Using Pressure Groups for Energy Efficiency

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1 - ABSTRACT

Associations of enterprises focussing on environmental and energy efficiency issues across sectors have recently joint the floor of energy efficiency policy. This article gives an overview of such associations in Germany, of their objectives and activities. It elaborates perspectives on their future role in promoting the rational use of energy and *resources.*

2 - INTRODUCTION

In order to better pursue their economic interests firms create or join associations which deal with questions that are of interest for all firms represented, such as assistance in knowledge transfer, publicity, etc. They also profit from the activities of these associations as pressure groups which represent their economic interests vis-à-vis policy makers. Most of these associations are organised sector by sector. However, for quite a few years now pressure groups and associations of enterprises have evolved in Germany which are organised across sector boundaries and cover topics of general interest, notably environmental issues and questions of the rational use of energy (RUE).

With the rise of these new actors in the domain of energy and the environment the dynamics of energy use may change and so may the possibilities for intervention from the side of public policy making. The aim of this paper is, therefore, to give an overview on environmental and energy specific associations and pressure groups and to analyse their strengths and weaknesses with respect to influencing the energy consumption of their members and possibly other target groups.

The results presented are derived from ISI's research on successful implementation processes of projects for improving energy efficiency in industry and the tertiary sector. The analysis focused on the factors fostering the successful implementation of energy efficiency measures in firms and the actual and potential role of selected associations – amongst others associations promoting energy efficiency - in the implementation process (Ostertag/Böde/Gruber/Radgen 1998).

We will first define more precisely our understanding of associations and pressure groups and introduce a range of organisations in Germany working on energy efficiency. Secondly, we will analyse the interrelations between these associations and their member firms focussing on strengths and weaknesses of these organisations. Finally, we will elaborate some approaches how energy efficiency could be reinforced with the help of the organisations identified.

3 - ECONOMIC ASSOCIATIONS SUPPORTING RUE IN GERMANY

3.1. Definition and possible tasks of an economic association for RUE

With a view to the role of conventional industrial associations the idea of forming an economic association or an economic pressure group means to bring together enterprises with a shared economic interest in a certain objective, who are willing to promote this actively. Towards the public, the members of the association present a unified position in order to reach their aims.

When transferring the concept of conventional industrial associations to economic associations or pressure groups for RUE, their main tasks would be, accordingly, to represent and demonstrate more clearly the interest in energy efficiency which is shared by many enterprises. RUE specific associations of enterprises should put forward the interest in energy efficiency arising from economic considerations as well as from environmental care reasons, both on the political level and in the public in general. Beyond addressing enterprises already committed to energy efficiency a further challenge would consist in raising suppliers' willingness to offer energy efficient products by making them realise the inherent economic opportunities. On the users' side, the challenge would be to increase their awareness for such energy efficient products and their advantages and to increase their willingness to purchase them.

Pressure groups for RUE should give impulses for the improvement of frame condition for RUE set by the government, for example by pressing for higher and more energy efficient quality standards. Another task is to provide technical and organisational support for the members in their commitment for RUE. In the long-run the activities should result in a higher acceptance and wider diffusion of energy conservation practices. This applies to the supply side (responsible for offering energy efficient products) as well as to the demand side (responsible for preferring products of higher energy efficiency).

Possible candidates for membership in an economic association for RUE are, on the one side, enterprises supplying energy efficient technologies and energy services. These include for example manufacturers of energy saving products, such as high efficient electric motors, as well as energy service companies (ESCOs), technical planners, energy consultants or heating technicians. On the other side, enterprises striving to reduce their energy consumption and increase the energy efficiency of their production will also have an interest to be involved.

3.2. A survey on existing associations supporting RUE in Germany

Our empirical analysis started from a survey on existing associations supporting RUE. Following the definition of economic associations and pressure groups for RUE given above, this was restricted to associations with an *economic* interest in RUE, whose members are *enterprises*. In total, 18 associations have been selected for a closer examination.

