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A. Synthesis of the proposals of FICSIMM employers' federation regarding the draft "Energy Strategy of Romania 2025-2035, with the perspective of 2050"

1. "EcoVoucher" program to stimulate energy efficiency in SMEs:

We propose the launch of a national voucher program, called "EcoVoucher", to partially finance energy audits and energy efficiency measures in SMEs. The vouchers will be calibrated on three levels, depending on the energy footprint of the SME and the type of activity carried out. Thus, SMEs will have access to essential financial resources to implement energy efficiency measures, reducing operational costs and improving their competitiveness on the market.

2. "GarantEnergy" Guarantee Fund for energy efficiency and green investments:

We recommend the establishment of the "GarantEnergy" Guarantee Fund, intended to grant guarantees for loans contracted by SMEs in order to carry out energy audits and implement energy efficiency measures. The fund will reduce financial risks for banks, incentivizing them to offer more favorable credit terms, thus facilitating SMEs' access to finance for green investments.

3. "Green QuickStart" grant program for immediate energy efficiency actions:

We propose the launch of a grant program, called "QuickStart Green", to support SMEs in the rapid implementation of energy efficiency measures that require low investment but offer immediate benefits. Targeted actions include improving building insulation, replacing lighting with LEDs and optimizing heating and cooling systems, thus helping to reduce energy consumption and associated costs.

4. The grant program for innovative solutions "InovaEco":

To stimulate the adoption of green technologies and innovation in the SME sector, we recommend the creation of the "InovaEco" program, through which SMEs can receive non-refundable grants for the implementation of innovative energy efficiency solutions and to

cover the costs of energy audits. The program will prioritize projects with high potential to save energy and reduce CO2 emissions.

5. ESCo "EcoPartneriat" program for the energy success of SMEs:

We propose the promotion of ESCo (Energy Service Company) partnerships through the "EcoPartneriat" program, which would allow SMEs to implement energy efficiency measures without substantial initial investments. ESCo will finance the projects, and the recovery of the investments will be realized from the generated energy savings, thus SMEs can benefit from efficient technologies without major initial costs.

6. "ProMESI" program for energy modernization and sustainability:

We recommend the introduction of the "ProMESI" program, which aims to replace old and inefficient production equipment with modern and sustainable solutions. The program will combine grants and advantageous loans to facilitate the transition of SMEs to advanced production technologies, thus contributing to the reduction of energy consumption and the improvement of environmental performance.

7. Integrated approach to implementing energy efficiency programs:

An integrated approach including both financing and technical assistance for SMEs, enabling them to effectively adopt energy efficiency measures, is essential. It is suggested to create a national information and support platform for SMEs, which would centralize all the programs and opportunities available in the field of energy efficiency.

8. Creation of a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the impact of energy efficiency measures:

In order to ensure the efficient use of funds and the continuous improvement of energy efficiency programs, we propose the development of a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the measures implemented by SMEs. This evaluation will facilitate the adjustment of programs according to the results and the real needs of SMEs.

9. Stimulating innovation and education in energy efficiency:

FICSIMM suggests the creation of educational programs and awareness campaigns dedicated to SMEs, in collaboration with universities and research institutes, to stimulate innovation and the adoption of best practices in energy efficiency.

B. The relevance of FICSIMM's proposals for Romania's Energy Strategy 2025-2035, with the perspective of 2050, and their inclusion in the specific chapters of the draft

The proposals formulated by FICSIMM are essential for improving and streamlining the draft Energy Strategy of Romania 2025-2035 with the perspective of 2050, as they directly target critical sectors of the national economy, such as SMEs. First of all, SMEs represent a majority segment of the Romanian economy, and the efficiency of their energy consumption will have a significant impact on the objectives of the strategy, contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and increasing competitiveness on the international market. These proposals are particularly relevant to the "Energy Efficiency" chapter of the Strategy.

The proposal to introduce **the "EcoVoucher" Program** falls under the sub-chapter on "Support programs for SMEs" of the "Energy Efficiency" chapter, as it provides a direct financing mechanism for SMEs to carry out energy audits and implement energy efficiency measures. energy efficiency. Through this program, SMEs can access adequate financial resources to reduce energy consumption and improve competitiveness, thus contributing to the achievement of strategic targets on reducing energy intensity.

