To:  
Ms von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

Cc  
Mr Timmermans, Executive-Vice President  
Ms Simson, Commissioner for Energy

4 March, 2022

Decreasing Europe’s dependency on energy imports through renewable heating and cooling

Dear President von der Leyen

We support your initiative to reduce Europe’s dependency on imported energy. Heating and cooling buildings and industrial processes consumes half of the energy in the EU, a significant share being fossil energy. Renewable heating is the best replacement solution: they are local and directly remove reliance on imported fossil energy, mainly gas, while contributing to the EU’s energy and climate targets. Investing in the EU’s ability to use local renewable sources is of greater strategic important than diversification of fuel supplies and the building of new LNG terminals.

Hence the forthcoming communication should give an unprecedented focus on the manufacturing, production and deployment of renewable heating and cooling solutions for residential, commercial and industrial applications.

To accelerate the deployment of renewable heating and cooling, we call on you to establish a ‘renewable heat accelerator’. This should establish the following:

- Immediate support for an increase the renewable heating and cooling sub-target to at least 2 percentage points binding increase per year.
- A European financial risk mitigation framework for large-scale renewable heating and cooling projects. This will provide coverage for public and private investors.
- The establishment of a Energy Savings and Renewable Heating & Cooling Task Force, managed by the Commission’s Secretariat-General, to oversee and coordinate the energy transition in heating and cooling in Member States.
- Creation of a European Heat Infrastructure Fund to finance large-scale renewable heating and cooling infrastructure for buildings and industrial hubs in the EU and neighbourhood countries. This will also support neighbourhood countries with fast-track access to EU technologies and expertise in the planning, design and construction of renewable heating and cooling systems.
- Subsidise access to professional, vocational and academic qualifications for the renewable heating and cooling workforce.
This will create a market framework making in which the cleanest and most efficient heating solutions economically most attractive, complement the introduction of a CO₂ price on fossil energy, and accelerate the phase down of fossil fuel subsidies and the rebalancing of energy taxation. The proposed Energy Efficiency Financing Alliance should also be extended to include renewable heating.

A renewable heat accelerator would add millions of additional geothermal, ambient and solar thermal heat installations across all Member States. It would directly address the high cost of fuel imports and the negative impact of the climate crisis while stimulating the European economies struggling to recover from the COVID pandemic. Furthermore, it improves the building stock and reduces energy bills for households, including those in energy poverty as well as businesses and industry.

In the medium term, direct financial support to deliver investments outlined in Sustainable Energy and Climate Plans operated by the Covenant of Mayors. Renewable heat is a local matter and local authorities are at the frontline. These investments will bring them part of the support they need to map and plan the rapid deployment of renewable heating systems across urban and rural areas. Furthermore, Distribution System Operators (DSOs) which currently manage local gas and electricity grids should be mandated to engage in a discussion process with local authorities on opportunities linked to the development of multi-property renewable heating and cooling systems.

We look forward to the incorporation of these ideas into the final proposal and remain at your disposal should you require further information.

Yours sincerely

The Renewable Heating & Cooling Alliance comprises

Energy Cities
European Climate Foundation
European Geothermal Energy Council
European Heat Pump Association
Solar Heat Europe