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“As much as car accidents in Western Europe”: new study links 6,000 annual deaths in Eastern Europe to heating and cooking systems

Combustion heating and cooking causes as many carbon monoxide deaths in Eastern Europe [1] as car accidents in Western Europe, according to [a new Coolproducts research from the European Environmental Bureau](#) [2]. Fossil fuel based systems also lead to 900-1,800 fire-related injuries annually. The findings highlight the urgent public health and safety risks of fossil fuel and biomass heating in European homes, emphasising the need for the EU to develop a comprehensive exit plan from combustion technologies.

The new EEB report highlights that combustion-based heating and cooking technologies pose significant risks compared to its electric counterparts, including equipment failures, carbon monoxide poisoning, and fire accidents. Currently, [83% of European homes still rely on fossil fuels and biomass](#) [3] heating and cooking technologies. The result is not only volatile energy bills but also a substantial contribution to the bloc's greenhouse gas emissions and an alarming rate of preventable injuries and fatalities.

The authors estimate that numbers could be potentially higher, since the figures can only be based only on selected countries with reliable data. Additionally, injuries data are guaranteed to be underreported as many don't go to the hospitals. The actual figures for accidents and injuries are likely much higher.

Yet, in 2022, [€3.2 billion of taxpayers' money](#) [4] was still allocated to fossil heating subsidies by national governments, despite clear evidence linking these technologies to Europe's social, energy, and environmental crises. According to the findings of this report, that money will finance future fatalities.

While pan-European data is still limited, the investigation of national data from 8 Member States [4] showed a clear trend in public health and safety concerns:

- In **Eastern Europe**, the fatality rate from carbon monoxide poisoning is notably higher than in the rest of the EU, with 5,000-6,000 deaths recorded only in 2021.
- In **Europe**, approximately 900 to 1,800 injuries annually can be attributed to fossil fuel heating and cooking technologies.
- In **Poland**, 27.6% of accidental domestic fires are due to fossil fuel heating. In 2023, firefighters recorded 4,350 interventions, in which 53 people were fatally poisoned by carbon monoxide and 1,468 were poisoned.
- In **Romania**, in 2022, there were 305 adult fatalities, 10 child fatalities, 702 adult injuries, and 40 child injuries related to fires linked with combustion technologies.
- Between 2018-2023, **Sweden** recorded at least 6,572 building fires and fire incidents begun by combustion heating and cooking technologies

- In **Italy**, between 2014 and 2019, there were a total of 1,743 injuries recorded from ducted gas, 97% of which came from end customer usage.

Davide Sabbadin, Deputy Policy Manager for Climate and Energy at the EEB said:

"It is unthinkable that public money continues to support combustion technologies posing significant public health risks within people's own homes. Investing money in clean, renewable, and cheaper alternatives like solar and heat pumps is no longer a good-to-have, but a moral imperative for policymakers."

The Coolproducts report emphasises the necessity of prioritising funding to accelerate the shift towards electric heating and cooking solutions, particularly for Central and Eastern Europe to leverage the Social Climate Fund to support mid to low income households who might struggle with upfront costs. Heating and cooking should not endanger families. Electric and solar technologies are more than ready for policymakers to commit to creating safer, cheaper, and cleaner homes across Europe.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

[1] [Definition and regions of Eastern, Central and Western Europe applied in the extracted dataset](#)

[2] [Embargoed link to study](#)

[3] [European heating energy consumption by energy source](#)

[4] [Coolproducts study Green Heat for All](#)

[5] The following Member States are the main focus of the investigation due to availability of multi-year data: Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Poland, Romania, Sweden. Snapshot data are also available for Portugal, Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Greece, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Cyprus

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