The "GarantEnergy" Guarantee Fund proposed by FICSIMM is relevant to the chapter "Financial support mechanisms for energy efficiency". This fund would reduce financial risks for banks and facilitate SMEs' access to loans for energy efficiency investments, thus contributing to the achievement of the green finance objectives mentioned in the strategy.

This fund will actively support SMEs in their transition to more sustainable practices and aligned with European and international environmental regulations.

The proposal for **the "Green QuickStart" Grant Program** also falls under the "Energy Efficiency" chapter, in the section dedicated to "Immediate and affordable measures to reduce energy consumption". This program would encourage SMEs to rapidly adopt energy efficiency measures with immediate impact, such as improving building insulation and using efficient lighting technologies. The rapid implementation of these measures will help to achieve the strategic objectives of reducing energy consumption until 2035.

The "InovaEco" program for innovative energy efficiency solutions is relevant to the "Energy Innovation and Research" chapter. This program encourages SMEs to adopt innovative energy efficiency solutions and promotes the development of new green technologies, aligning with the strategic objectives regarding the transition to an economy based on innovation and sustainability.

The proposal for **the ESCo "EcoPartnership" Program** is relevant to the "Public-Private Partnerships for Energy Efficiency" chapter. The program facilitates the adoption of energy efficiency measures through partnerships with energy service companies (ESCO), without requiring significant initial investment from SMEs. This partnership model contributes directly to the objectives of the strategy to reduce energy consumption and increase efficiency, by involving the private sector in financing energy efficiency projects.

The "ProMESI" proposal for the energy modernization of SMEs falls under the "Modernization of Energy Infrastructure" chapter. This supports the replacement of old and inefficient production equipment with modern and efficient solutions, thus contributing to increasing energy efficiency and reducing the carbon footprint of SMEs. The program supports the transition to advanced and sustainable technologies, a central objective of the energy strategy.

In addition, **the proposal to adopt an integrated approach to the implementation of energy efficiency programs** aligns with the chapter "Strategic coordination and implementation". A national information and support platform would improve SMEs' access to resources and facilitate the implementation of energy efficiency measures, ensuring effective coordination of efforts at national level.

FICSIMM's suggestions for stimulating energy efficiency innovation and education are relevant to the "Education and Public Awareness" chapter. Educational programs and awareness campaigns would stimulate the adoption of best practices in energy efficiency and increase awareness of the benefits of energy sustainability among SMEs.

Finally, **the proposal to create a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the impact of energy efficiency measures** is relevant to the "Monitoring and evaluation" chapter. This mechanism will ensure the efficient use of resources and allow continuous adjustment of programs, thus guaranteeing the achievement of long-term strategic objectives.

C. Coherence of FICSIMM's proposals for Romania's Energy Strategy 2025-2035, with the perspective of 2050, with the 2023/1791 Directive on energy efficiency

FICSIMM's proposals for Romania's Energy Strategy 2025-2035, with the perspective of 2050, are fully consistent with the objectives and requirements established in "DIRECTIVE (EU) 2023/1791 on energy efficiency". This directive emphasizes the importance of energy efficiency as a fundamental element in achieving the European Union's climate targets, such as reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 55% by 2030 and ensuring a sustainable energy transition.

In accordance with the principle "energy efficiency first" (**Article 3 of the Directive**), FICSIMM's proposal to introduce an **"EcoVoucher" voucher program** for energy audits

and energy efficiency measures in SMEs directly corresponds to the need to prioritize energy efficiency measures energy efficiency in all investment and policy decisions. This principle requires Member States to ensure that energy efficiency is a primary option, which is in line with the aim of the "EcoVoucher" program to support SMEs in reducing energy consumption.

"GarantEnergy" Guarantee Fund is also aligned with the Directive (**Article 30**), which provides for the establishment of national energy efficiency funds and the provision of technical and financial support. The "GarantEnergy" fund would reduce financial barriers for SMEs in accessing energy efficiency loans, thus facilitating the investments needed to achieve the energy consumption reduction targets set by the Directive.

Also, the **"QuickStart Verde" Grant Program** and the **"InovaEco" Program** align with the requirements of the Energy Saving Obligations Directive (**Article 8**). The Directive requires Member States to double their annual energy saving obligations by 2028, and these programs support SMEs in the rapid adoption of energy efficiency measures, thereby helping to achieve these savings obligations.