The sample of associations can be divided into three sub-groups. First, those conventional industrial associations have been selected, which from the point of view of the technologies which are produced by their members, are particularly influential in determining energy consumption levels. A second group are environmental associations of enterprises which deal with energy efficiency as one issue among other environmental topics. A third group contains associations specifically and primarily founded to represent the economic interest for RUE of their members. Table 1 gives an overview of the associations examined. For each of them a one-page profile has been worked out which gives an overview on their most important features and current activities (see Ostertag/Böde/Gruber/Radgen 1998). The description focuses on their activities in RUE including further perspectives on their work programme and their organisational structure. In the following, we will summarise the main characteristics of each sub-group.

Table 1 Associations included in the survey

industrial sector associations	Board of Trustees for the Rationalisation of the German Economy (Rationalisierungs-Kuratorium der Deutschen Wirtschaft - RKW)
	Association of Systems and Machine Manufacturers (Verband Deutscher Maschinen- und Anlagenbau - VDMA)
	Association of Independent Power Producers (Verband der Industriellen Energie- und Kraftwirtschaft - VIK)
	Central Association of Electro-technical and Electronic industry Zentralverband Elektrotechnik- und Elektronikindustrie (ZVEI)
	German Association for Facility Management (Deutscher Verband für Facility Management - GEFMA)
	Centre for Energy, Water, and Environmental Technology (Zentrum für Energie-, Wasser- und Umwelttechnik - ZEWU)
Environmental Associations	Federal German Working Group for Environmentally Sound Management (Bundesdeutscher Arbeitskreis für Umweltbewußtes Management - B.A.U.M.)
	European Business Council for a Sustainable Energy Future
	Future
	Association for the Promotion of an Environmentally Sound Economy (UnternehmensGrün – Verband zur Förderung umweltgerechten Wirtschaftens)
Associations for RUE	Working Group for the Rational and Environmentally Friendly Use of Energy (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für sparsamen und umweltfreundlichen Energieverbrauch - ASUE)
	Working Group of Municipal Utilities (Arbeitsgemeinschaft kommunaler Versorgungsunternehmen zur Förderung rationeller, sparsamer und umweltschonender Energieverwendung und rationeller Wasserverwendung im VKU - ASEW)
	Association of Energy Purchasers (Verband der Energieabnehmer - VEA)
	Federation of Energy consumers (Bund der Energieverbraucher - BdE)
	German Working Group on Energy Conservation (Deutsche Energie-Spar-Arbeitsgemeinschaft - DESA)
	Society for the Rational Use of Energy (Gesellschaft für Rationelle Energieverwendung - GRE)
	Association of German Energy Managers (Verband Deutscher Energie-Manager - VDEM)
	Association for heating services (Verband für Wärmelieferung - VfW)

a) Conventional industrial associations

For this sub-group, the interest in RUE is strictly connected with the clientele the association represents. Industrial associations of the energy-intensive sector (VIK), of the manufactures of systems and machines (VDMA) and of the electronics and electrical engineering sector (ZVEI) represent enterprises working directly in RUE fields, some as manufactures some as users of RUE technologies. At the same time, however, they represent a large number of members with no or only weak interest in RUE. As a result of equilibrating members' interests RUE is, therefore, of low priority. As a rule, RUE-related activities amount to a share of less than 5 % of the total activities. Only in two associations – the German Association for Facility Management (GEFMA) and the Centre for Energy, Water and Environmental Technology (ZEWU) – RUE activities represent 25 % and 20 % respectively of the work programme.

The conventional industrial associations cover a vast area of activities. These include services for their members, such as the provision of data bases, software development, the elaboration of guide books, and the offer of various continuing education services and events). Another domain are public relations and the representation of the members' general economic interests vis-à-vis third parties. As instruments they use for example public statements on pieces of legislation currently being developed and direct contacts with policy-makers, ministries and other sector associations. The aim of these activities is to put forward the general economic interests of the associations' members in the political decision making procedures.

b) Associations with environmental care as core objective
Most of the associations in this group are quite young, which means they have been founded only in the last ten years. Apart from financial support related to individual projects they finance themselves exclusively through membership fees. The number of their members varies between 100 and 500, mainly small and medium enterprises. Contrary to the structure of conventional industrial associations, environmental associations recruit their members from many different economic sectors.

