

To members of Euroheat & Power's board of directors and secretariat

Dear colleagues,

2020 is certainly a year that we will remember!

We knew, at the beginning of the year, that a new framework had been agreed to facilitate the transition away from fossil fuels towards a cleaner energy sector, and we settled in to see it implemented. There was a new EU-commission, and there was supposed to have been an interim period where it settled in and figured out what to do next. And we were preparing. Together, we, the European District Heating Sector, worked to embrace the changes and challenges that we saw coming. As a network-based industry, we know the power of connection and its responsibilities. We reaffirmed our commitment to working with policy-makers, customers and communities to decarbonise and transform our sector on a scale commensurate with our common challenge.

And then came the Covid-19 pandemic. It has killed millions, infected millions more, hit the global economy, transformed the workplace, by sending many of us to work from home, and introduced many other changes. As the year is coming to an end, we are again facing a wave of infections in most of our countries and most of us will have our traditional seasonal holidays at home - seeing just very few of the people we would normally get together with. But, as I am writing this, the first vaccines are being distributed, lighting a candle of hope that the world can soon return to normal.

But it is a "new normal" that we are facing, because Covid-19 is not our only severe challenge. The other great crisis is uncontrolled levels of greenhouse gas emissions and their increasingly dangerous consequences. Energy is at the heart of the challenge, and 40 % of energy consumption in the EU takes place in buildings – mostly for heating. The European Union is stepping up its ambitions and is using the need, to get the European economy going after the Covid-19 recession, to introduce an enormous recovery package that focuses on putting the EU on a path towards climate neutrality in 2050. Funds will be available for the transition of our homes, cities and energy networks, at a time where more and more cities in Europe are getting to grips with their heating sectors.

But it is also about using legislation to change the whole energy sector of Europe. Away from fossil fuels and into renewables and energy efficiency. And away from separate supply silos, towards an integrated energy system where the strengths of one technology can mitigate the weaknesses of others. 2021 will bring an avalanche of legislative initiatives to implement strategies for buildings, sector integration, transport and much more through new and revised directives.

We have all been working under challenging circumstances. Belgium, in particular, has been hit hard by Corona and the office has effectively been closed since early March, leaving staff members to work from home. No members visiting, no meetings, no coffees with policymakers and all that. Just Zoom, Teams and all that. That has been a challenge for all of us.

On behalf of the members, the board of directors of EHP and myself, I would like to sincerely thank Aksana, Alessandro, Crélida, Eloi, Gabriele, Giulia, Jack, Kale, Muriel, Paul, Pauline B., Pauline L. Silke and Sofia for their commitment and hard efforts during these challenging times. For all the qualities and conveniences of online meetings, we sincerely miss meeting you in person to deal with all the oddities of DHC!

I would also like to thank the members of the board of directors. We have unfortunately been prevented from meeting as much as certainly I, and surely you, would have liked, but nevertheless you have been very supportive in setting out the policy line of our work. I will also, again, thank you for electing me president of EHP at our general assembly in early summer. I have had an opportunity to speak with many of you personally, and it encourages me to know, that you all share our ambition that DHC will remain a part of the solution to transition the European energy sector. I very much look forward to getting together again – also at our traditional pre-meeting dinners – and hope we will have an opportunity in Vilnius in early May.

The Danish (district) heating sector is also in transition. A lot is happening – some things on our initiative, other things forced upon us – but generally the outlook is positive. For those of you, who may find yourselves with time on your hands over the next weeks, we have prepared a little overview of what is going on around here. It is attached here for your information.

And finally, I send all of you and yours my very best wishes for the season. I hope we all can be together with at least the ones most significant to us, and that 2021 will bring us together again – for real! – around the topics that interests us all.

Stay safe!

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