

## Regions key players in the new Eco-Energy Paradigm

**Helping customers to save energy: an effective way to fight the climate change and create green value**



**Interview with Myriam Maestroni,  
Founder and President of Economie  
d'Energie**

**The decade of 2000-2010 brought about major changes to energy consumption. Do you think that peoples' ideas on the subject have really progressed?**

Myriam Maestroni: We are experiencing a veritable economic and energetic paradigm shift. The energy sector became aware of this very early, even before the economic sector.

In 2003 when we first began advocating that clients be assisted in reducing their consumption we were seen as iconoclasts. It wasn't until 2005 with the introduction of the "loi d'orientation sur les politiques

énergétiques (loi POPE)<sup>1</sup>," the new regulation concerning energy policies, that our approach became recognised.

**What does the European Energy Efficiency Directive published last October bring about?**

By putting into action the principle that energy providers are under obligation to help their clients to consume less, a decisive step was taken. This obligation, initially perceived as very counter-intuitive, opens up many possibilities; the transformation of client relations, the conception of new services and the creation of new jobs, in particular linked to renovation and energy performance. The entities will decentralise, will work as part of integrated service chains, and will have the mission of simplifying complicated subjects, which the subject of energy efficiency can be. Local and regional government should rally to optimise and enhance the energy mix on a regional scale.

Transformation of jobs, creation of interactions, new roles for existing parties; we are going to enter into circular savings logic. It is comforting to think that the future

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<sup>1</sup> This law obliges energy companies and suppliers to achieve energy savings through their clients, under risk of considerable financial penalties.

belongs to those who favour savings, that is to say a more rational consumption of resources, and also the reduction of waste and the use of waste to create new sources of energy.

**Innovative methods of finance were identified and put in place. Do we have a first impression of their impact?**

Ordinary taxation is poorly adapted to favour energy savings. It reflects the elevated costs of data collection and treatment for the government without a real value in terms of information and practical advice for the recipients of tax breaks or other tax incentives relating to energy efficiency renovations. The taxation of the market built around the mechanism of the Energy Savings Certificates is less rigid. It allows the energy providers under obligation to auto-manage the allocated money in order to enable energy savings in a context controlled by the government. This is to the benefit and satisfaction of the clients who find themselves encouraged to carry out renovations to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, therefore reducing their energy consumption and their impact on the environment while increasing the value of their property.

**Does the energy transition risk being pushed into the background in the face of the global economic crisis?**

In our countries the economic crisis is not an obstacle, it can even be considered as an incentive for the energy transition, highlighting our need to adapt. What's more, this transformation has created experiences unimaginable just three years ago. In this way the large distributors encourage and advise their clients on renovating their homes, and help them to finance the renovations. Leclerc and Auchan, whom we are accompanying in their approach,

undertook to inform their clients of the benefits of carrying out energy savings, grouped in more than 20 types of renovation measures, and to provide them with "energy bonuses" in the form of vouchers in exchange for energy savings certificates. So far, they have contributed to more than 150,000 energy efficiency home renovations with an average contribution of 10% of the total cost. This is revolutionary, even more so because to succeed they employed innovative interactive tools using new technologies. This is only one example amongst others, as we are only at the beginning of this new dynamic of revival, growth and creation of value.

**How do you react to the conclusions of the environmental conference that was held last September?**

France has distinguished itself on a European level by how far it has advanced in terms of energy efficiency and therefore energy savings, which is of course an essential element of the energy and climate objectives defined in the Kyoto Protocol. The system has certainly room for perfection, but even so it is envied by many European countries who find themselves today faced with the challenge of putting in place a version of the French model before 2014.

The question today is how to capitalise on the experience acquired since 2005, to define from this the objectives, to keep what should be kept and to improve and correct the elements that aren't yet perfect. I believe in a step-by-step approach with a good dose of pragmatism. It is my opinion that the question of rational energy use and the problem of energy renovation are apolitical. We must not forget that the "Grenelle de l'Environment" (French committee to define environmental and sustainability policies) was voted for almost unanimously by the

parliament. The debate on the energy transition must allow a consensus to be reached that is acceptable to the collection of parties present. This consists of treating the heart of the subject, to know first of all the significant growth in the residential energy renovations necessary to fight against fuel poverty. It consists also of continuing to accompany the energy optimisation investments of our industries so that they can gain competitiveness, and also to favour better performing transport solutions (requiring less energy, less pollution and lower costs).

We are at a key point. Will France be able to transform this outstanding trial into substantial results in terms of energy performance and energy savings? These are the stakes of the discussions that will take place in 2013. I sincerely hope so, as it is linked to jobs across the whole country to the benefit of our SMBs and tradespeople. Not only the improvement of the energy performances of our industries and homes but also; the improvement of the service, the acquiring of new skills and without a doubt a breath of fresh air both social and economic. France must conserve its status as a leader in the subject and impose itself as a champion of energy efficiency. Furthermore, define itself as a model of economic revival in this new paradigm where we must invest to allow us to reduce and improve our energy consumption.

**In your opinion, from this point what is the major challenge that we need to rise to?**

State of mind. Our country is stuck in its habits, we have lost some of our creativity and new ideas scare us a little bit. Reinventing ourselves takes imagination and a lot of rallying. We have to engage in progress; put success to the forefront and stabilize the legal elements or else risk a

plateau effect or even a regression. We must not fall into the pit-hole of thinking that all things new are complicated and therefore without a future. This requires coherence and time for the different parties to express their talents and create new business. Let us look at the successes and be a country capable of creating a vision.

**How regions can contribute to the new energy paradigm and be active support for green growth?**

As a matter of fact, regions are much better positioned to see and understand a changing world. Energy customers, in the field whoever they are –families for their house, industries for their process, agriculture...- understand much better and faster what's going on around them. They see the effects of the climate change, the weight of their energy needs because they are the ones paying the bills, they share in a word of mouth their experiences with other people around, and ultimately it is at local level where the power to change the world is getting much higher than any when before. This is part of the 3d industrial revolution that brought the power to get and produce locally information, and therefore the power to generate new ideas, innovation and action. Regions should be there to encourage local initiatives, to become examples, to offer proper environments to allow this local enthusiasm to be one of the most important parts of the change. This is about creating a vision of our future where we all become responsible for all. I believe that after the “think global act local” the big breakthrough of the 3d industrial revolution will be “think local and act global”, because “we are all worth it”!

**Identifying and facilitating worthy collaborations.**

In 2003 Myriam Maestroni, at the time Director of Operations at Primagaz France, perceived the necessity of concerning the company in the energy requirements of the clients with the objectives of *“no longer reasoning in terms of the unit price of energy but rather the allotted energy budget.”* Nevertheless, this idea of a budget is relative. For Myriam Maestroni, *“this budget is dependent on the daily habits of the client and an efficient application across the five pillars of energy efficiency; the features of the home, the lifestyles and number of habitants, the features and performances of the construction and of the heating system, and finally the possibility of incorporating renewable energies.”*

The creation of Economie d’Energie in 2008<sup>2</sup> allowed her to offer an original service combining creativity and expertise in the energy sector. *“The vocation of Economie d’Energie is to accompany the companies “under obligation” as well as the new parties engaged in this sector. In collaboration with our clients, who must carry out renovations improving the energy performance of their homes, buildings (public or private), or factories, we develop solutions, programs and innovative energy saving strategies”.*

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<sup>2</sup> In July 2011, Myriam Maestroni [a repris](#) la société and left her position within Primagaz. The Dutch group SHV, parent company of Primagaz, is the primary shareholder of Economie d’Energie SAS.