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Open letter

Decarbonising the EU building stock with available solutions and no direct use of hydrogen

To:

Frans Timmermans

First Executive Vice-President, European Commission

Copy to:

Kadri Simson, Commissioner for Energy

Ditte Juul Jørgensen, Director General, DG ENER

Members of the European Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

Members of the European Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Brussels, 21 January 2021

The co-signatories of this letter represent a broad group of businesses, civil society organisations and think tanks who have joined forces to support the European Green Deal.

We believe that Europe must prioritise the **most efficient, sustainable and cost-effective pathways to decarbonise the economy and create jobs**. In this respect, all future EU policies and legislations concerning the EU gas market and infrastructures should be aimed at designing an energy system that goes beyond fossil gas to reach increased energy and climate targets by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050.

The European Commission's modelling for the proposed 2030 targets suggests that **massive emissions reductions in the buildings sector are expected over the next 10 years** (<60% compared to 2015). To make this happen, the Renovation Wave strategy envisages the application of **the energy efficiency first principle in synergy** with increased thermal and power **renewables integration**.

While some believe that challenging renovation of buildings and the retrofitting of renewable heating systems could be avoided by introducing hydrogen for heating our buildings, the reality is different. It is true that **renewable hydrogen** can play a role in decarbonising hard-to-abate sectors, but its **direct use for heating on a large scale is problematic** because it comes with many **uncertainties linked to the scalability, costs of its production and inefficiencies**. In the medium and long-term, to optimise the process of heat decarbonisation, **energy efficiency options must be favoured because they can immediately deliver real carbon savings, while accommodating a growing share of renewable sources**.

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We therefore call on you not to overestimate the zero-emission gas potentials, mostly imported from abroad, because it would constrain EU consumers to fund unnecessary infrastructures, such as gas pipelines (or their upgrade) and would divert precious financial resources away from **immediately applicable heat decarbonisation solutions**.¹

Signatories



¹ A non-exhausting list of readily available solutions to decarbonise the EU heating sector include: highly energy efficient thermal envelopes to reduce energy needs; direct heating through heat pumps; direct renewable heat (in the form of district and building level solar thermal heating and cooling, geothermal); renewable-based electrification; and highly efficient district heating and cooling networks.