FICSIMM's proposal for ESCo partnerships (the **"EcoPartnership" Programme**) is also consistent with the Directive, which encourages Member States to promote energy efficiency in all relevant sectors, including through innovative and collaborative solutions such as energy performance contracts. This model allows SMEs to implement energy efficiency measures without major upfront costs, driving the adoption of efficient solutions.

In addition, the proposal for a **mechanism to monitor and evaluate the impact of energy efficiency measures** aligns with **Article 11 of the Directive**, which requires Member States to ensure energy management systems and periodic energy audits. The creation of a monitoring mechanism will allow better reporting and assessment of progress, improving the transparency and efficiency of the implementation of energy saving measures.

Thus, **all FICSIMM proposals are consistent with Directive (EU) 2023/1791**, contributing to the achievement of its objectives of energy efficiency, reduction of GHG emissions and promotion of sustainable energy transition, offering Romanian SMEs a clear support framework and affordable to align with European requirements.

D. Compatibility of FICSIMM's proposals for Romania's Energy Strategy 2025-2035, with the perspective of 2050, with other relevant European initiatives

The proposals of FICSIMM for the Energy Strategy of Romania 2025-2035, with the perspective of 2050, are in line with several recent European initiatives, reflected in the strategic documents of the European Union, such as the Net-Zero Industry Act (NZIA), The European Green Pact, but also with the Antwerp Declaration for a European Industrial Agreement.

First, FICSIMM's proposals align with **the Net-Zero Industry Act (NZIA)**, which aims to transform the European Union into a world leader in the production of clean technologies. FICSIMM's proposals for financial support programs, such as **the "EcoVoucher"** for energy audits and **the "Green QuickStart"** for rapid energy efficiency actions, respond to the need to increase the local production capacity of net-zero technologies in the EU. This is in line with NZIA's target to meet at least 40% of the EU's annual needs for net-zero technologies from domestic production by 2030.

Also, the proposal to create ESCo (Energy Service Company) partnerships through the **"EcoPartneriat" program** reflects the **NZIA measures** to simplify authorization procedures and reduce bureaucracy for strategic projects. This approach supports the rapid growth of industrial capacity needed to meet the EU's climate goals and boost European innovation and competitiveness.

FICSIMM's proposals are also consistent with the initiatives contained in **the Antwerp Declaration for a European Industrial Agreement**, which emphasizes the need to create a predictable and stable environment for investment in European industries. Financial support programs proposed by FICSIMM, such as "**GarantEnergy**" and "**InovaEco**", are in line with the calls of the Antwerp Declaration for a public investment fund for energy-intensive industries and clean technologies. This fund would facilitate investments in emission reduction technologies, thus strengthening Europe's position as a leader in the transition to climate neutrality.

In addition, FICSIMM's initiatives are in harmony with **the European Green Deal** and the emission reduction targets set by the EU, such as the commitment to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. The proposals for **education and awareness programs**, such as stimulating innovation and of education in the field of energy efficiency, contributes directly to the development of the human capital necessary to support the green transition. This is in line with measures in **the NZIA**, which proposes the creation of net-zero industry academies to train 100,000 workers over the next three years.

Similarly, FICSIMM's proposals for the creation of a **mechanism for monitoring and assessing the impact of energy efficiency measures** support the EU's comprehensive and coordinated approach to monitoring progress in the field of energy transition, as detailed in **the NZIA** and other European industrial policy documents. This mechanism will allow Romania to optimize its resources and contribute significantly to the achievement of the EU's decarbonisation objectives.

Moreover, FICSIMM's initiative to **simplify SMEs' access to financing** and facilitate **public-private partnerships** is fully consistent with the measures proposed in the **Net-Zero Industry Act** and other strategic documents, which call for the creation of a regulatory framework that support rapid and efficient investment in clean technologies, reducing import dependency and creating a strong and resilient European industrial ecosystem.

In conclusion, FICSIMM's proposals are perfectly aligned with the directions of action established by the EU for the transition to a green, sustainable and competitive economy. They contribute not only to the fulfillment of specific energy efficiency objectives, but also to the creation of a competitive and resilient industrial framework, essential for ensuring a fair and efficient energy transition.

FICSIMM expresses its readiness to collaborate with the Ministry of Energy for the improvement and implementation of these initiatives.

