



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Camera Deputaților for its Opinion on the Commission's Communication on an EU Strategy for heating and cooling {COM(2016) 51 final}.

The Commission shares the Camera Deputaților's view that energy efficiency is a priority for the EU Heating and Cooling Strategy. Energy efficiency, together with increasing the use of sustainable energy sources, is anchored in the EU Heating and Cooling Strategy as a central purpose. This is in line with the objectives of the Energy Union, which aims to make energy efficiency an energy source in its own right and sets energy efficiency as one of its five overarching dimensions. The Energy Union identifies heating and cooling, in particular in buildings, as the sector where untapped energy efficiency potentials are the greatest and must be harnessed to give EU consumers – households and businesses – secure, sustainable, competitive and affordable energy. The EU Heating and Cooling Strategy contributes to delivering these objectives.

The Commission would like to assure the Camera Deputaților that consumer choice is at the very heart of the EU Heating and Cooling Strategy, not only as an important objective, but also as a driving force behind deploying the technologies and solutions needed for the energy transition in the EU's heating and cooling sector.

The Commission agrees with the Camera Deputaților on the central role of smart cities, as these are the places where the benefits of smart buildings, smart grids and smart heating and cooling equipment can be harnessed most. Developing smart cities is key to increasing consumer choice, improving living conditions and reducing energy poverty, deploying new services to consumers and exploiting cost-effective synergies throughout energy systems. In this context, the Commission is grateful to the Camera Deputaților for its support for the objective of creating conditions for consumer participation in demand response as an instrument of energy and cost saving.

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The Commission notes that the EU Heating and Cooling Strategy has been developed in accordance with the principles of the circular economy and aims at establishing synergies between energy efficiency and resource efficiency. This is not only reflected in the central consideration given to energy efficiency throughout the Strategy, but also in the emphasis put on the need to utilise residual (waste) heat and cold as well as the focus on simple, cost-effective and nature-based solutions in building renovation. The Strategy also highlights the need for better information for consumers, including through metering and information tools facilitating informed decision-making when upgrading old heating systems or buildings.

The Commission welcomes that the Camera Deputaţilor recognises the importance of cooling and the recommendations to support the deployment of energy and resource efficient technologies in this sector, in particular in information technology related to cooling. The Commission notes that the Strategy is a first comprehensive analysis not only of the heating, but also of the cooling sector and thanks the Camera Deputaţilor for its encouragement to continue work and analysis in this new field, including as regards the environmental impacts of certain cooling technologies.

The Commission agrees with the Camera Deputaţilor on the need to give small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) more support for integrating new innovative concepts, devices and equipment for heating and cooling, including new financial instruments to ensure access to funding. The Commission notes that the proposed industrial round tables will have, as a main objective, the strengthening of the capacity of energy intensive SMEs to improve energy efficiency in heating and cooling.

As regards the use of wood for heating and cooling, the Commission draws the attention of the Camera Deputaţilor to the forthcoming EU policy on sustainable biomass and biofuels, which will be part of the Commission's proposal for a new Renewable Energy Package later in 2016.

The Commission welcomes the support of the Camera Deputaţilor to pursue an ambitious training and skills development agenda for the professionals active in energy efficient and renewable based building, heating and cooling technologies, and notes that the Strategy proposes intensified actions to improve training for installers, builders and architects.

As regards funding for energy efficiency, renewable energy, the upgrading of energy networks, including district heating systems, as well as the related scientific research, the EU Heating and Cooling Strategy stresses the need to ensure access to financing for all involved actors, such as households, businesses, SMEs, local and regional authorities, and suggests solutions and actions to remove barriers to financing. These include the Smart Financing for Smart Buildings' Initiative, Horizon 2020, the upgraded Strategic Energy Technology Plan and full use of the opportunities of the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI).

The Commission fully shares the view of the Camera Deputaţilor on the need for further analysis and studies on the specific elements of the EU Heating and Cooling Strategy, including on social and environmental aspects or to develop in-depth knowledge of the various sub-sectors and cost-effective technology options.

The Commission congratulates Romania on its initiative to include the heating sector in its energy strategy and assures the Camera Deputaților that this is a step in the right direction and can serve as a good example for all Member States.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Camera Deputaților and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

Member of the Commission