E.5 Find the right supplier

The situation of SMEs may vary significantly depending on the individual case, and on the type of supplier that is needed. Some SMEs might have trusted suppliers whom they can turn to also for energy efficiency, while others do not. In some cases, specific technologies might be not sufficiently common yet. Also, finding an energy auditor or an energy consultant of trust can constitute a barrier to take action.

The Trusted Partner is often in a privileged position, with an excellent overview of which suppliers are available on the market for different types of services useful to SMEs. In some cases, the Trusted Partner might be part of an industrial association, with several suppliers among her associates. Or the Trusted Partner might be the manager of a business park with time and resources to monitor the market.

As a consequence, the Trusted Partner is often in a position where he/she can suggest available suppliers to SMEs. The experience and skills of the Trusted Partner are at the core of the process of choosing the right supplier for the right project, nevertheless some criteria can be of particular importance:

- presenting efficiently the potential improvements related to the implementation of energy efficiency measures to SMEs decision makers;
- identifying non-energy (multiple) benefits of energy efficient technologies and estimate the financial impact;
- extending their proposition to collective projects (e.g. assessing potentials, facilitating in building collectives, collective purchasing and contracting of energy); and
- finding financial-support solutions for energy-related projects.

In each country there are already tools (e.g. lists, search engines, etc.) that can help Trusted Partners gather information and select a reliable energy service provider suitable for the SME's or collective's energy efficiency project. Mostly, databases include energy auditors (technical experts with skills to carry out energy audits and design efficiency measures). Less common are databases that collect information on installers and technology suppliers.