

Clear financial and policy support required

# F-Gas deal no substitute for shift from fossil fuel heating

European legislators reached a deal early October last on a faster phase-out of fluorinated gases (F-gases). While the heat pump sector has always supported a phase-out by 2050, the new rules will be a significant burden in the short-term, according to the European Heat Pump Association (EHPA). The industry is already ramping up production in line with EU goals, and now is tasked with changing most of its production lines in parallel.

The recent agreement will make heat pumps even cleaner, but will do little to speed up the move away from fossil fuels in heating and cooling. Potentially, it could even slow it down, by making it more difficult to roll out heat pumps for the various application fields such as residential, commercial and industry.

“Every heat pump replaces a fossil fuel boiler, cutting carbon emissions. If there are not enough heat pumps, consumers will choose fossil heating instead,” stated Alessia Del Vasto, Policy Officer at the European Heat Pump Association (EHPA). “To avoid a shortage of heat pumps, the EU needs to give the sector clear financial and policy support to finalise the shift to non-fluorinated refrigerants that is already underway.”

The new rules will see some F-gases still widely used by heat pumps banned from as early as 2027. While this is not impossible, it will require unambiguous support by policy makers for R&D, installer

training, and an upgrade of production facilities to safely handle the flammable refrigerants that will replace some fluorinated refrigerants. It will also require changes to rules covering how heating and cooling equipment can safely be used in buildings and industry, and awareness campaigns directed at citizens and consumers.

Barriers and solutions to a faster heat pump roll-out are presented in the EU Heat Pump Accelerator. EHPA calls for these to be taken up in the EU Heat Pump Action Plan, which must also reflect the impacts of today’s agreement on refrigerant use.

One of the most impactful measures would be correcting the distorted energy pricing that favours fossil gas. In EHPA’s view, electricity should be no more than twice the price of gas per kWh. Governments should apply the lowest possible taxation rates on electricity and put in place lower VAT and tax breaks on heat pumps.

“Heat pumps, which are the cleanest heating solution, must become the most economically attractive to activate end-user demand. Further to the recent changes, this needs to be the focus of policy to ensure a fast energy transition within this decade,” concluded Thomas Nowak, Secretary General of EHPA. ■



Alessia Del Vasto, Policy Officer, European Heat Pump Association.

