REHVA Brussels Summit 2026 – HVAC pathway to energy security

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European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), Brussels

Concept Note

Overview

The 2026 edition of the REHVA Brussels Summit takes place at a defining moment for EU buildings and energy policy. With the EPBD transposition deadline having passed on 29 May 2026 for substantially all of its provisions, and Member States finalising their National Building Renovation Plans by the end of the year, attention now turns from legislative design to delivery and measurable results. At the same time, the European Commission's Heating and Cooling Strategy—developed under the Action Plan for Affordable Energy—places the decarbonisation of heating and cooling, around half of the EU's energy demand and still 70% fossil-fuel based, at the centre of the Union's energy security, affordability, and competitiveness agenda.

The Policy Conference is structured around three complementary sessions that move deliberately from the technical, to the political, to the practical—each also reflecting a distinct vantage point. Session I adopts a bottom-up technical perspective: now that the EPBD transposition deadline has passed, it draws on Member State reporting to assess how transposition is actually unfolding on the ground. Session II takes a top-down policy perspective, examining the EU Heating and Cooling Strategy and the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED)—a Union-level framework tempered, in practice, by the local heating and cooling plans through which it is delivered. Session III, sponsored by the Horizon Europe project InCUBE, grounds the day in reality, showcasing first-hand experiences from industrialised renovation projects delivered in Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain.

REHVA is thrilled to renew its partnership with the European Economic and Social Committee. The EESC's role in connecting organised civil society with the EU institutions fits well with REHVA's own endeavours and objectives, making it an ideal setting for inclusive, evidence-based dialogue at a moment when the credibility of Europe's buildings agenda depends on effective implementation on the ground.

Session I – The technical side: EPBD implementation – Member State reporting and discussion

This opening session provides a technically grounded, bottom-up assessment of where Europe stands on EPBD implementation, after the 29 May 2026 transposition deadline and as Member States move towards finalising their National Building Renovation Plans by the end of the year. The revised directive introduces demanding instruments—zero-emission building (ZEB) requirements, minimum energy

performance standards for the worst-performing buildings, IEQ provisions, solar-readiness obligations, and renovation passports—whose effectiveness depends entirely on the quality and consistency of national transposition.

Following an institutional keynote offering the European Commission and European Parliament perspective on the state of play and enforcement priorities, the core of the session is dedicated to REHVA's EPBD implementation reporting results from Member States. Drawing on REHVA's network of national member associations, this comparative exercise maps how key provisions are being translated into national codes and methodologies, identifies divergences and gaps, and highlights good practices that can guide late-moving Member States. An extended Q&A allows national experts, industry, and policymakers to scrutinise the findings and share their own implementation experiences.

Session II – The policy side: the EED and the EU Heating and Cooling Strategy

Where Session I looks at the engineering of implementation from the bottom up, Session II turns to the policy architecture shaping the next phase of the transition. Heating and cooling represent roughly half of the EU's final energy consumption, the majority still supplied by imported fossil fuels. Reducing this dependency is no longer solely a climate imperative: it is a matter of energy security, affordability, and industrial competitiveness—the central themes of this year's Summit.

The session examines the European Commission's new Heating and Cooling Strategy, developed under the Action Plan for Affordable Energy and the Clean Industrial Deal, alongside the Energy Efficiency Directive. This is a deliberately top-down view—Union-level objectives and instruments—tempered by the local heating and cooling plans through which the EED is implemented in practice. A Commission keynote will set out the strategy's objectives, from accelerating clean and efficient heating and cooling to integrated infrastructure planning, district energy, and waste heat recovery; a second keynote will present REHVA's vision and the HVAC sector's perspective. The panel will debate how the strategy can translate into concrete market signals—restoring momentum in the heat pump market, mobilising the installer workforce, addressing the electricity-to-gas price ratio, and ensuring that efficiency delivers lower bills as well as lower emissions.

Session III – From Policy to Practice: Real Experiences from Delivering Renovation Projects Across Europe

Following the technical and policy discussions of Sessions I and II, Session III shifts the focus to practical implementation. Sponsored by InCUBE—a Horizon Europe project bringing together 23 partners from seven European countries to unlock the EU Renovation Wave through industrialisation, digitalisation, new technologies, and new market entrants—this session showcases real-life industrialised renovation projects carried out on two buildings and one district in Spain, the Netherlands, and Italy.

Through three case studies, the session explores the challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned in translating EU policies—including the EPBD and the EED—into renovation actions on the ground. The Trento case illustrates the decarbonisation of a district energy supply through ground-source heat pumps and renewable energy community models; the Groningen case demonstrates how industrialised, streamlined renovation—including prefabrication, robotics, and automation—can compress timelines and costs; and the Zaragoza case presents participatory renovation of an occupied residential building, delivered with owners at home and strong attention to social inclusion and affordability. By closing the Summit with evidence from the field, the session tests the day's conclusions against the realities of delivery and identifies what it will take to replicate these experiences at the scale Europe's targets demand.