In general, the representation of interests vis-à-vis third parties slightly dominate the activities related to the provision of services to members. With a share of 10 %, RUE related activities do not play an important role in the associations' activities, an exception to this being the European Business Council with 33 %. However, the associations see a need for increased action in the promotion of energy efficiency issues. More specifically, they are in support of more comprehensive public relation efforts for changing political frame conditions (for example concerning energy prices and eco-taxes). They also see a need to support their members in re-negotiating their energy supply contracts with their utilities.

c) Associations with the promotion of RUE as core objective
This last category comprises associations which focus their activities on the promotion of RUE. The approaches chosen to support their members in questions of the energy efficiency, differ between associations. Each one is specialised on particular aspects of the wide range of RUE issues. The target groups addressed vary accordingly. Among the members are enterprises of the gas industry and municipal utilities with a declared aim to foster the efficient use of resources, manufacturers and planners of energy conserving technologies, heat suppliers, and energy consumers in general.

60 to 90 % of the associations' activities are taken up by services offered to the members. These services include very practical tasks such as elaborating model contracts and reference tables for calculating prices, software development or providing support in the acquisition of new orders. Professional training, further education, and professional journals as well as the organisation of conferences and regular meetings of working groups form also part of the work programme.

The members' interests are represented vis-à-vis third parties by means of commenting on laws and regulations, by public relation efforts and by working for the parliament. One of the successes of this type of pressure group activity is, for example, the stirring-up of the discussion about stand-by energy consumption of electrical equipment. As a result of this debate the Federal Associations of Energy Consumers (BdE) and others have initiated a labelling scheme for energy efficient HIFI and office equipment which is now being introduced.

4 - STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF EXISTING ECONOMIC ASSOCIATIONS FOR RUE

Following the survey on existing associations supporting RUE, representatives of these organisations have been interviewed on their view on the needs and possibilities to improve the representation of economic interests in RUE. A workshop was held to discuss strategies to strengthen the interviewed organisations, especially to equilibrate the balance with associations of energy suppliers. In a parallel step, case studies have been carried out in enterprises which can be considered pioneers in RUE because they have set positive examples in applying RUE technologies. The decision-makers have been asked about their membership in conventional industrial associations and in cross-sector associations and about their view on existing activities

of these associations to support the rational energy use. On the basis of these two approaches the strengths and weaknesses of existing associations in promoting RUE have been analysed and propositions have been developed how to further reinforce the representation of the economic interest in RUE.

4.1. Acceptance of associations supporting RUE

The interviews with nearly 20 pioneering enterprises in RUE allow the conclusion that these enterprises see the representation of their interests mainly as a duty of their conventional industrial sector associations. Only a few enterprises are members of an ”alternative” economic association focusing on environmental care or on the promotion RUE. Actually, only few of the examined associations were known to the enterprises. Thus, the Board of Trustees for the Rationalisation of the German Economy (RKW), the Association of Energy Purchasers (VEA) as well as some associations focusing on environmental care, such as Future e.V. or B.A.U.M, were mentioned. But one third of all interviewed enterprises did not know any organisation working especially in the promotion of RUE or seeming adequate for this. It is mainly the sector associations, whose activities are known and whose services are solicited mainly for professional advice.

Some of the interviewed enterprises have already solicited advice on energy efficiency from economic associations. The advisory capacity of the various associations in energy issues was judged differently. The RKW and the VEA were judged positively, while the competence of industrial sector associations in this field is considered as weak. Most suggestions on energy efficiency measures from their side had been already known before and did not represent any additional new ideas.

