

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Gas lobby's fight to save polluting boilers revealed as EU gears up for crucial vote

**Lobbyists for the gas industry are using unvetted access to MEPs and Commission officials through events and astroturfing campaigns to curb the EU's ambitious green agenda ahead of vote on Energy Performance Buildings Directive.**

An investigation released by Better Without Boilers (BWB) has revealed how the gas lobby has identified the domestic gas boiler as the key battleground for the future of fossil fuels in Europe (full report available [here](#)).

With MEPs set to vote on the Energy Performance Building Directive (EPBD) in March, the report reveals that:

- On at least three occasions, undeclared meetings between the gas lobby and pivotal figures in the debate over the future of domestic gas consumption in Europe took place, with the EPP's Sean Kelly MEP - Shadow Rapporteur on the EPBD negotiations - participating in two of them.
- Lobbying groups were in contact with MEPs closely involved with the negotiation process, who later put forward arguments closely resembling those of lobbyists and astroturfing campaigns promoting solutions like "hydrogen-ready" hybrid boilers that would keep gas boilers in every household.
- Through unaccountable front organisations, the gas lobby can approach and influence these officials, while using loopholes in the European Commission and the European Parliament's transparency rules to hold meetings and events that go undeclared.

In June 2022, Henry Cubbon, LPG president of fuel distributor DCC, told the European Liquid Gas Congress taking place in Barcelona: "The gas boiler is our livelihood — if it gets banned, we have a real problem. We are doing a lot of work with regulators to see if we can position the gas boiler as a heating source of the future, powered by renewable gas."

Now, a report released by Better Without Boilers - a coalition between the European Environmental Bureau, the Environmental Coalition on Standards and Green Transition Denmark - can reveal that industry lobbying body Liquid Gas Europe is in contact with senior MEPs and Commission officials who participate in events - organised and chaired by the group and its campaign front Rural Futures - that have not been declared on official registries by LGE or the officials themselves, including Stefan Moser - Head of Unit B3,

Products and Buildings, DG ENER, European Commission; Anne-Katherina Weidenbach - Member of EU Commissioner for Energy Kadri Simson's cabinet; Seán Kelly (EPP, Ireland) - Shadow Rapporteur on the EPBD, European Parliament; and Franc Bogovic (EPP, Slovenia) - Co-president of RUMRA Intergroup.

Through Rural Futures, LGE is promoting the idea that rural communities around Europe have different needs to major cities, and that “the current EPBD proposal is limiting rural consumers to technologies that are unsuitable and unaffordable”, one of the main arguments of the gas lobby.

Despite the fact Rural Futures is a project by Liquid Gas Europe, as its own website makes clear, its activities are not registered as lobbying by LGE, and neither are their meetings and events with EU officials.

Meanwhile, in emails to MEPs seen by BwB, lobbyists for Gas Distributors For Sustainability (GD4S) push for the introduction of hybrid gas boilers as an “intermediate” solution to full transition away from fossil. They claim that hybrid solutions have multiple benefits: that they allow for rapid energy efficiency gains and a rapid reduction of gas demand in heating, that they can be deployed easily and cost-effectively, and that they result in cost savings for consumers.

But the reality is that the technology to produce and distribute enough hydrogen to heat Europe's home does not exist and is unlikely ever to exist. 37 Independent studies have concluded that “hydrogen would not play a significant role in zero-carbon heating.” As it is, green hydrogen for heating is 2-3x more expensive, less efficient and has more environmental impacts than electrification. For the individual consumer, hydrogen is the most expensive alternative to natural gas and could see energy bills double by 2050. As a 2021 report by BEUC showed, heat pumps will be by far the cheapest green heating option.

Despite stern warnings from civil society, the gas industry is currently getting their way. As the Energy Performance Building Directive (EPBD) is up for vote in the European Parliament on Tuesday 14 March, the text comes with a crucial loophole on hydrogen-ready and boilers certified to run on renewable gases, which means gas boilers can continue to be installed in buildings all around Europe.

Last week, even more amendments were tabled to water down the ambitions of the EPBD, including one from German MEP Andreas Glück (AM2, see below) with near-identical language to an amendment drafted by Liquid Gas Europe, as seen in leaked documents.

Experts warn that the new amendment tabled by Glück softens the obligation to ensure that only the most energy efficient equipment is used when equipment is replaced or installed, which is not the level of ambition needed, as it relates to the intention and does not emphasise the formulation per se.

**Julie Abrahams, Advisor for Energy and Climate at Green Transition Denmark, said:**

"Now is the time to avoid a fossil gas lock-in. Gas boilers do not belong in the future heating system, and it is completely wrong to call it future-proof, environmentally friendly or green. It will lead to higher energy bills and reliance on imported gas, not to mention the harm to the environment. Danish families should not be paying the price for the gas industry's survival."

**Marco Grippa, Programme Manager with ECOS, said:**

"The gas industry is succeeding in convincing politicians about the future of hydrogen-ready boilers where the only beneficiary is the gas industry itself. This threatens important progress in the EU such as the transition away from gas boilers to clean and affordable heating, and towards energy independence."

