be shaped to facilitate international alignment through the use of common product measurement protocols (test procedures) and comparable definitions and approaches to set energy efficiency levels (metrics). This approach will help to avoid trade barriers and provide a more open market to increase the production and uptake of the most efficient products..

The conference recognised that energy label designs are likely to remain a unique national or regional requirement because of the need to maintain cultural and language relevance when communicating with consumers. However, this limitation is only minor and there is great potential to align many of the underlying programme elements such as common test measurement protocols and performance metrics for efficiency standards and in the associated categorical energy labels steps. The idea of linking financial incentives and disincentives to particular labelling levels or otherwise reinforcing the labelling with complementary policies and programs was also strongly supported.

The Scope for energy labelling

It was agreed that energy labelling programmes should be confined to those products where the label is likely to be used to inform and influence the choice of product efficiency during the purchasing decision. This will maximise their impact and focus resources toward those product types where labelling is effective. Evidence was presented that the extension of the concept to products which did not use energy directly



but which had significant impact on energy consumption (e.g. tyres, aerators for showers and taps) could make significant contribution in tackling climate change. It was also acknowledged that ambitious minimum energy performance standards also have an essential role to play in the delivery of future energy savings, either in conjunction with labels or instead of labels, depending on the local situation.

How to include new products in regulatory or voluntary energy efficiency programmes

When nations first introduce energy labelling and/or performance requirements, the focus should be on harmonisation with existing international methods rather than development of unique national schemes as a first step. Traditional development paths have not optimised greenhouse mitigation as quickly as is needed. Subsequent attempts to reconcile unique national schemes with existing global test methods have, from bitter experience, been found to be fraught with difficulty and most take many years to even secure the first steps. Participants called on efficiency programme managers to learn from our collective experience, through improved collaboration and dialogue, and not to repeat the mistakes of the past. It is important to avoid some developing countries becoming the dumping ground for inefficient products banned elsewhere, for the sake of their consumers and for environmental integrity.

How to plan for change

At the national or regional level, participants agreed that occasional changes to energy labels and performance requirements (such as MEPS) are a necessary feature of these programmes to keep the schemes relevant and to continue to drive future efficiency improvements. Such changes need to be factored into planning cycles. This is particularly important as algorithms and efficiency metrics need to be amended to take into account the ongoing emergence of newer and more efficient technologies. Programme administrators need to be mindful of this reality and plan ahead to ensure that there is an orderly, structured and well communicated process of change. The key to success is early and continuing dialogue with all stakeholders (viz. manufacturers, retailers, consumer representatives, and environmental NGOs) early in the process and to agree a shared vision of the desired outcome.

At the international level, there is a need to get philosophical alignment of global energy efficiency specifications around a common set of principles and the conference noted the helpful contribution here that emerged from the recent ACEEE Summer Study. This needs to be built on by getting buy-ins from around the globe. There are good grounds for believing this can be done successfully as good progress has been made in the fields of compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs), external power supplies and office equipment. In particular, international initiatives and organisations aiming at defining common metrics and efficiency levels should proactively engage with stakeholder consultation and participation.

How we should minimise grounds for legal challenges

The energy efficiency world has accumulated a store of wisdom in creating and operating labelling and energy performance standards. This experience reinforced the following important objectives:

- Elimination of any ambiguities that might confuse suppliers or preclude enforcement action being taken against suppliers of non-compliant products.
- Minimization of uncertainties in the test method through comprehensive specification of test procedures (aligning with international approaches where possible), ensuring only high quality accredited test laboratories are used and



continuous maintenance and improvement of the test method and associated equipment requirements.

- The achievement of the highest practical level of repeatability and reproducibility within the test method.
- The explicit agreement with all stakeholders on defensible verification tolerances that can be applied when undertaking verification testing.
- Developing countries, especially those with little or no experience of labelling or performance standards, need to be helped with technology and practical experience transfer and so help remove the concerns about trade barrier positioning in developing countries.

Next steps for eceee

eceee will promote the outcomes of this conference to energy efficiency stakeholders in Europe both directly and through our Members. We will analyse the feedback we are receiving from the conference and depending on that feedback, consider with potential sponsors whether it would be useful to hold a further event next year.

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Attachment

Participants – Conference on Global Product Efficiency 2008

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