E. The importance of energy efficiency for SMEs in Romania

1. Energy efficiency: a pillar for the competitive sustainability of SMEs in Romania

In the current economic context, characterized by fluctuations in energy prices and strict regulations regarding carbon emissions, **energy efficiency has become essential for SMEs in Romania.** This is **particularly relevant for SMEs in the manufacturing, processing, food processing and manufacturing sectors,** where energy consumption represents a significant proportion of operational costs. By improving energy efficiency, these businesses not only reduce direct energy costs, but also improve their competitiveness in the global market, becoming more resilient to energy market volatility. **Energy efficiency contributes to the optimization of resource consumption, which has a direct impact on the profitability of SMEs.** In an economy where resources are increasingly scarce, **adopting energy-efficient measures is not only a strategic choice, but a necessity for survival and growth.** In addition to reducing costs, energy efficiency contributes to **improving the quality of products and services offered by SMEs, through the use of advanced technologies and optimized production processes.** These aspects increase the added value of the products, which positively reflects on the revenues and profitability of the companies.

2. Reducing costs and increasing competitiveness

For SMEs in the mentioned sectors, energy costs can represent a considerable part of the total expenses. **Implementing energy efficiency measures**, such as optimizing heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, modernizing/retrofitting production equipment and using efficient lighting, **can lead to substantial savings**. These **savings** not only **reduce operational costs**, but also **enable the reinvestment of the saved funds** in other critical areas of the business, such as **innovation and new product development**, thus improving the competitive position of SMEs in the market.

In the long term, **reducing energy costs contributes to the financial stability** of SMEs by providing them with additional resources for investment in modernization and expansion. Also, **energy efficiency allows SMEs to respond more flexibly to changes in the market**, quickly adapting to customer requirements and new technological trends. In an increasingly competitive environment, the ability to reduce costs and offer products and services at competitive prices is a significant advantage that can ensure the long-term success of SMEs.

3. Contribution to sustainability and environmental objectives

Energy efficiency plays a crucial role in **achieving sustainability goals and reducing greenhouse gas emissions**. SMEs in the manufacturing, processing and food processing sectors have a major responsibility in this regard, given their significant ecological footprint. By adopting energy efficiency practices, these businesses can help reduce CO₂ emissions and protect the environment. This commitment not only improves the reputation of SMEs in front of customers and partners, but also aligns them with national and European environmental protection regulations.

By reducing energy consumption, **SMEs can significantly reduce their carbon footprint, thus contributing to combating climate change**. **Implementing green technologies and energy efficiency solutions** can include using renewable energy sources, optimizing production processes to minimize waste, and adopting sustainable resource management

practices. All these measures contribute to the creation of a greener and more responsible business environment, which is essential for **long-term sustainable development**.

4. Improving the resilience and adaptability of SMEs

SMEs that invest in energy efficiency are better prepared to face economic and climate challenges. Modernizing equipment and optimizing production processes not only reduces energy consumption, but also improves the reliability and performance of operations. This adaptability is essential in a constantly changing economic environment, where the ability to react quickly to changes in energy prices or new regulations can be decisive for the long-term success of SMEs.

Increased resilience enables SMEs to maintain stable operations even in times of energy or economic crisis. Investments in energy efficiency reduce dependence on energy price fluctuations and ensure the continuity of economic activities. Also, SMEs that adopt energy efficiency measures can benefit from financial and technical support from the government and international institutions, which provide grants and subsidies for sustainability projects. These additional resources can accelerate the adaptation and transformation process of SMEs, ensuring their long-term success.

5. Stimulating innovation and access to finance

The implementation of energy efficiency measures stimulates innovation among SMEs, encouraging the adoption of new technologies and more efficient processes. These innovations may include advanced automation solutions, the use of renewable energy sources and the development of sustainable products. Furthermore, SMEs that demonstrate a commitment to energy efficiency and sustainability can benefit from **improved access to finance**, through grant programs and guarantee funds that support investments in energy efficiency and green technologies.

Access to finance for energy efficiency projects enables SMEs to develop their capabilities and constantly innovate. Through partnerships with financial institutions and international organizations, SMEs can access funds and resources to implement ambitious



energy efficiency projects. This financial support not only **facilitates the adoption of advanced technologies, but also contributes to the development of the skills and abilities necessary for the efficient management of energy resources.** In the long term, SMEs that invest in innovation and energy efficiency secure a leading position in the market, benefiting from a significant competitive advantage.

