

## Paris agreement under threat as Member States try to water down key buildings measures in EPBD

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While President Trump is grabbing world headlines by publicly trashing the Paris climate agreement, Member States are also trying to sabotage this agreement by watering down measures in the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) and Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) which are essential to achieving to the Paris Agreement – the only difference is that this is happening behind closed doors in Brussels.

Energy efficiency is supposed to deliver half of the EU's carbon dioxide reductions, implying twice the amount of additional renewable energy supply - within the same time frame - if it is not met.

Yet the Czech Republic is proposing a dilution of the energy savings obligations in the EED from its annual 1.5% headline figure to as little as 0.4%.

Poland, which will host COP24 – in Katowice, one of the most heavily polluted areas in Europe – is trying to erase milestones for 2030 and 2040 in the EPBD revision, even though these offer the only possibility of holding states to account if their efforts fall short.

And latest intelligence indicates that the Maltese Presidency is also seeking to drastically cut ambition on energy efficiency in the latest version of the EED to be discussed at COREPER meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June.

It is difficult to overstate the gravity of this development. If the Member States are successful in watering down the EPBD and EED, they will reduce the EU's Paris pledge to a dishonest paper shuffling exercise in the eyes of the world, and its own citizens.

The UN, EU, world governments and Building Performance Institute Europe have all endorsed the role that the housing sector can play in grasping the promise of Paris. Indeed, there is no way of reaching its aspirational target of capping warming at 1.5C without it.

Our buildings account for nearly one fifth of the world's atmospheric CO2 pollution. Their emissions doubled between 1990 and 2010 and, on present trends, could double again by 2050, according to the International Energy Agency.

It is no surprise that a coalition of 300 businesses recently warned that Europe would miss its targets under the Paris climate agreement without a rapid increase in the efficiency and emissions performance of its built environment. The Build Upon alliance called on EU states to follow the logical conclusions of the Paris Agreement and establish renovation strategies that drastically improve their buildings' energy performance.

It is crucial for Paris that the pace and depth of energy renovation is accelerated – not slowed – according to last year's UN-backed global roadmap for resilient buildings, which was conceived at COP21 in Paris and developed by scores of national experts.

The global roadmap proposes a doubling of the current 1% renovation rate in developed countries within eight years, and net zero emissions for all existing buildings by 2070 at the latest.



Energy reductions of 20-30% by 2025 will also be needed, with the aim of covering four fifths of large real estate by the same year.

Member States should be asked how they intend to achieve these energy demand and CO2 emissions reductions as they are busy blocking, gutting and watering down key provisions in the EPBD and EED. And if they do not intend to achieve the EU's energy and climate goals, they should be asked how they plan to meet the Paris goals at all.

"The essential role of the building sector is well recognised as a critical element to achieving the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting global warming to well below 2°C," said a status report by the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction (GABC), prepared for COP22 in Marrakech last year.

The UNFCCC has registered more than 3,000 city-level and 500 private sector housing emissions mitigation actions, along with commitments from nearly half of the 195 countries that filed nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

Impressive as this is, it is not enough. We need to avoid at least 50% of the projected energy growth from buildings by 2030 – at a time when the world population will increase by 1.5 billion people, and existing buildings will begin suffering the negative effects of climate change.

To do that, we must roll up our sleeves and get to work, not kick out the cornerstones of Paris and go back to sleep. This is what makes the stand of the EU states so densely retrograde.

As James Drinkwater, of the World Green Building Council, put it in April: "Europe is at a crossroads in terms of its energy policy with decision-makers unwilling to commit to a clear vision for one of Europe's most pressing climate challenges – its buildings."

There can be no more excuses. We have no more time. The EU can commit at the upcoming Energy Council on 26<sup>th</sup> June to reducing the energy demand of its last-century housing stock – with all the health, productivity and economic gains that will bring – or it can say that catastrophic climate change is a price worth paying to preserve the short-term rent-taking of inert political placemen. It should not be that difficult a decision.

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## **RENOVATE EUROPE**

*Renovate Europe is a political communications campaign with the ambition to reduce the energy demand of the building stock in the EU by 80% by 2050 compared to 2005 levels through legislation and ambitious renovation programmes. This will bring the energy performance of the entire building stock in the EU to a Nearly Zero Energy (NZEB) performance level. Renovate Europe brings together 36 partners from across the building value chain (trade associations, companies, trade unions, city networks and 14 national partners):*

*Find out more: <http://renovate-europe.eu/>*

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