



To:
Mr. Maroš Šefčovič,
Vice-President of the European Commission
B-1049 Brussels

Brussels, 17 June 2016

RE: Need for increased engagement with the Western Balkans on their pathway to low-carbon transformation and healthy energy future

Dear Vice-President Šefčovič,

In the run up to the Energy Community Civil Society Day on June 21, the Permanent High Level Group meeting on June 22 as well as the Western Balkans 6 Summit in Paris on 4 July, Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe are contacting you to ensure that the European Commission sends strong messages to the region about the urgent need to move towards low-carbon transformation, which will bring many benefits, including to people's health not only in the region but the whole of Europe.

Unfortunately, we see little being done by the Western Balkan countries to comply with the existing obligations under the Energy Community Treaty, such as meeting renewables and energy efficiency targets. Furthermore, it is worrisome that several governments have emphasised they have no alternative to coal for power generation during the last gathering in May of representatives of Western Balkan Governments and Ministries of Energy.

In March 2016, HEAL published a new assessment that showed that existing coal power plants in the Western Balkans cause up to 8.5 billion EUR in health costs annually (due to air pollution), not only to the people in the region but also all across the EU Member States. It was disappointing to see that particularly the Serbian government questioned the evidence-base of the report, instead of initiating an open and comprehensive debate of the true costs of coal power and other fossil fuel generation. We consider this another example of the unwillingness of policy-makers in the region to prioritise low-carbon transformation.



As the countries move forward with the implementation of the Energy Community legislation, the Paris Agreement and continue the EU accession talk, we consider your role and that of the EU Commission crucial to encourage and see through low-carbon transformation in the region.

We therefore invite you to highlight, in your exchange with the Western Balkan countries, that health and climate benefits of the implementation of the EU Directives and low-carbon energy strategies surpass the costs of low-carbon transformation.

As a first specific step, we hope that you, along with Commissioner Arias Cañete and colleagues from DG CLIMA, will ensure that the Energy Community gets its first climate acquis adopted this year, which will be essential to facilitate transition in the Western Balkans countries.

In view of the public interest of this matter we intend to make the letter more widely known.

We thank you for considering the issue and remain,

Anne Stauffer

Deputy Director
Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

Wendel Trio

Director
Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe