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It is time to speed up investment in energy infrastructure and in the energy performance of buildings to reduce greenhouse gas emissions responsible for global warming and ensure the security of EU energy supply for the next decade and beyond.

FIEC warmly welcomes the adoption of the Commission's Energy Strategy to 2020 and applauds its proposals to facilitate public and private investment of around €1 trillion in grid infrastructure, clean energy technologies, and storage capacity.

De-carbonising the supply of energy is crucial if Europe is to meet the challenge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050. FIEC recalls that fossil fuels still make up around 55% of electricity generation in the European Union. Therefore in order to achieve the aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, huge investment will be needed in upgrading Europe's grid infrastructure and in ensuring the development of electricity storage technologies to cater for the increasing generation of power from renewable energy sources. If Europe's global leadership and competitiveness is to be maintained in energy industries, the EU should also ensure that a favourable legal environment and fast-track procedures will allow for the rapid development of interconnections, smart grids, and clean energy technologies.

FIEC also recalls that no energy strategy can leave aside the issue of the management of energy demand in the built environment. Households are responsible for around 40% of final energy consumption in the EU and it has been estimated that buildings account for up to a third of greenhouse gas emissions. A clear vision is needed from the European Union and the Member States on how to grasp the challenge of increasing the energy efficiency of existing buildings, especially in the new Member States. Over 50% of all buildings standing today in the EU were built before thermal efficiency requirements became widespread. The challenge is to transform these great wasters of energy into energy savers, helping Europe to meet its targets of a 20% rise in energy efficiency by 2020 and a 20% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions while helping to lift many out of fuel poverty.

Raising sufficient finance remains a huge barrier to the uptake of energy efficiency measures and in this context FIEC welcomes the fact that the "split incentive" problem between owners and tenants will be addressed in upcoming proposals from the Commission. Furthermore, optimising public facilities such as street lightening, transport, or district heating will also contribute to energy savings.

FIEC is the European Construction Industry Federation, representing via its 34 national Member Federations in 29 countries (27 EU & EFTA, Croatia and Turkey) construction enterprises of all sizes, i.e. small and medium-sized enterprises as well as "global players", carrying out all forms of building and civil engineering activities.

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