In conclusion, energy efficiency is not only a necessity for SMEs in Romania, but also a strategic opportunity to increase competitiveness, reduce operational costs, improve sustainability and stimulate innovation. By adopting energy efficiency measures, SMEs can secure a more robust market position and actively contribute to protecting the environment. This transition to a green and sustainable economy is essential for the sustainable development of the SME sector and for ensuring a prosperous and balanced future.

F. Proposals for national programs to increase the energy efficiency of SMEs in Romania

The Organization of Women Entrepreneurs proposes several financing instruments that can be configured to facilitate the access of SMEs to energy audits and the implementation of measures to improve energy efficiency.

We believe that these models should be developed in collaboration between the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism, the Ministry of Finance and, respectively, the associative structures that represent SMEs in Romania:

1. Energy efficiency incentive program for SMEs "EcoVoucher"

Description: This program proposes the granting of vouchers for the partial financing of energy audits and the implementation of recommended energy efficiency measures. Vouchers would be calibrated according to the energy footprint of the SME and categorized into three levels, corresponding to the size and type of activity of the SME (production, processing, manufacturing, including food processing).

Implementation: The Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism and the Ministry of Finance, based on a public debate, will define the eligibility criteria and the value of the vouchers. SME associative structures will play a key role in disseminating information and providing recommendations for the application process.

Benefits: Facilitating access to energy audits and financing for the implementation of efficiency measures, thus stimulating the improvement of energy efficiency and the reduction of operational costs.

Detailed description of the program:

Objective: Increasing energy efficiency in the SME sector by facilitating access to professional energy audits and implementing measures to improve energy efficiency, thus contributing to the reduction of operational costs and the promotion of sustainability.

Voucher categories:

- **Level 1 Vouchers:** For SMEs with low energy consumption and a small carbon footprint. They are aimed at companies with less energy-intensive activities, providing partial funding for audits and efficiency measures with low investment.

- **Vouchers level 2:** For SMEs with moderate energy consumption. They target mid-level energy-intensive companies, such as small and medium-sized manufacturers, facilitating access to detailed energy audits and funding for moderate to capital-intensive efficiency measures.

- **Level 3 Vouchers:** For SMEs with high energy consumption and a significant carbon footprint. They are aimed at companies with energy-intensive activities, such as food processing or industrial production, offering the largest amount of funding for complex audits and the implementation of advanced energy efficiency solutions.

Implementation:

1. Defining the eligibility criteria: The Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism, the Ministry of Finance and, respectively, the associative structures of SMEs will elaborate the eligibility criteria, including the size of the SME, the field of activity, the current energy consumption and consumption reduction potential.

2. Value and allocation of vouchers: The value of vouchers will be established based on a preliminary study of the specific needs of each category of SMEs. The allocation will be made on the basis of a simplified application process, with the verification of the fulfillment of the eligibility criteria.

3. Dissemination and application: The Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism and the Ministry of Finance, together with the associative structures of SMEs, will organize information campaigns and provide informative materials to encourage application to the program. Assistance in the application process will be provided through dedicated contact points and information sessions.

4. Conducting audits and implementing measures: the selected SMEs will collaborate with accredited energy service providers to conduct audits and implement the recommended energy efficiency measures.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation: The results of program implementation will be monitored by collecting data on energy savings achieved and CO2 emission reductions, providing feedback for future program improvements.

Expected benefits:

- **Reduction of operational costs:** SMEs will benefit from significant savings in energy costs by implementing the energy efficiency measures recommended following the audits.
- **Increased competitiveness:** Improved energy efficiency will reduce production costs, increasing the competitiveness of SMEs in the market.
- **Contribution to sustainability objectives:** The program will contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, aligning SME activities with national and international sustainability and climate change objectives.
- **Encouraging innovation:** This program will stimulate the adoption of innovative solutions and energy efficiency technologies, thus promoting innovation in the SME sector.



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- **Accessibility of energy audits:** By reducing the financial barrier, more SMEs will be able to carry out energy audits, essential for identifying efficiency measures.

Through the effective implementation of the Energy Efficiency Voucher Program "EcoVoucher: Energy Efficiency Stimulation Program for SMEs", a significant boost towards energy efficiency and sustainability among Romanian SMEs can be ensured, offering them the tools necessary to meet the energy and environmental challenges of the future.



