Call for the Commission to produce a roadmap on the reform of Environmentally Harmful Subsidies

Dear Mr. Potočnik,

We would like to thank you again for sending your video message for the participants of the Green Budget Europe Annual Conference in Budapest. We were impressed by your commitment to the elimination of environmentally harmful subsidies (EHS). The outcome of the internal discussions in the Commission on coal-subsidies in the EU, a few days later, in which we understand you played a key role, underlines this commitment. We would like to thank you very much for restricting the duration of eligible coal subsidies more than was initially foreseen and we encourage you strongly to stand by this commitment to end coal subsidies by 2014 in the face of current attempts to extend the deadline to 2018.

From the presentation at our conference by Dr. Jerzy Pieńkowski, on behalf of the Commission, we have learnt with satisfaction that a methodology is already available within the Commission for the identification of EHS. At the same time we were very dismayed to hear that due to reasons outside of the scope of DG Environment, the preparation of a roadmap for the phasing out of EHS has been indefinitely postponed, particularly as it is already long overdue.

We believe that the identification of EHS in the EU budget can be started immediately, as this does not require (at least in the first phase) the involvement of the Member States. Once these EHS are identified and publicized, steps can be taken to start their elimination.

We understand the serious difficulties of having the Member States identify and remove EHS in their own countries. Nevertheless, we believe that the Commission has the possibility (referring to a number of documents with call for EHS reform, i.a. the Europe 2020 Strategy, the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and the 6th Environmental Action Plan) of reforming EHS in its own budget, and also of asking the Member States to provide national information about the identification of EHS (using the methodology provided by the Commission) and about national plans to remove these EHS.

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We therefore call upon you to promote the finalization of the work on the roadmap on environmentally harmful subsidies, which the European Council already expected in 2008 (according to EU sustainable development strategy) and its publication without further delay.

It is not acceptable that the Commission is consistently failing to deliver on this important topic, not least since the EU budget for 2014-2020 is now being prepared. The roadmap could play an important part in greening the EU budget and help to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It is a matter of urgency to reform the many environmentally harmful subsidies which counteract central objectives of the EU, such as increasing competitiveness, environmental protection and social cohesion.

Yours sincerely,

John Hontelez
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