The EU must provide local and regional authorities with technical and financial means to decarbonise the building stock by 2050

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The European Committee of the Regions has adopted unanimously André Viola's recommendations on the new proposal for a Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings (EPBD).

On Thursday, the European assembly of local and regional representatives adopted a series of recommendations on the new proposal for a European directive on the energy performance of buildings. The rapporteur for the opinion is André Viola, Aude Departmental Council's representative to Europe. The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive is a cornerstone of the Fit for 55 package, which aims to reduce EU greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030.

Buildings account for 40% of final energy consumption in the Union and 36% of its energy-related greenhouse gas emissions. The ultimate objective of the new directive is to decarbonise Europe's building stock by 2050.

When presenting the opinion, rapporteur André Viola (FR/PES), Aude Departmental Council's representative to Europe and president of the French Delegation to the European Committee of the Regions, stressed: "let's rethink all energy systems, in order to become more resilient and to tackle energy insecurity, while achieving our climate targets by 2050. Let's be ambitious about decarbonising the EU building stock! We need to put in place a renovation plan that will stand the test of time and is financially viable for all citizens and local and regional authorities. The revision of the directive should focus on the whole life cycle of buildings and integrate all stages of the circular economy. It should be noted that the partnership agreement, which

provides EUR 18.4 billion in European funding for France by 2027, makes the thermal renovation of buildings and housing, together with support for the households concerned, a strategic priority. The resources are there, there is no time to lose with renovating!"

The Committee stresses the need to involve local and regional authorities in the policy-making process related to the building renovation wave in order to ensure that the transition takes place at all levels. Similarly, the European assembly of local and regional representatives points out that the objectives of the renovation wave cannot be achieved without specifically allocating significant resources to local and regional authorities, in terms of financial envelopes, capacity-building and technical capacity-building.

The opinion adopted by the Committee calls for the new directive on the performance of buildings to be applied not only to new buildings but also to renovations. The rapporteur advocates avoiding gradual, unambitious renovations that are likely to lead to carbon dependence, and promoting zero-emission renovations including by minimising demand for energy and materials.

In order to increase synergies between improving the energy performance of buildings and reducing pollutants, the Committee advocates an approach that minimises the demand for materials and promotes the circular economy by including policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions throughout the life cycle of buildings in national renovation plans.

The European assembly of representatives of local and regional authorities notes that there is also a need to promote buildings with a positive impact on the climate, which in turn should offset the additional emissions of less efficient buildings.

The opinion adopted by the Committee supported Mr Viola's proposal to bring forward the elimination of fossil fuels for heating and cooling to 2025, instead of 2027 as proposed by the European Commission. The Committee calls for national policies and measures to be drawn up in close cooperation with local and regional authorities. However, even the slightest rise in costs for tenants must be avoided when renovating buildings, in particular for citizens who are already suffering from energy poverty and are most vulnerable to the persistent rise in energy prices.

In this regard, the Committee points out that the large-scale renovation of buildings offers an opportunity to combat energy poverty and to transform the buildings of vulnerable households and businesses into positive-energy buildings. It stresses the danger and the importance of ensuring that renovation wave does not exacerbate the problems associated with this issue throughout the European Union. The Committee's opinion therefore calls on the Commission to put in place a comprehensive strategy to eradicate energy poverty in the EU.

As regards renovation passports, the opinion adopted by the Committee proposes that they be made available to local and regional authorities, not to building owners as proposed by the Commission.

The rapporteur also calls on the Commission and Member States to provide guidance on improving the energy efficiency of historic buildings and create dedicated funding schemes for this purpose.

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