2. The guarantee fund for energy efficiency and support for green investments in SMEs "GarantEnergy"

Description: This fund would aim to provide guarantees for loans contracted by SMEs for the purpose of carrying out energy audits and implementing energy efficiency measures. The guarantees would reduce the financial risk for banks and encourage them to offer more favorable lending conditions to SMEs.

Implementation: The fund would be administered by an entity designated by the government, in collaboration with financial institutions. Eligibility for guarantees would be determined based on a set of predefined criteria, including potential for energy savings.

Benefits: Improving access to financing for SMEs, facilitating energy audits and the implementation of measures to improve energy efficiency.

Detailed description of the fund:

Objective: Supporting SMEs in the process of improving energy efficiency by reducing financial barriers, providing guarantees for loans intended to finance energy audits and implementing the recommendations resulting from them.

Mechanism of operation:

- **Administration:** The fund would be administered by a government entity, in collaboration with partner financial institutions (commercial banks, microfinance institutions, etc.). This entity would have the role of evaluating applications, issuing guarantees and monitoring the use of funds. *(to be analyzed if there is a faster variant for administration)*



- **Guarantees:** The fund would provide credit guarantees covering a significant percentage of the loan value, thus reducing the risk assumed by banks and encouraging them to offer loans with more favorable conditions (eg lower interest rates, grace periods, etc.).

- **Eligibility criteria:** SMEs should meet certain criteria to be eligible for this support, such as operating in a certain industrial sector, having a certain level of energy consumption, or demonstrating a clear potential to improving energy efficiency.

Implementation:

1. Application submission: Interested SMEs apply for the guarantee, presenting the energy efficiency project, including the cost estimate for audit and implementation.

2. Evaluation and approval: The managing entity evaluates applications based on eligibility criteria and energy saving potential, approving guarantees for eligible projects.

3. Granting the guarantee: Once approved, the guarantees are communicated to both the SME and the financial institution, facilitating access to financing.

4. Project implementation: the SME contracts the guaranteed loan to carry out the energy audit and implement energy efficiency measures.

5. Monitoring and reporting: SMEs report progress and results achieved, including energy savings achieved and impact on energy efficiency.

Expected benefits:

- **Improved access to finance:** Reducing financial risk for banks will improve access to finance for SMEs, facilitating investments in energy efficiency.
- **Favorable lending conditions:** The fund's guarantees will allow the negotiation of advantageous loan conditions (low interest rates, flexible repayment terms, etc.).
- **Stimulating investments in energy efficiency:** By facilitating access to financing, investments in energy efficiency measures will be stimulated, contributing to the reduction of energy consumption and the reduction of CO2 emissions.
- **Sustainable development:** The fund will support the transition of SMEs towards more sustainable practices, aligning them with national and international environmental objectives.

The successful implementation of the Energy Efficiency Guarantee Fund "GarantEnergy: the support fund for green investments in SMEs" will require close collaboration between the government, the financial-banking sector and SMEs, but the potential benefits justify the joint effort. This could become a crucial tool in promoting energy efficiency and sustainability in the SME sector.



3. Grant program for immediate energy efficiency actions in SMEs "Green QuickStart"

Objective: Facilitate and accelerate the adoption of post-audit energy efficiency measures, with a focus on actions that are not very capital-intensive / require low investment, but offer immediate benefits in terms of reducing energy consumption and related costs.

Methodology: Creating a grant program for actions with an immediate impact on energy efficiency, such as improving the insulation of the production hall, replacing lighting with LEDs, or optimizing heating and/or cooling systems. SMEs can apply after completing an energy audit, presenting the proposed measures for financing.

1. Definition of eligibility criteria: interested SMEs must have completed an energy audit that identifies specific energy efficiency measures that can be quickly implemented. It is important that the proposed measures are concrete, with an immediate impact on energy consumption.

2. Creation and administration of the grant fund: Allocation of a specific budget intended to finance these measures. The fund should be managed transparently, with clear application and project selection procedures.

3. Application process: Interested SMEs will apply through a dedicated portal, presenting the results of the energy audit and detailing the measures they wish to implement. It should also provide an estimate of expected costs and energy savings.

