

Press release

Wonderwall? The EU agrees on its buildings directive

Much like the song from Oasis, the deal on the European Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) leads to mixed reactions.

Friday, 8th December 2023 - Yesterday, the European Commission, European Parliament, and European Council reached a deal on the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD). The directive outlines the framework to support reductions in the emissions of the EU's buildings, as well as in our bills for years to come. However, the journey to this agreement was marred by a misinformation campaign in Italy and Germany, contributing to a challenging negotiation process. The deal, while a commendable achievement, is viewed with mixed emotions due to its lack of ambition on several fronts.

At REScoop.eu, the European federation of citizen energy cooperatives, we regret some elements in the text but are very happy about the introduction of energy communities for renovations and heating and cooling activities.

The most problematic element of the text seems to be the phase-out date for fossil fuel boilers, which is set for 2040, and the introduction of “decarbonised energy” in Zero Emission Buildings (ZEBs), which could endanger renewables. To exacerbate the situation, financing will still be given to “hybrid” boilers partially running on dirty fossil fuels, introducing a wolf in sheep's clothing into our homes. Furthermore, Minimum Energy Performance Standards (MEPS) lack the necessary ambition to accelerate the renovation wave.

On the positive side, the EPBD introduces a paradigm shift of citizen empowerment in building renovations that could have far-reaching impacts. Firstly, the role of energy communities is strengthened throughout the text, acknowledging and encouraging citizen-owned projects for renovations, one-stop shops, and heating and cooling. For instance, the primary energy use of new or renovated Zero Emission Buildings (ZEB) must come from renewables, an efficient district heating system, or from an energy community. Secondly, financing for renovations must prioritise vulnerable households and people living in energy poverty. Energy communities should now find it easier to access funding for renovations, as Member States must ensure that financing programmes are accessible to organisations with lower administrative, financial, and organisational capacities. Thirdly, there must be a One-Stop-Shop (OSS) per 80.000 inhabitants in the Union, further accelerating access to information and cooperative OSS models.

Dirk Vansintjan, President of REScoop.eu, said: *"Is the deal on the Energy Performance of Buildings (EPBD) everything that we hoped for? No. But the steps taken to empower citizens, and to bring the ownership of building renovations and its benefits and revenues into their hands, are a massive game changer. The community energy movement won a small battle today, and we should be proud of that"*

Now that this 2 year process has come to an end, we must ensure that our respective governments implement the EPBD correctly, enabling citizens to carry out renovations and heating and cooling projects within energy communities.

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