

Press release

Energy prices and energy efficiency in the spotlight at the 6th MEDENER International Conference on Energy Transition in the Euro-Mediterranean Region

Brussels, 15 October 2018. The 6th MEDENER International Conference on energy transition in the Euro-Mediterranean region was held on October 4th, 2018 in Amman, Jordan. Gathering energy experts coming from 16 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Region, it has been organised by the Mediterranean Association of the National Agencies for Energy Conservation (MEDENER) in cooperation with the Jordanian National Energy Research Centre (NERC) as part of the activities of the meetMED (Mitigation Enabling Energy Transition in the Mediterranean Region) project, an EU-funded project implemented by MEDENER and the Regional Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RCREEE).

By focusing on “Energy Efficiency and Energy Prices: a Peaceful Solution to the Jigsaw”, the conference aimed at investigating energy prices as the main bottleneck for energy efficiency and renewable energy investments where electricity prices are very low, and as a prerequisite for an effective energy policy. As a matter of fact, despite significant progress in innovative technologies and in enabling appropriate legislative and regulatory frameworks, on the one hand, support mechanisms to promote renewable energy sources could become impracticable when incentives exceed the costs of commodity to consumers. On the other hand, energy efficiency remains difficult to foster as long as end-users have no incentives to invest in EE measures or to change consumption behaviours.

The conference was introduced by the Director of NERC, Mr Walid Shahin, the Head of Economic, Infrastructure and Trade Facilitation Section of the EU Delegation to Jordan, Ms Sirpa Tulla, and the Assistant Secretary General for Scientific and Technological Affairs of the Jordanian Higher Council for Science and Technology, Mr Fawaz Al-Karmi. Furthermore, Mr Leonidas Kioussis, Senior Expert of the DG Energy of the European Commission, Mr Maged Mahmoud, Technical Director of RCREEE, and Mr Dario Chello, President of MEDENER contributed to the discussion by giving an overview of the challenges originating from the dichotomy between energy prices and energy efficiency policies.

An in-depth analysis of the economic and political challenges related to energy prices and energy efficiency in the Euro-Mediterranean region, on the one side, was addressed by Mr Alberto Pototschnig, Director *ad interim* of the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER), who presented the EU experience on energy prices and energy efficiency; on the other side, Ms Wijdan Al-Rabadi, Vice President of MEDREG and Deputy Chairman of Energy and Mineral Regulatory Commission (EMRC) presented the Jordanian experience on the matter.

Two interactive sessions further delved into the main topic of the conference: the first one focused on energy efficiency in households and in the transport sector, and the second one on energy efficiency in the industrial sector. Herein, presenters, panellists and participants from many Mediterranean countries had the opportunity to dig up major issues related to energy efficiency and prices, such as sustainable urban mobility and citizens' behavioural change, the link between fuel prices and the choice of technologies for industrial manufacturing, the concept of prosumers for the industrial sector and the possible solutions.

As the main outcome of the event, the conference conclusions identified two possible ways ahead to increase energy efficiency where energy prices are not influencing consumers towards responsible energy choices: in the short term, by entrusting the public institutions to lead by example on the benefits of investing in renewables and energy efficiency; whilst in the medium and long term, by joining forces towards the harmonization of Mediterranean energy markets. The unwelcomed effects of climate change are becoming undeniable, thus waiting for "perfect" market conditions to act on improving energy efficiency and further spreading renewable energy sources without further interventions, is not an option.