To:

Mr Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal

Brussels, 23 September 2021

OPEN LETTER

Phasing out new fossil-fuel based boilers is vital to achieving the EU's climate commitments

Dear Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans,

There is increased attention to the role that buildings must play in the climate transition. The EU's 2030 climate target plan requires the building sector to achieve 60% emission cuts between 2015 and 2030, through the application of the energy efficiency first principle, mass deployment of renewable heating and the phase-out of fossil fuels. The International Energy Agency's net-zero roadmap has called for the sale of new fossil-fuel based boilers to be ended from 2025[1] and the Council on 11 June 2021 called on the Commission to prepare for the phase-out of fossil-fuel based heating and cooling appliances[2].

Phasing out the sale of new fossil-fuel based boilers within this decade is crucial to meet the EU's climate and energy targets as well as strengthen the Union's competitiveness in renewable heating technologies. To achieve a decarbonised building stock by 2050:

1. **The Ecodesign measures for space heaters must phase-out the sale of fossil-fuel based boilers[3]** through higher minimum energy efficiency requirements.

   The ongoing revision of Ecodesign measures for space and water heaters presents a not-to-be-missed opportunity to engage in a complete phase-out of fossil-fuel based heating appliances. This undertaking is immense but if done correctly can result in massive benefits to European citizens, such as more comfortable and healthier homes[4] and lower energy bills and provide a clear market signal to the heating industry on the upcoming transition from fossil to clean heating technologies.

   Banning the sale of inefficient fossil-fuel based combustion boilers through Ecodesign can deliver two thirds of the required emission cuts of residential and public buildings to achieve climate neutrality by 2050[5]. The draft Commission regulation[6] currently falls short of this potential with the risk of locking people into high carbon, inefficient and expensive heating

[1] IEA (2021), see here

[2] See Council conclusions on an EU renovation wave here.

[3] This covers e.g. gas, oil and coal boilers that solely rely on the direct combustion of fossil fuels.

[4] Gas boilers and stoves have been linked to increased levels of indoor and outdoor pollution, with gas stoves leading to a 20% higher chance of lung diseases in children for example.

[5] See ECOS (2020), https://ecostandard.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Five-Years-Left-How-ecodesign-and-energy-labelling-Coolproducts-report.pdf

[6] The draft regulation proposes to rescale the energy label of space heaters, moving combustion technologies to the lowest energy classes, but don't foresee a phasing-out of these inefficient combustion technologies through more stringent minimum energy efficiency requirements. It will be discussed with Member States during a Consultation Forum on 27 September 2021.

technologies and locking the EU's building stock in a high emission pathway. This needs to be corrected as soon as possible, as heating appliances have long lifetimes[7].

The Commission has recently proposed a ban on the sale of cars and vans that produce carbon emissions. A similar ban on the sale of fossil-fuel based combustion boilers should now be implemented to cut emissions in the building sector.

2. **The upcoming revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) should not allow the direct combustion of fossil fuels in new buildings.**

   At the same time, new buildings' continued use of fossil-fuel based heating technologies and the continued promotion of gas grid connections further burden homeowners with additional upgrade costs and lock-in higher bills and polluting emissions into the future. Owners of new buildings should instead have the right to future proof buildings. The EPBD revision foreseen later this year therefore should not allow the direct combustion of fossil fuels in new buildings.

   Fossil free new buildings are already the norm in more and more countries across Europe and several national and city authorities are planning to phase-out new fossil-fuel based boilers and establish fossil-free districts[8]. The EU should support these efforts and facilitate the rapid transition from fossil fuels towards energy savings and renewable energy in buildings in a socially just way.

Acting now to phase out fossil-fuel based heating technologies will send a strong signal to investors and can give Europe a first mover advantage in an area which will see rapid global growth in the near future, since the EU currently has a strong renewable heating manufacturing base[9] while decreasing the EU's dependence on imported fossil fuels[10]. Moreover, clean heating technologies will improve air quality, resulting in health benefits and increased productivity for European citizens.

We look to you to take these concrete steps this year to end the use of fossil fuels in our buildings, as without such action it will be near impossible to decarbonize the building stock by 2050, strengthen the EU's clean heating manufacturing base and increase the quality of life of millions of EU citizens. We would be pleased to further discuss these points in a call at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

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[7] Heating appliances have a lifetime of 15-25 years.

8 See https://energy-cities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Cities-Manifesto-Fossil-Free-Districts_final.pdf

[9] The EU's renewable heating and cooling industry, such as heat pumps, solar thermal, geothermal, and renewable district heating & cooling, currently employs over 650,000 full time people with a combined turnover of EUR 82 billion and the dominant share of the world's heat pump companies is based in Europe.

10 The EU's sector integration strategy aims for about 50 million buildings to be heated with increasingly green electricity, the IEA report foresees 1.8 billion heat pumps by 2050 to keep global temperatures below 1.5°C.

- ECOS – Environmental Coalition on Standards
- European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
- Global Witness
- Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe
- Friends of the Earth Ireland
- Natuur & Milieu
- Bond Beter Leefmilieu
- Kyoto Club
- Legambiente
- International Society of Doctors for Environment
- Green Transition Denmark
- Energy Cities
- E3G
- Deutsche Umwelthilfe
- European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)
- ZERO – Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável
- Quercus - Associação Nacional de Conservação da Natureza
- Inforse – International Network for Sustainable Energy, Europe
- ECODES
- Ecologistas en Acción
- Green Building Council España
- Fundación Renovables
- Solar Heat Europe
- Bellona Europa
- Euroheat & Power
- CLASP
- Za zemiata – Friends of the Earth Bulgaria
- EGEC Geothermal
- GREENoneTEC Solar collectors
- Ecoserveis


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