

## ***Energy crisis: suggestions for a toolbox of measures to reduce energy demand through energy efficiency***

In 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine repositioned Europe's energy independence at the center of the political debate, requiring finding alternatives to phase out Russian gas imports. It also exacerbated the increase of energy prices, putting consumers, in particular low-income households, in a precarious situation as well as jeopardising the competitiveness of businesses across the EU.

The European Commission provided an answer to this challenge with the [REPowerEU plan](#), which combined a push for short-term measures to reduce gas demand and mitigate energy prices with a medium to long-term increase in ambition of the EU 2030 targets for renewables and energy efficiency. In practice, while the EU was successful in drastically reducing gas and oil imports from Russia, it largely solved the crisis by shifting countries of import: according to Eurostat, the **EU energy import dependency rate remained relatively stable** between 2021 (55.5%) and 2024 (57%),<sup>1</sup> with Russian fossil fuels import partly compensated by gas import from Norway and an important increase in LNG supplied by the United States. **In short, the 2022 energy crisis was not resolved by a structural change to make the EU more independent from energy imports.**

Today, the ongoing war in the Middle East is creating similar vulnerabilities, with prices for gas and oil increasing by 70% and 60% respectively, leading to an additional EUR 22 billion increase in bills for the same amount of energy imported.<sup>2</sup> This shows that the new energy crisis cannot be resolved by the same mindset as in 2022. **It must be the moment for the EU to truly make itself more independent from fossil fuel imports, thanks to energy efficiency** together with renewable energy and electrification, structurally improving its energy security and resilience.

This was recognised by the Commission President Von der Leyen, who [highlighted](#) the need to reduce energy demand with immediate energy efficiency measures to mitigate the impact of the ongoing energy crisis, with a focus on renovation of buildings and renewal of equipment in industrial operations.

**This non-paper lists a series of energy efficiency actions that could be integrated into the Toolbox** of measures to mitigate the impact of the war in the Middle East, **delivering both rapid energy savings and a structural reduction of energy use.** When available, best practices illustrating possible actions are also provided.

### ***1. Ensure the full implementation of the EU energy efficiency framework, namely the EED and EPBD***

The Fit for 55 package led to the adoption of the 2023 Energy Efficiency Directive and Energy Performance of Buildings Directive. These pieces of legislation contain objectives to reduce energy demand, with specific measures for, among others, the buildings, the public sector, and incentivising businesses to take actions to reduce their energy use.

As the deadline to transpose the EED was set to 11 October 2025, Member States must ensure that the legislation is fully implemented so it can lead to a long-lasting reduction of energy consumption, and therefore fossil fuels imports. **The European Commission should accelerate its transposition**

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<sup>1</sup> [Eurostat page on Energy imports dependency](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Statement by the President on the impact of the situation in the Middle East on the Europe Union](#)

**assessment and, in case of gaps, intensify its support to Member States** to ensure all provisions are being implemented as soon as possible, leading to the adoption of measures on the ground.

**Example: Czechia.**

In November, the European Commission opened 26 infringement procedures<sup>3</sup> for failure to communicate the full transposition of the recast Energy Efficiency Directive (EED). As of April 2026, the only country which completed its communication for the full transposition of the Directive by the deadline was Czechia.

## **2. Showcase how to best adapt national Energy Savings Obligation**

One of the core measures to fast-track the delivery of energy savings is the Energy Savings Obligation (ESO) established in the Energy Efficiency Directive. The revised ESO has already been adjusted to reflect the lessons learnt from the 2022 energy crisis with an increased annual energy savings rate, the limitation of the counting of energy savings stemming from direct fossil fuel combustion and the ringfencing of a certain amount of energy savings to be delivered among people in energy poverty and vulnerable consumers.

The revised ESO must now be fully transposed by Member States, **ensuring that the measures adopted every year, and the delivered savings, contribute even further to the reduction of fossil fuel imports.** The European Commission could offer guidance and showcase best practices of Member States that have adequately and timely adapted their national legislation to fit the new ESO rules.

**Example: Spain**

The Spanish government just adopted a revision of its Energy Saving Certificates scheme that will both support the **roll-out of heat pumps in buildings and industry and reduce taxation for energy renovations.** Importantly, heat pumps replacing fossil fuel-powered equipment are awarded a multiplier on the energy savings they deliver, pushing at the same time energy efficiency improvements, electrification, and reduction of fossil fuel consumption. At the same time, other incentives for renovations, beyond the replacement of heating systems are also provided, showing how those actions work in synergy.<sup>4</sup>

## **3. Direct energy efficiency improvements firstly towards the ones that need it the most**

As mentioned by President von der Leyen in her [statement](#) on 13 April “measures should be targeted to vulnerable groups”. However, tax rebates or capping oil and gas prices, although important in the short term, will not solve the EU dependency on volatile fossil fuel prices.