All in all, the existing activities for RUE by associations are considered as insufficient. Above all, the lack of practical relevance of the associations’ work on RUE is criticised. In the opinion of the interviewed enterprises, many existing offers such as seminars, brochures or articles in technical journals are not precise enough and contain not enough concrete instructions how to act. Thus above all, practical experts from enterprises were recommended as potential candidates to engage in the work of associations promoting RUE.

4.2. The role and tasks of associations for RUE

The majority of interviewed enterprises is in favour of reinforcing the representation of interests in RUE. The reliability and the neutrality of any institution taking this role are seen as key features. The enterprises expect consulting services which are neutral with respect to the energy carriers and the technologies they recommend. However, from the point of view of the enterprises it is just as important, that the institution take also the role of a pressure group representing the interest in RUE in the public and vis-à-vis third parties. This activity may comprise enhanced efforts in public relations as well as active lobbying on the political level.

On the side of the interviewed associations the ambitions to improve their consulting services and their activities as a pressure group vary. The conventional sector associations do not see much need for increasing activities to foster RUE. They only propose the use of new media, such as the Internet, to better distribute information on RUE. Their main interest lies in their general consulting services. The environmental or energy specific associations, on the contrary, see a large need for themselves as well as for others to increase efforts for RUE (see table 2).

Table 2 The role of an economic association for the promotion of RUE
(according to the interviews with enterprises and economic associations)

Interviews with Enterprises
Active lobbying on the political level (for example, lancing of new pieces of legislation and criteria for financial support or intervening in their development)
Publicising the topic within an increased effort in public relations
Individual consulting services which are neutral with regard to energy carriers and technologies they recommended and illustrated with clear and easily comprehensible demonstration examples.
Improving the acceptance and the image of RUE
Demonstration of profitability of RUE measures
Pooling the interests in RUE within a pressure group
Interviews with associations
Conventional industrial sector associations:
Enlarge own consulting services
Increase use of new media (Internet) for the diffusion of information
Important future topics: energy and construction, energy services and outsourcing for SMEs
Environmental associations
Improve co-ordination of representation of interests for RUE
Establish network between existing associations: joint events or selection of common annual key topic
Expand consulting services for enterprises to include RUE
Energy efficiency associations
Develop energy services further
Indicate potentials for RUE to enterprises more intensively
Improve networking and co-ordination of activities and joint events.
Data bases, information services on Internet

A comparison of the enterprises' expectations and of the perspective of the associations on their own role shows that it is actually the environmental associations and the associations for energy efficiency, whose objectives are the closest to the expectations of the enterprises. Yet they are the least known to their target group.

Creating a network between the existing associations is seen as a key step to raise and establish the importance of questions of RUE. Especially the environmental and energy efficiency associations are looking for possibilities to co-operate. This can be explained by the fact that the associations for energy efficiency - as a result of the demand of their members - see a need to act more strongly as a pressure group, but at the same time lack the experience and face difficulties in doing so on their own. This shows particularly well the actual deficit in representing the economic interests for RUE on the political level.

4.3. Organisational aspects of improving the representation of economic interests in RUE

One of the reasons why the representation of economic interests in RUE is so weak compared to the energy supply side is that RUE technologies are very numerous and very heterogeneous and so are the producers that would have to be united if one would follow the organisational approach of a conventional sector association. But a second, even more serious obstacle to uniting the producers of RUE technologies is the fact, that manufacturers very rarely produce only products of high energy efficiency. They are more likely to offer an energy efficient model of a product along with other models of standard performance in order to satisfy the demand of a wider range of clients. In this case, their interest in promoting RUE is limited since it would reduce their own sales opportunities for standard models. A technology or sector specific approach to strengthen the representation of economic interests in RUE is therefore not likely to be successful.

The foundation of a new association to improve the representation of economic interests in RUE is favoured by almost none of the interviewed enterprises and associations. The majority of the interviewed associations do not even have a precise picture of the other existing associations for energy efficiency and they only rarely co-operate. This indicates, that the very next step should be to better link the activities of the existing associations. Many interviewed organisation actually suggested this approach and preferred it to creating a new association.

The range of what enterprises expect from associations for energy efficiency, on the one side, and the varying strengths and weaknesses of the individual associations, on the other side, show, that the co-operation between environmental associations and associations for energy efficiency could strengthen the representation of interests for RUE decisively. The former could contribute their experience in pressure group activities, the latter their energy specific technical and organisational expertise (see also section 5.1.). By contrast, the spectrum of - actual or planned – activities of neither category of the associations examined is likely to suffice on its own to fulfil the needs of the targeted enterprises.

5 - THE FUTURE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENERGY SPECIFIC ECONOMIC ASSOCIATIONS IN ENERGY POLICY MAKING

As the analysis of existing institutions above has shown, there is already a large and rapidly evolving number of associations of enterprises focussing on issues of environmental and energy policy issues. Rather than creating new institutions any initiative to improve the representation of economic interests in energy efficiency should therefore start from the already existing institutional structures. Several options to increase their capacity in energy policy can be envisaged reaching from a change in the focus of their activities to their organisational structure and alliances with other institutions.

5.1. Focus on lobbying for RUE on the political level

From the perspective of the interviewed environmental and RUE specific economic associations, but also from the perspective of selected enterprises with an exceptionally high commitment in RUE there is a deficit in voicing the economic interest in RUE on the political level in order to change frame conditions in favour of energy efficiency improvements. On the on hand, RUE specific economic associations do focus on the promotion of energy efficiency, but so far 60 % to 90 % of their activities are rather concrete services for their members than policy intervention. On the other hand, even though the environmental economic associations see their participation and intervention in public policy making as one of their main tasks the issue of energy efficiency is only one among many environmental topics they advocate. In order to better represent the interest in RUE on the political level both sub-groups should, therefore, combine their expertise and intervene jointly. A special role in this could accrue to the European Business Council, because this association is already experienced in political negotiations and also focuses on RUE.

5.2. Self-commitment as a precondition for membership

The vast and heterogeneous list activities pursued by environmental and energy specific economic associations indicate a difficulty to find a consensus on a common set of priorities among members. One possibility to improve communication on this issue may be the introduction of voluntary self-commitments to reduce resource use or, more specifically, CO_2 emissions. If environmental and RUE specific economic associations made these a precondition for joining them, this would allow them to demonstrate their objectives more concretely – for example by declaring a reduction goal on the level of the association, too - and to raise the priority of RUE on their agenda. Since member firms often use their affiliation for marketing purposes it would be in their own self-interest to adhere to their individual self-commitment. On the municipal level there are already successful examples for this approach. Thus, in the Climate Alliance / Alianza del Clima e.V. the member municipalities commit themselves to reduce their CO_2 emissions by 50 % until 2020 in relation to 1987 levels.

Such a scheme of aggregating individual voluntary commitments would avoid some of the weaknesses from which suffer some of the voluntary agreements on the level of industrial associations, which recently have become a widely spread policy instrument to reduce CO_2 emissions (Solsbery, Wiederkehr 1995; Storey 1996).

The latter have been criticised in many cases for not being effective, one reason being that the associations lack the means to exert a direct influence on their members' energy consumption behaviour (ZEW 1996). This would be different if the agreements were founded on individual commitments of member firms.

5.3. Identification of new and more precise target groups for policy making

The analysis of successful implementation processes of energy efficiency improvements shows that in the initiation of RUE measures, i. e. the very first phase of the implementation process, the influence of external actors, for example policy makers, is actually very limited. The central issue here is to raise the attention and motivation of at least one key actor in the enterprise who will build up and diffuse the motivation for activities RUE amongst his colleagues. Technical expertise and financial resources, and thus policy instruments giving support in these domains, only become important factors for success in later stages of the process. For the initiation of RUE, on the contrary, policy making is largely restricted to information that aims at motivating key actors in the firm.

