



## **ESTIF Position on the Solar Keymark** (Agreed by the Board of Directors, September 2003)

The Solar Keymark has been developed by initiative and with active participation of ESTIF and its predecessor associations (ESIF and ASTIG). On 29th January 2003, CEN (European Committee for Standardization) has approved the Solar Keymark scheme rules for solar collectors and factory made systems based on the EN 12975 and 12976. The first certification body has now been empowered and the Solar Keymark is available to market actors.

Solar Keymark licenses are provided by national or local certification bodies, which must be empowered by CEN. To increase its acceptance, the Solar Keymark is always given together with a national mark. In Germany, for example, the Solar Keymark is given together with the mark “DIN geprüft” (DIN proved).

The Solar Keymark certifies the conformity of a solar collector with EN 12975. Therefore it gives the consumer the security, that the product, he is buying, has the same quality level as the original tested unit (production quality surveillance). This higher consumer security requires the testing according to EN 12975 of a collector randomly taken from the production line or the stock of the manufacturer. Moreover, it requires an annual inspection of the factory production control, taking into account the relevant elements of ISO 9000. It also requires a bi-annual physical inspection of the product for comparison with the originally tested sample. Analogously, the Solar Keymark for EN 12976 certifies the conformity of factory made systems.

The Solar Keymark has been developed with the goal of:

- Creating in Europe a common certification scheme for collectors and factory made systems, based on EN 12975 and 12976
- Increasing the trust of customers of solar products by introducing an additional quality evaluation of conformity with EN standards on a continuous basis.
- Accelerating the growth of the European market by reducing the barriers to trade caused by the existence of different requirements to get financial incentives in different countries

ESTIF welcomes the introduction of the Solar Keymark. We consider it as an important opportunity for harmonising labelling in Europe, for increasing quality assurance of solar thermal products and for a stronger market growth. It offers the opportunity to become the sole reference basis for all EU and national regulations and incentive programmes.

ESTIF takes note that, during the current phase of introduction, some practical questions are still open:

- Only few certification bodies have already been empowered
- Distributors and end users of solar thermal products are not yet familiar with the Keymark and therefore do not necessarily recognise it.
- The expected economic advantage arises through avoiding the necessity of repeating certification in several countries will materialise only in the middle term, once all the national/regional authorities providing subsidies or impose regulations will refer to the Solar Keymark. In the short term Manufacturers applying now for the Solar Keymark face additional certification costs.



On this background, ESTIF recommends that:

- European manufacturers of solar thermal products investigate the consequences of the introduction of the Solar Keymark and get experience with it
- The European Commission actively supports the market introduction of the Solar Keymark by promoting dissemination information, by supporting costs during the starting phase and by evaluating the introduction phase
- The institutions responsible for financial incentive schemes give automatically refer to products with a Solar Keymark. As a first step, this should be done alongside the already existing national certification requirements as presently references are being prepared or are active in the UK and the Netherlands.