

Brussels, 15th June 2022

Subject: Rural households are at risk of being left behind with the revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

Rural, mountainous and remote areas constitute 83% of the total EU area, are home to 31% of EU's population and account for 46% of gross value added. They represent a source of creativity and innovation in which large part of the European cultural and natural heritage is rooted. Despite numbering 130 million people, rural communities are often overlooked.

The revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) delineates a great occasion to ensure that buildings contribute to the ambitious climate goals set by the EU, opening an opportunity to set up a pathway to cleaner and more efficient heating in Europe. However, the **EPBD proposal ignores the reality of rural areas, limits consumer choices and risks leaving already vulnerable consumers behind.**

The current description of a “zero-emission building”, whose primary energy consumption is “fully covered by energy from renewable sources generated on-site” is concerning. It would prevent consumers from reducing their emissions with renewable energy sources that are produced off-site. This would be especially problematic for rural households that are poorly insulated and cannot afford to electrify their heating system.

Removing the need for zero 'direct' emissions and the need for 'generated on-site' from the description would stimulate the development of renewable liquid gases for heating but also for on-site cogeneration from renewable fuels, thus enabling rural consumers to choose from additional heating technologies that fit their needs. It would also allow for continued use of local space heater, which are especially beneficial in low-income households, new builds or heavily insulated properties requiring only a small capacity single heating source.

Moreover, electricity demand will rise significantly in the coming years, resulting in grid constraints and further burden on electricity balancing. **A mix of different energy sources would reduce the pressure on the electricity grid and ensure energy security in most critical areas.** Therefore, the definition of zero-emission buildings should be technologically neutral and pave the way for further development of off-grid sustainable energy sources, such as renewable liquid gases.

Rural communities are an integral part of the European project and cannot be left behind in the energy transition. To successfully respond to the challenges posed by climate change and to fully reap the benefits of the green transition, **sensitive, inclusive and multi-technology policies are needed.** We count on the European Parliament to embrace these recommendations to ensure them a safe, efficient and sustainable future.

Sincerely,

