

BRUSSELS, 22 June 2022

To:

EU Energy Ministers

### **Ending the EU's fossil fuel dependency for better health**

Dear Minister,

Next week, you will be discussing EU energy developments in light of the ongoing war in Ukraine, as well as the Fit for 55 package.

The [Health and Environment Alliance \(HEAL\)](#) is the leading not for profit organisation working for better health through a healthier environment. For almost two decades, HEAL has been active to raise awareness on how climate change and a polluted environment impact people's health, especially those of vulnerable groups, and to highlight the health harm of Europe's fossil fuel energy system, for which evidence keeps growing.

Last year, HEAL was an initial signatory to a [Healthy Prescription letter](#), signed by over 600 organisations representing over 46 million health workers, together with over 3,400 individuals from 102 different countries, calling for climate action, and urging for a phase out of fossil fuels. The World Health Organization (WHO) also [recommends](#) to end fossil fuel use for energy generation.

HEAL and other NGOs recently published the first ever assessment on the hidden health costs of the EU's fossil gas power generation.

Our [data shows](#) that in 2019 alone, burning fossil gas for power (and heat) generation caused over 2,800 premature deaths from air pollution (from PM<sub>2.5</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub> and ozone) in the EU-27 and the UK. The price tag for this reliance on fossil gas is up to 8.7 billion EUR in health costs for that year, with the largest health burden falling onto Italy, Germany, the UK, France, the Netherlands and Spain.

The briefing underlines that the continued reliance on fossil gas is highly unhealthy. Given that gas power plants are located in areas of high population density, a large number of people are under threat from air pollution impacts.

The much needed way forward for better health is a zero pollution approach with the accelerated deployment of renewables, and a prioritisation of energy efficiency and energy savings.

**HEAL CALLS ON YOU TO:**

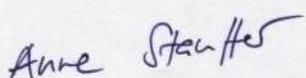
- **Commit to a timeline and an ambitious deadline for the phasing out of all fossil fuels, including fossil gas.** A continued reliance on fossil fuels undermines the EU's zero pollution commitment included in the Green Deal, and accelerates climate change, when alternatives exist.
- **Avoid false solutions in the process of becoming independent from Russian fossil fuels.** This includes investing into new fossil gas infrastructure, the promotion of wood burning or prolonged coal power use, to name a few.
- **Fast track renewables and energy savings, especially in transport and buildings.** Energy savings, both the reduction in demand and greater efficiency, could bring huge health benefits and address energy poverty.

In order to protect people's health, we need fossil-free, healthy energy systems across Europe.

We should not be distracted by short-term false solutions: it is within the EU's reach to shift away from its dependence on all fossil fuels altogether and to promote and protect health, resilience and our environment.

HEAL and its members look to your leadership, and are ready to work with you in this transformational time.

Yours sincerely,



Anne Stauffer  
Director for Strategy and Campaigns  
Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) is the leading not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects human health in the European Union (EU) and beyond. HEAL works to shape laws and policies that promote planetary and human health and protect those most affected by pollution, and raise awareness on the benefits of environmental action for health.

HEAL's over 90 member organisations include international, European, national and local groups of health professionals, not-for-profit health insurers, patients, citizens, women, youth, and environmental experts representing over 200 million people across the 53 countries of the WHO European Region.

As an alliance, HEAL brings independent and expert evidence from the health community to EU and global decision-making processes to inspire disease prevention and to promote a toxic-free, low-carbon, fair and healthy future.

HEAL's EU Transparency Register Number: 00723343929-96