For increasing the motivating impact of information it has been repeatedly established by marketing experts and social psychologists, that information campaigns need to be tailored to well defined and segmented target groups. For this purpose the criteria of sector affiliation and size may not yet be specific enough, since the motivation for engaging in RUE may still be very different (for an interdisciplinary analysis of this issue see also Hennicke/ Ramesohl et al 1998, Ostertag/Frahm/Gruber 1998). Environmental concern is one of the more frequent motives, others are cost savings and the use of innovative technology.

The features of energy efficiency technologies and the sources of information, which a firm will find attractive and trustworthy and which thus should rank highly in information programmes, will depend on its principal motivation. In order to design more target group specific information programmes it is therefore of interest to know the motives that will most likely appeal to the target group. It is in this context that the affiliation of a firm to an environmental or RUE specific associations may serve as an indicator for its interest in environmental and energy issues. Thus, policy makers, but also consultants or suppliers of energy efficient technologies may tailor their communication strategies to the characteristics of this specific clientele.

5.4. Possible roles in Co-operative Procurement

In recent years efforts have been made to transfer the policy instrument of co-operative procurement from Scandinavia to the European level. A feasibility study for Germany shows the promising potential of this policy instrument in fostering innovation and diffusion of energy efficient technologies also in this country. However, it also points out national institutional short-comings for the implementation of this instrument due to the lack of a national energy agency (Ostertag et al. 1997). In an alternative institutional set-up environmental and RUE-specific economic associations could play a vital role. Since a pilot project of co-operative procurement is presently being brought on the way we will elaborate this issue a bit further.

Co-operative procurement can be especially effective in a market situation where, on the one hand, the demand side faces difficulties to identify highly energy efficient products and their suppliers on the market and where, on the other hand, the interest of the demand side in such products is not immediately obvious to the suppliers. The specific 'comparative advantage' of co-operative procurement vis-à-vis other technology policy instruments lies in incorporating user preferences of private market actors into the innovation and diffusion process, since it provides a common platform for communication between customers and suppliers (Ostertag/Dreher 1998).

The concept can be seen as a variation of public purchasing. Co-ordinated by a moderator a group of buyers, including public administrations, get together and jointly formulate a catalogue of performance requirements for a specific product which reflects their own preferences and includes energy efficiency and/or environmental criteria. On this basis the buyer group launches a call for tenders, evaluates the bids received from the manufacturers and commits to assuring a certain sales volume for the winning product. Thus, market opportunities are provided for the most successful innovators and suppliers in a given area of technology (Westling 1996, EM 1998).

The analysis of environmental and RUE specific economic associations shows that they provide a promising institutional setting to identify and regroup buyers and suppliers with similar interests in energy efficient

products. Thus, chances to find candidates for a powerful purchasing group among the members of these associations seem very high. While sector associations should be integrated in the procurement process as technology experts and important information multipliers, environmental and RUE specific economic associations may be particularly well suited to participate in the co-ordination of the process. According to their own objectives they could credibly assure the priority for high energy efficiency performance in the negotiations of product specifications while at the same time being free from sector specific interests.

6 - CONCLUSION

New categories of actors have recently joint the floor of energy efficiency policy. The economic interest of enterprises in the rational use of resources and especially energy is beginning to be voiced in more formally organised economic associations. On the one hand they provide services to their members to support their activities in saving energy and the environment. On the other hand they also act as pressure groups on the political level to improve frame conditions for rational resource use. Their influence may still be rather weak on the national level. But their potential is promising – in terms of direct influence on the resource use of their members but also in terms of increased opportunities for joint policy intervention with public agencies. Important next steps towards using this potential consist in increasing not only the public awareness of environmental and RUE specific economic associations, but these associations should also become more aware of each other and unite their efforts, as far as their common interests and activities allow. After the phase of rapid creation of numerous new associations some efforts for consolidation should now follow. Other policy makers, too, may find the co-operation with the ”new-comers” rewarding for a more target group specific conception and implementation of their policies.

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