



## PRESS RELEASE

European Environmental Bureau

### Member States send Commission back to drawing board on the European Ecolabel

**[Brussels, 24 April 2008]** – The European Environmental Bureau, Europe’s largest federation of environmental citizens groups, applauds national governments’ rejection of Commission proposals that would have weakened the European Ecolabel<sup>[1]</sup> in a number of areas. Now serious damage to the credibility of this voluntary product label, which has the stated goal of being an indicator of ‘environmental excellence,’ has been avoided.

Blanca Morales, EEB Ecolabel Coordinator, said, “We are delighted that Member States took a unified stand against the Commission’s failure to ensure transparent decision-making, sending them a crystal clear message to maintain the Ecolabel as a benchmark for environmental performance.”

A clear majority of Member States rejected Commission proposals – for example, to allow PVCs, GMOs and other problematic substances in Ecolabelled products - which would have hampered the ambition and ability of the Ecolabel to go beyond existing legislation.<sup>[2]</sup> The Board also criticised the lack of transparency in the Commission’s internal decision-making process, which ultimately led to the proposals’ failure to reflect Member State and stakeholder opinions. As a result, the Commission must now go back to the drawing board and propose new Ecolabel criteria for bed mattresses, textiles and wooden furniture.

Today Member States managed to vote for new Ecolabel criteria for paints and varnishes. EEB is satisfied that the improved proposal will result in more stringent requirements for some problematic substances such as phthalates and halogenated organic solvents.

#### **For further information please contact:-**

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#### **Notes:-**

[1] The European Ecolabel is a voluntary programme that awards a special Ecolabel to high environmental performance products and services. The five products the Commission proposed for a vote at the Regulatory Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> of April were wooden furniture, textiles, bed mattresses, and indoor and outdoor paints.

[2] The Commission’s proposal would have allowed flame retardants - including decaBDE - and biocides in Ecolabelled textiles and mattresses; PVC in wooden furniture; and GMOs in wooden furniture, something that Member States had already agreed to exclude but the Commission proposed again. The criterion on decaBDE was of particular concern to EEB, as it would have led to a situation where a hazardous substance was phased out in televisions through the Directive on Restriction of Hazardous Substances, while at the same time being allowed in an Ecolabelled textile or mattress.

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