



Open Letter to: President and Members of the European Council Concerning “the EU-2020 Strategy”

CC to: President Barroso and President Buzek

Brussels, 26th January 2010

Dear Mr VAN ROMPUY

On the 11th February you will have a first discussion about the EU post-Lisbon Strategy. On behalf of the largest environmental organization in Europe, we would like to present you our key ideas for this strategy, which is to determine the direction the EU economy and society will take the next decade.

In essence, we call upon you to support a strategy aiming at an energy and resource efficient and low carbon economy and society, effectively protecting its eco-systems, leading to a reduction of the EU's ecological footprint by 50% within 20 years, while improving social cohesion, transparency of decision making at all levels, and sustainable employment.

Preparing a low-carbon economy is necessary not only to limit climate change but also to prepare for increasing energy prices and approaching oil-scarcity (i.e. peak oil). Thereby, investing in energy savings has the triple advantage of creating (domestic) jobs, lowering energy bills and reducing pollution and climate change.

Beyond energy use, the EU-2020 Strategy should also prioritize resource efficiency in a broad sense. Both the environmental and social problems that result from the current over-exploitation of resources, as well as rising resource prices, are urgent reasons to address resource efficiency. Generally speaking, the EU and the world suffer from an increasing imbalance between the quantity of resources we use and the quantity of resources nature can re-create for us. This is represented in a general manner in the concept of the ecologic footprint, which leads to the conclusion that the current level of resource use of the EU society applied at a global scale requires more than 2,5 planets. Besides using less of resources, we also need to effectively protect our natural resource base, our eco-systems, as underlined by the recognition of 2010 as the international year of biodiversity. This year, we are also forced to recognize the failure to meet the EU objective to stop the decline of biodiversity, which even more underlines the need for a strong commitment to stop further erosion of biodiversity and to restore disturbed eco-systems.

The EU-2020 Strategy will certainly be focusing on competitiveness, jobs and innovation. The overall objective for this strategy, as we propose above, requires (targeted) innovation and will create jobs and also – if the EU acts quickly and ambitious enough – contribute to increased competitiveness, as all nations of the world are facing the same challenges with respect to energy and resource use.

A successful EU-2020 Strategy requires strong political leadership, leading to a roadmap with clear targets, actions and time frames to move the economy in an eco-efficient direction. It should include legislation and standards where necessary, research and development initiatives, as well as product and production standard setting. However, a major strategy is to fully mobilize the market potential for a sustainable economy. This can partly be done with an ambitious policy for greening public procurement, but much larger positive effects would come from reducing labour costs while internalising the real – external – costs of products and services into the prices for consumers and business. This can be achieved with environmental taxation reforms. Given the single market it is strongly advised to coordinate such reforms in the framework of the Strategy.

Together with trade unions and social and development organizations in civil society, we have agreed on the Spring Alliance Manifesto, a set of strategies and concrete measures to be taken by the EU in order to concentrate on “people and planet” in the next decade¹.

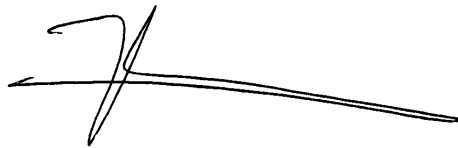
In conclusion we sincerely hope that the European Council takes its forthcoming meeting as an opportunity to guide the overall EU strategy for this decade, into fostering a sustainable development that puts people and the planet at the centre of all EU activities.

We wish you the best of luck in this endeavour!

Yours sincerely,

Mikael Karlsson,
President
European Environmental Bureau

John Hontelez
Secretary General
European Environmental Bureau



¹ Please see further at www.springalliance.eu/manifesto (in six languages). EEB’s contribution to the consultation by the European Commission on the EU-2020 Strategy, with more detailed recommendations, can be found at www.eeb.org/activities/sustainable_development/documents/Consultation-EU-2020-response-eeb-final-version.pdf.