

Brussels, 30/01/2024

Dear European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen,
Dear European Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič,
Dear Commissioner for Climate Action Wopke Hoekstra,

Last December, COP28 addressed fossil fuels for the first time in the history of these Conferences of the Parties (COPs) as the cause of our global climate change problem. It sets the expectation that countries demonstrate their transition away from fossil fuels via their climate plans. **We, the undersigned organisations, therefore ask the Commission to now set clear fossil fuel phase out dates for Europe as part of its forthcoming Communication on the 2040 Target.**

The European Union played an essential role in getting this language adopted. But whereas the EU has pushed for an ambitious outcome on this topic at COP28, the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change (ESABCC) warns that “the EU’s own policies are not yet fully aligned with such phase out and risk locking the EU’s energy infrastructure into emission-intensive fossil fuels”. The EU’s Green Deal puts the Union on track for a ca. 30% reduction in gas demand¹, and the EU could reduce by 16% its oil consumption between 2021 and 2030.² While both are substantive progress, neither are explicit goals or sufficiently ambitious to keep the globe on track for 1.5°C. The Advisory Board also highlights as a top priority for policymakers the need to put forward clear plans and timelines to urgently and fully phase out harmful fossil fuel subsidies across the EU.

As a minimum, the Commission’s 2040 Target Communication should very prominently include the Council conclusions of October 16th 2023, which stressed “the need for work towards agreeing 1.5°C compatible goals and targets (...) to go hand in hand with (...) the phase out of fossil fuel energy production and consumption”.³ The EU’s negotiation mandate for COP28 also stressed the need “to achieve a fully or predominantly decarbonised global power system in the 2030s”, the need for removal and capture technologies to “not be used to delay climate action in sectors where feasible, effective and cost efficient mitigation alternatives are available” and the need to “phase out as soon as possible fossil fuel subsidies”.

The translation of these timelines within the 2040 Target Communication should reflect the fact that the October Council conclusions were global recommendations, which also stressed that major economies (such as the EU) should “have significantly enhanced ambition”. **Fossil fuel phase-out timelines for Europe should thus be set significantly earlier.** Coal should be phased out no later

¹ E3G (2022). Repowering towards EU gas demand reduction. [Link](#).

² Transport & Environment (2023). New oil map: EU replaces Russian oil barrel for barrel as continent fails to cut demand. [Link](#).

³ Council of the EU (2023). Council conclusion on EU preparations for COP28. [Link](#).

than 2030, fossil gas no later than 2035 and oil at the latest by 2040⁴. It's worth stressing that these objectives are technically viable and have already been proven possible by reliable models.⁵

In this context, the Commission's communication should note that the ESABCC's analysis shows very limited amounts of coal and gas in the power sector across their modelling: less than 4% of coal by 2030 and less than 6% of fossil gas by 2040.⁶ The phase out dates above should directly be linked within the Communication to the modelling findings of the accompanying Impact Assessment. This means that the Communication needs to state what each of these phase-out commitments will inevitably need to entail in practice, with **clarity by fossil fuel type and by sector**, in line with Article 10 of the European Climate Law.⁷

We urge you to clearly state such timelines for fossil fuels and sectors within the forthcoming Communication, in order to **provide long term investment certainty** to European citizens and industries, to enable the multi-stakeholder planning needed for a **just transition** and to allow this continent to abandon fossil fuels and become evermore **energy independent and resilient**, thanks to a fully renewables-based energy system, in the coming decades.

Yours sincerely,



⁴ CAN Europe (2023). CAN Europe Manifesto for a Fossil-Free, Socially Just, and Climate-Neutral Union. [Link](#).

⁵ PAC project (2020). "Paris Agreement Compatible Scenarios for Energy Infrastructure". [Link](#).

⁶ European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change (2023). Scientific advice for the determination of an EU-wide 2040 climate target and a greenhouse gas budget for 2030–2050, p. 60. [Link](#).

⁷ European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change (2024), Towards EU climate neutrality: progress, policy gaps and opportunities, p. 61. [Link](#).