

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Ireland Unlikely To Meet Targets Set Out Under EU Directive

- Fewer people feel environment is priority due to economic crisis, SERVE survey says
- Householders wasting millions of euro on heating poorly insulated homes
- SERVE conference to discuss

90,000 Irish homes will need to undergo significant energy upgrades every year up to 2020 if Ireland is to achieve its legal obligations under the EU Energy Efficiency Directive, which was adopted by the European Parliament on 11 September 2012 and is expected to come into force in November.

EU Members States will eventually face fines if they fail to comply with the new Directive, which is aimed at driving energy efficiency improvements in households, industries and transport sectors.

According to research conducted by the Tipperary-based SERVE (Sustainable Energy for the Rural Village Environment) Project, one million Irish buildings will be required to undergo energy upgrades by 2020 under the terms of the Directive and the National Energy Retrofit Programme.

It warned, however, that Ireland is unlikely to meet the target in light of its research indicating that less than 50,000 buildings will undergo energy upgrades in 2012. It pointed to a reduction in Government grant levels, the lack of public investment in energy efficient projects due to the economic downturn, and lowering public support for energy efficiency measures as principal causes behind the poor figure.

The Project's research has found that fewer Irish people feel that the environment is a priority due to the economic crisis. In 2010, 37% of those asked felt that the environment should be given priority over competitiveness, whereas this has reduced to 25% in 2012.

The EU-funded SERVE Project carried out its research in the context of a four-year project in North Tipperary that has delivered an investment of €10.5m in sustainable energy in the region. The project has resulted in 400 buildings receiving significant energy upgrades, and the development of an eco-village in Cloughjordan that is 100% supplied by renewable heating system and has the largest solar array (506m²) in Ireland.

"Unless there is Government intervention, Ireland faces possible EU fines and a situation whereby Irish householders and businesses will continue to waste millions of euro each year on heating poorly insulated and energy inefficient buildings. Only full implementation of the National Energy Retrof Programme, along with a review of Government grant levels, increased public investment in energy efficient projects, and a national shift in opinion in favour of energy efficiency measures, will ensure Ireland achieves its legal obligations under the EU Energy Efficiency Directive," explained **Seamus Hoyne, Manager of the SERVE Project.**

Mr. Hoyne noted that the social and economic benefits associated with adopting a more proactive approach to energy efficiency would be "significant and long lasting" for Ireland.

"The soon-to-be introduced EU Energy Efficiency Directive will bring forward legally binding measures to step up Member States efforts to use energy more efficiently at all stages of the energy chain, from the transformation of energy and its distribution to its final consumption. Massive public and Government savings and a minimum of 4,500 jobs could be created in

the domestic construction sector as a result of a full implementation of the National Energy Retrofit Programme and abidance of the conditions set out under the EU Energy Efficiency Directive. This, however, is not happening and the public and wider Irish economy is losing out as a result,” he explained.

Mr. Hoyne, who is Acting Head of L.I.T. Tipperary's Technology, Media and Science Department, said the results of the SERVE project provide ample evidence of the benefits associated with adopting a more proactive approach to embracing sustainable energy policies.

He continued: “Of the 300 homes which completed upgrades, approximately €200,000 was saved in energy consumption. If this level of savings was applied to all Irish homes the total savings would be €1bn per annum. Monitoring of energy consumption of 100 houses has shown some startling results. Electricity wasted by leaving appliances on standby could save €35 per home. If this was applied to all houses in Ireland this would equate to annual energy costs savings of €56m.

“The rate of return for the investment in sustainable energy for houses in the SERVE region was 10% which is significantly better than the average rate of return in a deposit savings account. With increasing fuel prices the rate of return will increase further making energy efficiency a sound investment. Furthermore, homes which have poor insulation levels not only lose energy but also are uncomfortable for residents. Our analysis has shown that during major temperature changes (20C to 3C), the internal temperature only changes by 2C in a well-insulated house.”

Mr. Hoyne added that investment in biomass heating for commercial and public buildings could save the exchequer hundreds of thousands of euro.

“An investment of €205,000 in a biomass heating system at a public pool in the SERVE region has resulted in annual savings of €25,000 to €30,000 per annum. Assuming all pools and leisure centres which are off the Natural Gas Grid where to make similar investments, one job will be created per €250,000 invested,” he concluded.

LIT Tipperary has been the manager of the SERVE Project, whose partners include North Tipperary County Council, SPIL and the Tipperary Energy Agency. The final event of the project will be the SERVE Energy Week and Conference running from the 1st to 5th of October 2012. This week will showcase the results from the project and plans for the future.

For more on the upcoming conference and details of the SERVE research visit www.servecommunity.ie, EMAIL: info@servecommunity.ie, or PHONE: +353 (0)504 28114.

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The SERVE conference programme may be viewed here http://servecommunity.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/LIT-Energy-week-NEW-A4-v2_FINAL.jpg