



## **Concerning: Informal Competitiveness Ministers Council in Umeå, 14-16 October 2009**

Brussels, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009

Dear Minister,

At the upcoming Competitiveness Informal Meeting you are going to discuss the concept of an eco-efficient economy and necessary steps to get there. The European Environmental Bureau, the largest environmental citizens' organisation in Europe, welcomes the decision of the Swedish Presidency to launch this debate, in not less than four Council formations, leading to, hopefully ambitious and clear, conclusions by the European Council in December.

In July, the Energy and Environment Informal Councils have already laid important groundwork for conclusions on that potentially could drive the EU in the right direction, in particular through a new Lisbon Strategy that focuses on the multi-dimensions of sustainable development and a exemplary role of the EU in leading the world towards prosperous and low resource and energy input societies, living within the carrying capacity of the planet.

The Council has a unique opportunity to develop and take forward past initiatives on eco-efficiency at a time when "greening" the economy is higher on political agendas than it has ever been before. This is true for politicians and business, but also for the public at large. A recent survey of the Euro-barometer also shows a large support among citizens for the use of, for example, fiscal instruments to promote eco-efficiency<sup>1</sup>. To make real steps forward, the EEB would therefore like to see the Competitiveness Council to support conclusions, demands and recommendations that clearly identify the objective, the actors, the timing and the instruments concerning eco-efficiency. Concrete conclusions are needed to counter the risk that the eco-efficiency agenda remain a debate without a lasting impact in practice, as we have seen with initiatives of some previous Presidencies.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/pdf/FL256\\_summary.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/pdf/FL256_summary.pdf)

You will find attached a document with the proposals the EEB has made for the informal councils, which I hope you will be able to support. In this letter I would like to emphasize in particular the need to move the slogan of "getting prices right" from theory to practice. We ask you to call upon the Commission to include in the new Lisbon Strategy clear guidelines for fiscal reform with the main purpose to reduce labour taxes while introducing or increasing taxation on resource and energy use and other environmental impacts. We urge you to take the next step on this topic and call for a concrete initiative now, to be integrated into the Lisbon Strategy. A broad coalition of environmental, social and development organisations, together with the European Trade Unions, working together in the Spring Alliance is proposing a clear target: *"By 2020 a shift of at least 10% of the national tax incomes away from labour to environmental pressures, resource use and capital, coordinated throughout the EU by applying the Open Method of Coordination combined with Enhanced Cooperation, with a strong mandate for the Commission to monitor, advise, review progress at the national level on an annual basis."* [See explanation in attached documents]. <http://www.springalliance.eu/images/manfinal.pdf>

Dear Minister, The EEB considers that the Presidency has made a good start with the eco-efficiency debate in the EU. We call upon you to continue on this basis and leave a real impact behind on the new Lisbon Strategy and other relevant EU policies. As EEB we would be happy to discuss our points further.

Yours sincerely,



John Hontelez  
Secretary General  
European Environmental Bureau