**Monique Goyens, Director General of The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), said:**

"The gas lobby's attempts to save the gas boiler are actively harming consumers, rejecting options which would save regular families money, and pushing so-called 'hybrid' options and hydrogen for heating, with little evidence. European families should not be paying the price for the gas industry's survival".

**Laetitia Aumont, the European Environmental Bureau's Policy Officer for Circular and Carbon Neutral Built Environment, said:**

"We are highly concerned about the tactics from the gas lobby which have come to light under this investigation.

"The fact that hundreds of meetings have occurred between the fossil fuel industry and the European Commission shows how strong the influence is.

The industry goes directly against the green future and energy independence that the EU needs through the greenwashing of technologies that will lock us in fossil fuel infrastructure and hamper the transition to more climate friendly heating systems".

## NOTES TO EDITORS

The full report is available [here](#).

For more information or to set up interviews please contact [caroline.n@89up.org](mailto:caroline.n@89up.org).

## About Better Without Boilers

Better Without Boilers is a coalition between the European Environmental Bureau, the Environmental Coalition on Standards and Green Transition Denmark. It calls upon the EU and European leaders to support the shift away from oil and gas boilers to cleaner, more affordable alternatives for Europeans to heat their homes.

The report was co-authored by 89up's investigation team, Yiannis Baboulias and Pdraig Reidy. Yiannis Baboulias is an investigative journalist who has worked for international media outlets like Foreign Policy, the Atlantic, the LRB, The Guardian, and Al Jazeera English and others for over a decade. Pdraig Reidy is a writer and editor who has written on human rights, media freedom and politics for publications from the Sun to the New Statesman.

**Note:** The BwB's advisory members, Öko-Institut and E3G, are not parties to this report.

## About the EPBD

The recast EPBD aims to accelerate building renovation rates, reduce GHG emissions and energy consumption, and promote the uptake of renewable energy in buildings. The EPBD is set to require EU member states to establish minimum energy performance standards for buildings and to ensure that new buildings are nearly zero-energy buildings (NZEB) by the end of 2020, and that all buildings are climate-neutral by 2050. Additionally, the EPBD sets requirements for member states regarding Technical Building Systems, such as inspection regimes for heating and cooling systems, including boilers, air conditioning systems, and heat pumps, to ensure they are regularly maintained and operating efficiently. The directive also encourages member states to promote the use of renewable energy sources in buildings and to promote the use of smart technologies to improve energy efficiency.

As the directive could potentially end subsidies for fossil fuel boilers and set heating system requirements to accelerate the phase out of gas boilers, a desperate gas industry and its lobbyists are working round the clock to save this cornerstone of their business. In 2020, most of the EU final energy consumption in the residential sector was covered by natural gas (31.7 %) and as a result Europe remains the world's largest natural gas market.

## AM2 tabled for plenary vote on the EPBD: AM2

*Differences highlighted in yellow.*

ITRE Committee <a href="#">text</a>	Liquid Gas Europe	Andreas Glück <a href="#">AM2</a>
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	<b>proposal (seen in leaked documents)</b>	
<p>Member States shall, for the purpose of optimising the energy use of technical building systems, set system requirements <b>using energy saving technologies</b>, in respect of the overall energy performance, the proper installation, and the appropriate dimensioning, adjustment and control of the technical building systems, <b>and, where appropriate, hydronic balancing</b>, which are installed in new or existing buildings. When setting up the requirements, Member States shall take account of design conditions and typical or average operating conditions and <b>shall ensure the use of the equipment that meets the criteria for the highest available energy efficiency classes in accordance with the relevant legal acts of the Union on energy labelling, taking into account system efficiency and the energy efficiency first principle.</b></p>	<p>Member States shall, for the purpose of optimising the energy use of technical building systems, set system requirements using energy saving technologies, in respect of the overall energy performance, the proper installation, and the appropriate dimensioning, adjustment and control of the technical building systems, and, where appropriate, hydronic balancing which are installed in new or existing buildings. When setting up the requirements, Member States shall take account of design conditions and typical or average operating conditions and shall <b>ensure enable</b> the use of the equipment that meets the criteria for the highest available energy efficiency classes in accordance with the relevant legal acts of the Union on energy labelling, <b>where technically and economically feasible, while</b> taking into account system efficiency and the energy efficiency first principle.</p>	<p>Member States shall, for the purpose of optimising the energy use of technical building systems, set system requirements <b>using energy saving technologies</b>, in respect of the overall energy performance, the proper installation, and the appropriate dimensioning, adjustment and control of the technical building systems, <b>and, where appropriate, hydronic balancing</b>, which are installed in new or existing buildings. When setting up the requirements, Member States shall take account of design conditions and typical or average operating conditions <b>and shall where technically and economically feasible enable the use of the equipment that meets the criteria for the highest available energy efficiency classes in accordance with the relevant legal acts of the Union on energy labelling, taking into account system efficiency and the energy efficiency first principle.</b></p>