

Joint statement on the review of the General Block Exemption Regulation

In light of the ongoing review of the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER), Glass Alliance Europe urges the European Commission to ensure that the GBER's regulatory framework concerning aid for environmental protection (Section 6) covering 2027-2034 acknowledges the current technological realities of the glass industry by **avoiding a blanket exclusion of block-exempted aid for hybrid furnaces based on the residual use of fossil fuels**.

At a time when the EU glass industry is investing heavily in decarbonisation while facing energy costs that significantly undermine its global competitiveness, support from EU instruments should not be reduced but rather reinforced. This would ensure that the EU glass industry can benefit from the same level of support available to other sectors.

While the latest GBER draft represents an improvement by no longer requiring installations to outperform the top 10% of EU ETS installations under Article 51, **Articles 51(3b), 52(3b), and 55(4e) would, in practice, render ineligible investments in sectors where fully electric or fully hydrogen-fired furnaces are not yet technically or commercially available, including the glass industry**¹. These provisions exclude *"aid for investments in assets using fossil fuels including natural gas and including assets where fossil fuels are used in combination with other energy sources"*. They should therefore be removed from the final Regulation to enable Member States to support the glass industry's decarbonisation efforts under the revised GBER.

This exclusion prevents block-exempted aid for so-called, "hybrid furnaces", which combine natural gas with alternative energy sources, such as electricity, biogas, or hydrogen, where these alternatives provide a substantial share of the energy required for the melting process. Given their technological maturity and significant decarbonisation potential, hybrid furnaces currently present one of the most promising pathways for the glass industry². Hybrid furnaces could achieve the 40% emission reduction at sub-installation level required under Article 51(9ai) when replacing natural gas. For example, in the container glass sector, partial electrification of a natural gas-fired furnace is estimated to reduce emissions by up to 60%. Even partial substitution of natural gas with electricity lowers emissions by reducing combustion of fossil fuels while improving energy efficiency, as electricity is a significantly more efficient energy carrier.

¹ JRC, Mapping the transition of the EU glass manufacturing industry to carbon neutrality, 2026.

² JRC, Mapping the transition of the EU glass manufacturing industry to carbon neutrality, 2026.

Moreover, this proposed would **ensure greater consistency in the treatment of the glass sector across EU legislation and the eligibility criteria governing access to EU and national funding instruments.**

This approach is consistent with the European Commission's treatment of the glass sector under EU funding instruments. The eligibility criteria of the 2025 and 2026 Innovation Fund Heat Auctions³ Explicitly recognise the challenge associated with the electrification in the glass industry. Accordingly, glass furnaces are exempt from the requirement that supported projects must not install new fossil fuel-fired capacity, *"as technical/safety barriers to full electrification exist."*

With these targeted refinements, the GBER can effectively deliver the investment framework required by the glass sector. A more nuanced approach would enable Member States to support credible and progressive decarbonisation pathways, mitigate carbon leakage risks, and promote investments that already contribute to substantial reductions in emissions and energy consumption.

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Glass Alliance Europe represents the European glass industry, regrouping 14 national glass associations and 6 main glass sectors. Aware of the great added-value of their products, the European glass industries come together in Glass Alliance Europe to highlight the importance of glass-making across Europe and to promote an economic and policy environment allowing European-based glass manufacturing industries to continue flourishing and providing Europe with an innovative, stylish and sustainable material that is present in every aspect of our daily lives.

The glass industry produces about 40 million tonnes of glass annually. It represents 500 glass plants in the EU and provides 500,000 jobs across the value chain.

³Innovation Fund IF25 Heat Auction Terms and Conditions, DG CLIMA Unit C.2, 10 October, 2025: https://climate.ec.europa.eu/document/download/b55d8315-2eef-4618-aa4c-75f72abb4e95_en?filename=news_20251010_tc_heat_auction_en.pdf, Innovation Fund IF26 Heat Auction Terms and Conditions, DG CLIMA Unit C.2, 22 May 2026: https://climate.ec.europa.eu/document/download/b1fd1068-9b26-4c3d-8275-228886d5c13c_en?filename=if_heat_auction_tnc_en.pdf