



IN FOCUS

SAVING ENERGY TOGETHER ON THE PATH TO CLIMATE NEUTRALITY



Policymakers and businesses are supporting the creation of energy efficiency and climate action networks. The systematic and target-oriented sharing of experience and ideas between a dozen companies in a single network serves to tap potential savings more quickly and easily.

It makes strategic sense for businesses to cut their energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions in order to reduce their costs and support climate action. Many companies are unaware of the possible saving measures, and it is difficult to determine the return on investment. Advisory services oriented towards energy can be too expensive for some companies. Therefore, collaboration on energy efficiency and climate action is beneficial. In late 2014, the Federal Government teamed up with around 20 business associations and organisations to form the Energy Efficiency Networks Initiative, later renamed the Energy Efficiency and Climate Action Networks Initiative in 2021. In addition to improved energy efficiency, the networks focus on climate action, the energy transition, resource efficiency and sustainability. By the end of 2025, the goal is to create 300 to 350 new networks, in addition to the initial 300, resulting in savings of 9 to 11 TWh of final energy consumption and 5 to 6 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. This knowledge exchange benefits both climate action and



Energy efficiency and climate action networks

(Source: Shutterstock/Gorodenkoff)

a company's competitiveness. By July 2023, 385 networks had been registered.

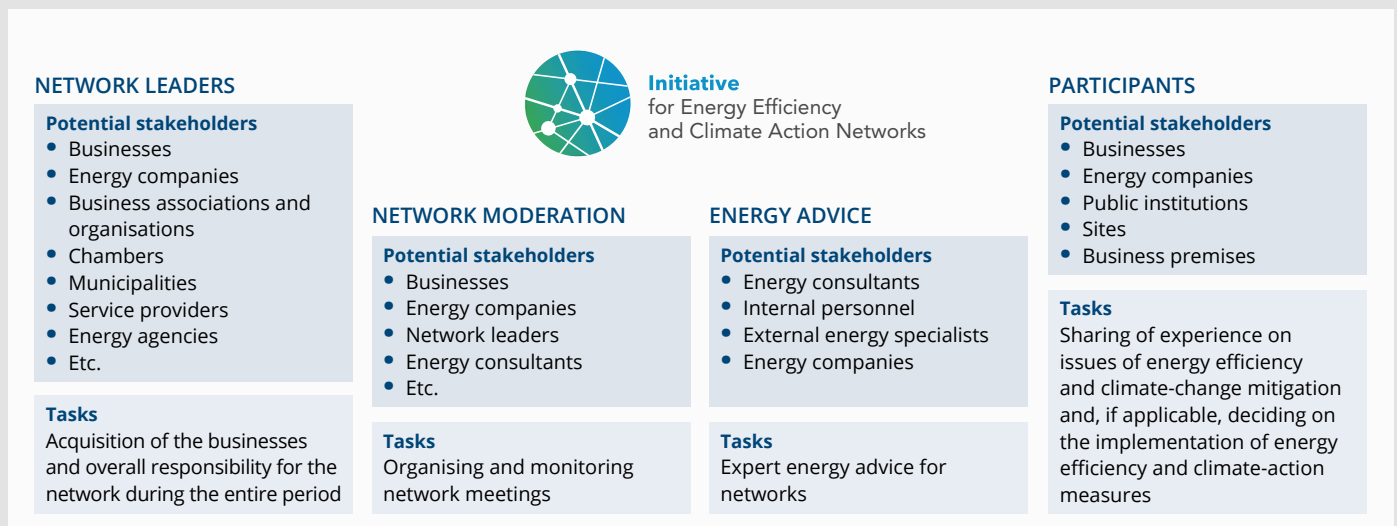


Figure 1: Stakeholders and tasks in a network (Source: Guidehouse 2023, based on Fraunhofer ISE 2023)

Networks create synergies and cut overall costs

In these networks, 8 to 15 diverse companies, from global corporations to local hospitals, from sugar beet processors to manufacturing operations, collaborate voluntarily for two to four years. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and skilled craft businesses benefit from larger businesses. Larger businesses may also develop new ideas in this dialogue and improve their cooperation with suppliers and customers through the networks. Moreover, energy audits can be conducted more efficiently through the networks, thus creating synergies. The networks collectively set energy-saving targets based on each company's individual goals, with expert guidance provided. When the network is wrapped up, the measures conducted are reviewed in a monitoring process (see IN BRIEF). The range of action includes from optimising compressed air systems, generating electricity from renewable energy for self-supply, conserving material, using rainwater for cooling, to optimising refrigeration and heating technology.

Interim results: more than 9,000 measures implemented to boost energy efficiency

The interim analysis of the results of the energy efficiency and climate action networks is promising: more than 2,500 businesses have taken part in the initiative so far. The sixth monitoring report from 2022 evaluates 212 networks made up of almost 2,200 businesses. Overall, the companies reported the implementation of 9,070 measures to increase energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. Despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the networks surveyed achieved 87 % of their self-set network savings targets. The monitored networks have saved around 6,432 GWh final energy, 29.0 PJ primary energy and 2.34 Mt CO₂ equivalents per year (July 2023). The networks are a key instrument in the German government's National Action Plan for Energy Efficiency (NAPE 2.0). The successful energy and CO₂ savings at the individual network level make the voluntary initiative one of Germany's most successful energy efficiency instruments.

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IN BRIEF

What it is an energy efficiency and climate action network?

An energy efficiency and climate action network is an affiliation of several companies in a region or a sector that work together to increase their energy efficiency and press ahead with climate measures. Key elements of the networks include a moderated exchange between the participants, setting joint savings targets and joint participation in monitoring measures. This enables businesses to acquire expertise on how to reduce their energy consumption and contribute to efforts to combat climate change at a faster pace.

What support is the Federal Government giving to the networks?

The networks do not receive direct funding as the initiative is a voluntary commitment made by German industry. However, the companies in the networks can access a whole range of government funding programmes. In view of the high priority of the issue of energy efficiency for the energy transition and in climate action, the available public funding has been increased in recent years. An overview can be found in German on the initiative's webpage <http://www.effizienznetzwerke.org/arbeitshilfen/foerdermoeglichkeiten/> and in the funding database of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Change at www.foerderdatenbank.de. An overview of the funding programmes can be found through the networks. In addition, the Federal Government funds the initiative's office, which has been run by the German Energy Agency (dena) since 2015. The office supports the networks and, for example, provides free lectures.

How is the success of the energy efficiency and climate action networks being monitored?

Through a monitoring process, the measures taken and results achieved by the networks are recorded anonymously when or after they wrap up their work, and sample checks are undertaken. The monitoring is conducted by an independent academic institute on behalf of the Federal Government. The institute presents an annual monitoring report. This is carried out once for each network at the end of the collaboration period. Only anonymised and aggregated results are published.