**This is why vulnerable consumers must also be supported financially and technically to undergo long-term energy efficiency improvements.** Low-income households often struggle with upfront investments or awareness of the available solutions to improve their homes. Even more so because the

<sup>3</sup> [Commission takes action to ensure complete and timely transposition of EU directives](#)

<sup>4</sup> See the text of the Spanish “[Plan Integral de Respuesta a la Crisis en Oriente Medio](#)”

most vulnerable citizens often live in the worst-performing buildings and energy efficiency measures are crucial to alleviate energy poverty.<sup>5</sup>

**Example: France**

France recently **revised** its energy savings objective for the period 2026-2030 upwards by 27% compared to the period 2023-2025 and specified that one quarter of the savings must be delivered among energy-poor households, **going beyond the earmarking that would be required by the EED** (around 11%).<sup>6</sup>

#### **4. Support businesses to adopt energy efficiency solutions:**

In addition to citizens, businesses are also heavily impacted by the increase of energy prices for their operation, with negative effects on their competitiveness. In a time of high energy prices, the most competitive company is the most energy efficient one. **As found by a recent EIB report,<sup>7</sup> firms that implement energy efficiency measures outperform those without these measures**, and this benefit improves as their energy intensity increases. Energy efficiency also makes businesses “structurally more resilient to future price shocks”, resonating with the current situation.

This is why financing schemes and technical support are also needed for businesses that wish to increase their energy performance, also as a result of the energy audits required under Article 11 of the EED.<sup>8</sup>

Such improvements can be implemented quickly and have rapid effects on industries’ energy consumption, also leading to a lower energy demand in the national energy system. Building on existing schemes, such as the European Investment Bank scheme for Small and Medium Enterprises (see below), **the Commission should fast-track available tools for businesses to access financial and technical support for energy efficiency upgrades also in the context of the European Energy Efficiency Financing Coalition.**

**Example: European Investment Bank**

In November 2025, the European Investment Bank Group launched a €17.5 billion financing initiative to support energy efficiency improvements in SMEs.<sup>9</sup> The goal of the scheme is to have more than 350,000 companies across Europe undergoing energy efficiency actions in the 2025-2027 period, and to mobilise a total investment of over €65 billion by 2027 for this effort. With the ongoing energy crisis, SMEs should make use of this opportunity to reduce their energy costs.

**Technological example:** Scaling up thermal insulation in industrial boilers, ovens, pipes, going beyond the level required for safety reasons and process control, can save up to 14 Million Tonnes of Oil Equivalent (Mtoes). More importantly, industrial insulation measures generally have a very short payback time, often less than 2 years.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> [Right to Energy Coalition | Take Action to End Energy Poverty in Europe](#)

<sup>6</sup> [The decree relating to the 6th period of energy savings certificates is published today, with a desire to maintain ecological ambition while fighting against fraud and windfall effects – Press – Ministry of Finance](#)

<sup>7</sup> [EIB report: Unlocking energy efficiency investments by small firms and mid-caps](#)

<sup>8</sup> For more information, see the [guidance note on Article 11 of the Energy Efficiency Directive](#)

<sup>9</sup> [More than 350,000 European companies to get energy efficiency support under major EU financing initiative](#)

<sup>10</sup> [EIIF study : The insulation contribution to decarbonise industry](#)

### 5. Accelerate and reduce the costs of electrification with energy efficiency:

Electrification and energy efficiency are mutually reinforcing. On one hand, electrification improves the efficiency of both the EU energy system and of end-uses, leading to lower energy consumption for a similar level of services. On the other hand, energy efficiency, by reducing energy demand across sectors, enables a faster and more affordable electrification of the EU economy through a reduction of the investment needed to expand the grids.

This combined effect of electrification and energy efficiency measures will fast-track the phasing out of imported fossil fuels. The Commission should lay out suggestions of measures to increase both energy efficiency and the electrification rate, such as renovation of buildings, combining insulation and electrified heating & cooling systems.

#### Example: France

The French Government just published a list of new measures to fast-track electrification of its economy, with the support for electrification moving from EUR 5,5 billion to EUR 10 billion every year until 2030. It announces, among others the end of gas boilers in new builds, the installation of one million heat pumps every year and a social leasing of 50,000 more electric vehicles from June onwards. This increase of funding is welcomed, it should, however, be additional to, and not come at the expense of, existing funds for other energy efficiency measures.<sup>11</sup>

### 6. Support the shift towards long-term energy savings actions:

Many Member States are once again adopting support schemes that help consumers pay for their fuel bills. According to a recent analysis from the International Energy Agency, the Energy Crisis Policy Response Tracker, this is the most common response to the crisis, with many nations adopting policies and schemes to reduce fuel prices as a reaction to the war in the Middle East.<sup>12</sup>

Even though these support measures are necessary in the short term, the **limited available public funding should be redirected towards supporting structural energy efficiency improvements**, as well as promoting energy communities that support citizens in using their energy in a more efficient way, while producing their own renewable energy.

#### Example: Energy communities

Energy communities can be mobilised to deliver energy savings in the residential sector. Households that join an energy community also implement energy savings measures to ensure their renewable energy production is maximised; research has shown that their energy use can be cut by up to 28%.<sup>13</sup>

Following the publication of the [Citizens Energy Package](#), the upcoming toolbox of measures should incentivise Member States to increase their support for Energy communities.

<sup>11</sup> See the [French government announcement webpage](#) (in French).

<sup>12</sup> [2026 Energy Crisis Policy Response Tracker – Data Tools - IEA](#)

<sup>13</sup> See the final data analysis report from the [REScoop PLUS project](#).