4. Evaluation and approval of applications: An evaluation committee, consisting of energy efficiency experts and representatives of ministries and private sector associative structures, will review applications and select eligible projects based on predetermined criteria, such as cost effectiveness, the impact on reducing energy consumption and the speed of implementation.

5. Monitoring and reporting: beneficiary SMEs will be required to monitor and report the progress of the implementation of the measures, as well as their impact on energy consumption and savings generated.

Benefits:

- **Rapid adoption of energy efficiency measures:** By removing the financial barrier, SMEs are more motivated to quickly implement measures that will reduce their energy consumption and costs.

- **Increasing the competitiveness of SMEs:** Reducing energy costs improves the profit margins and competitiveness of SMEs in the market.

- **Contribution to sustainability objectives:** The implementation of these measures contributes to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, aligning the activities of SMEs with the national and European objectives of sustainability and energy efficiency.

- **Promoting awareness and education:** The program could include education components and dissemination of good practices in energy efficiency, encouraging a more sustainable approach among the entire SME sector.

By implementing the "Green QuickStart" SME Energy Efficiency Immediate Action Grant Program, a positive transformation can be achieved in the way SMEs approach energy efficiency, giving them the tools to make quick and effective changes with significant impact on energy performance and their long-term sustainability.



4. Grant program for energy efficiency and innovative solutions in SMEs "InovaEco"

Description: This program would provide grants to cover a portion of the costs of energy audits and the implementation of innovative energy efficiency solutions, particularly for measures that are not very capital intensive.

Implementation: The Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism and the Ministry of Finance, respectively, in partnership with the associative structures of SMEs, would develop the eligibility criteria and the selection process. Priority could be given to projects that demonstrate a high potential to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions.

Detailed description of the program:

Objective: Supporting SMEs in the implementation of innovative energy efficiency solutions and in carrying out energy audits, by granting non-refundable grants to cover part of the associated costs.

- **Eligibility criteria:** Interested SMEs must operate in eligible fields (e.g. production, processing, manufacturing, food processing) and demonstrate commitment to improving energy efficiency. Priority could be given to projects that:

- Demonstrates high potential for saving energy and reducing CO2 emissions.
- I propose innovative and sustainable energy efficiency solutions.
- Have a significant impact on improving energy efficiency throughout the operation.

- **Selection process:** The process would include the submission of detailed applications, their evaluation by an expert committee and the selection of projects based on

eligibility criteria and impact potential. The process should be transparent and fair, giving equal opportunities to all eligible SMEs.

Implementation:

1. Launch of the program: The Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism and, respectively, the Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with the associative structures of SMEs, officially announce the launch of the program and the availability of grants.

2. Information Dissemination: Detailed information about the program, including eligibility criteria, application process and deadlines, is widely disseminated through various channels to ensure the widest possible participation.

3. Application process: Interested SMEs complete and submit applications, which must include a detailed project plan, estimated costs and expected benefits, as well as any other relevant information requested by the selection committee.

4. Evaluation and selection: Applications are evaluated by a committee made up of energy efficiency experts, representatives of the ministries involved and possibly other relevant stakeholders. Projects are selected based on merit and potential for impact.

5. Awarding of grants: Selected projects receive funding, with the obligation to complete the project within a set deadline and report the results obtained.

6. Monitoring and evaluation: The Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism and the Ministry of Finance, respectively, and their partners monitor the progress of the funded projects and evaluate the impact of the program on energy efficiency in the SME sector.

Benefits:

- **Innovation in energy efficiency:** Stimulating the development and adoption of innovative solutions, contributing to technological progress in the field of energy efficiency.
- **Reduction of operational costs:** By implementing energy efficiency measures, SMEs can achieve significant savings on energy costs, thus improving their profitability and competitiveness.
- **Long-term sustainability:** Contribution to the reduction of CO2 emissions and the promotion of sustainable operational practices among SMEs, aligning economic activities with environmental objectives.

Effective implementation of the "InovaEco" SME Energy Efficiency and Innovative Solutions Grant Program will require firm commitment from all stakeholders and close collaboration between the public and private sectors. However, the potential for positive impact on energy efficiency, innovation and sustainability among SMEs justifies the investment and effort.



5. ESCo Program for the energy success of SMEs "EcoPartneriat"

Program to implement Energy Performance Contracts (CPE), also known as ESCo (Energy Service Company) Contracts, for SMEs - these contracts have been used successfully in the European Union and other regions to encourage energy efficiency and reducing energy consumption in industry and commercial buildings.

