

PRESS RELEASE

20 July 2022, Brussels – The European Commission published today the Communication ‘Save gas for a safe winter’, which includes ‘Guidelines on a European Gas Demand Reduction Plan’. The Ceramic Industry stresses the high impact on European jobs and value chains in case of interruptions in gas supplies to ceramic installations.

In light of its dependency on natural gas, the ceramic industry - which is already affected by the current energy crisis – is deeply concerned by potential shortages and curtailing in natural gas implied in the Communication.

Natural gas constitutes 80 % of the European ceramic industry’s energy mix and there are no feasible solutions for its substitution in the short term. Furthermore, ceramic processes are mostly based on continuous firing, implying that any shut-off of the kiln has to be avoided as much as possible.

With over 200.000 direct employees working in ceramics throughout virtually all EU member states, the resulting social and economic impact of halting ceramic activity would not only be felt in the numerous regions where tens of thousands of jobs directly depend on the ceramic industry and its suppliers (eg. raw material and machinery producers) but also in areas where its very diverse value chains are established.

In this context, **Cerame-Unie welcomes the reference to continuous processes (“Potential damage to installations”) and “downstream effects of upstream gas reduction and value chain integration” among the prioritisation criteria for gas demand reduction.** We believe however that the societal criticality criterion should also reflect the risks associated with “carbon leakage” listed sectors. Due to their high exposure to international competition, these sectors would risk losing irreversibly significant market shares to international competitors in the case of cut-off of gas supplies.

With regards to **supply chain criticality, ceramics are essential for multiple strategic value chains.** This is the case for products across all ceramic sectors. Ceramic refractories are indispensable to produce steel, aluminium, cement, glass, chemicals and petro-chemicals and to any other high temperature manufacturing activity, while technical ceramics have very broad applications from medical to defence and aerospace, and including batteries, chips or the production of hydrogen. Ceramics are also used as an essential material in the construction sector, as is the case for bricks and roof tiles, wall and floor tiles, sanitary-ware, which are key for affordable and energy efficient housing.

Cerame-Unie also welcomes the acknowledgment in the Gas Demand Reduction Plan that fuel switching may in some cases increase emissions and would require derogations from limits regulated under the Industrial Emissions Directive. In that respect, it must be stressed that such derogations should be possible for all industrial sectors and types of installations (small and large).

As stated by Alain Delcourt, Cerame-Unie President, *“the ceramic industry is deeply worried by the prospect of potential gas supply disruptions. While implementing the gas reduction plan, the wide range and strategic importance of our value chains and the high number of employees involved in the ceramic industry should not be underestimated”.*

The European ceramic industry covers a wide range of products including abrasives, bricks & roof tiles, clay pipes, wall & floor tiles, refractories, sanitaryware, table- & ornamentalware, technical ceramics, expanded clay and flower pots. The industry generates over 200,000 direct jobs and a production value of €31 billion in the EU.

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