Objective: Increasing energy efficiency in SMEs by implementing measures to improve energy efficiency without requiring substantial initial investments from SMEs, the repayment of investments being realized from the generated energy savings.

Methodology:

1. Partnerships with ESCo: The Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism and the Ministry of Finance, respectively, will promote and facilitate partnerships between SMEs and energy service companies (ESCo) through regulations and possibly by providing fiscal or other incentives benefits for companies participating in this program.

2. Energy audit and project proposal: ESCo will conduct an energy audit to identify opportunities for energy efficiency within the SME. Based on this audit, ESCo will propose an energy efficiency project, including an estimate of costs, anticipated energy savings and investment payback period.

3. Project financing: ESCo will finance the implementation of the energy efficiency project. The SME will not have to make initial investments, removing one of the main barriers to improving energy efficiency.

4. Implementation and monitoring: ESCo will implement energy efficiency measures and monitor the energy performance of the SME to ensure the achievement of the planned energy savings.

5. Sharing of Energy Savings: According to the ESCo contract, the energy savings generated will be shared between the SME and the ESCo for a specified period, after which all the energy savings will revert to the SME.

Benefits:

- **No initial investment:** SMEs benefit from energy efficiency improvements without the need to allocate initial financial resources.
- **Technical expertise:** SMEs have access to ESCo's expertise and technical knowledge, which they may lack to identify and implement energy efficiency measures.
- **Reducing costs and increasing efficiency:** In the medium and long term, SMEs will benefit from reducing energy costs and improving energy efficiency, which contributes to their sustainability and competitiveness in the market.
- **Contribution to sustainability:** By reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions, SMEs contribute to national and global efforts to protect the environment and combat climate change.

The implementation of the ESCo Program for the energy success of SMEs - "EcoPartneriat" can be an effective tool to encourage the adoption of energy efficiency measures among SMEs, giving them the opportunity to reduce operational costs and contribute to sustainability efforts without the need for substantial initial financial investment.

6. Energy modernization and sustainability program for SMEs "ProMESI"

This program aims to re-engineer SMEs by replacing old and energy- and ecologically inefficient production equipment with modern, efficient solutions with low environmental impact. ProMESI aims to improve the competitiveness of SMEs, reduce energy costs and contribute to the transition to a green economy.

Objective: Facilitating the transition of SMEs to advanced and sustainable production technologies, by replacing old equipment and machines with new solutions that provide superior energy efficiency and minimize negative environmental impact.

Methodology:

1. Initial assessment: Interested SMEs will undergo an initial assessment to identify obsolete equipment in need of retrofitting and to estimate the potential to improve energy efficiency and environmental impact.

2. Program of grants and advantageous loans: Creation of a mixed program that combines grants with low-interest loans, intended to finance the purchase of new equipment. The program could be supported through government funds, EU funds and/or partnerships with banks and financial institutions.

3. Eligibility conditions: Priority will be given to projects that promise the greatest energy savings, carbon reduction and significant improvement in production performance.

4. Application and selection process: SMEs will apply through a transparent and competitive process, presenting detailed plans for retrofitting and estimates of expected energy and environmental benefits.

5. Performance monitoring and evaluation: The implementation of new equipment will be monitored to assess the achievement of anticipated energy savings and environmental impact reduction. This data will inform program adjustments and guide the selection of future projects.

Benefits:

- **Improving energy efficiency:** Replacing old equipment with new and energy-efficient technologies will reduce energy consumption and operational costs for SMEs.
- **Increasing market competitiveness:** By adopting advanced technologies, SMEs will be able to improve production quality, process efficiency and market response time, thus increasing competitiveness.
- **Reduction of environmental impact:** New and efficient equipment contributes to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and to the minimization of other negative impacts on the environment, aligning SME activities with sustainability objectives.
- **Stimulation of innovation:** Access to financing for retrofitting can stimulate innovation within SMEs, encouraging the adoption of state-of-the-art technological solutions.

The implementation of the Energy Modernization and Sustainability Program for SMEs "ProMESI" could play a crucial role in the modernization of the industrial sector, promoting energy efficiency, sustainability and long-term competitiveness among small and medium-sized enterprises.