

Green groups: European Commission off target

Brussels, 10 June 2009 – The environmental record of the outgoing European Commission is worryingly off target, the 'Green 10' coalition of leading environmental organisations said today in Brussels. Environmental groups published an assessment of the Barroso Commission, giving it an overall mark of 4.4/10.

In all, the 'Green 10' report examines successes and failures in 12 policy areas that impact the environment, and sets out a checklist for the next Commission.[1] The Green 10 blamed the low score on, among other things, a failure to reform agriculture and fisheries policies, and, more broadly, to propose sustainable economic policies. But there were some positive notes, notably in climate, energy and transport policy.

At a time when Europe is gripped by economic and environmental crises, the environmental groups call on the next Commission to double its efforts over the next five years and put in place policies that benefit the environment and people's health, and create sustainable economic growth and jobs.

On taking office in 2004, the Barroso Commission got off to a bad start by judging environmental objectives to be inconsistent with the overriding jobs and competitiveness agenda, the report says. But spurred by growing public and media interest in environmental issues in the second half of its term, the Commission belatedly began to strengthen legislation in the fields of climate, energy and transport, thus earning scores of 7/10, 6/10 and 6/10 respectively. The Green 10 report, however, warns that these policies – in particular the EU's 'climate and energy package' – have not delivered the results predicted in the original Commission proposals after being weakened by EU governments. Much more will need to be achieved by the incoming European Commission, say the groups.

The report also finds that the Commission has neglected the protection of nature and disregarded its importance for long-term economic sustainability and the fight against climate change. The report is critical of the Commission for too often giving in to vested interests when legislating on issues affecting agriculture and marine life. In particular, the so called 'CAP Health Check' was a missed opportunity to truly reform the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, the groups say. The Commission only scores 4/10 on agriculture.

Failure to adequately finance 'Natura 2000' sites, a network of sensitive protected areas, a poor initial proposal for the new 'Marine directive' that failed to address the pressures on the marine environment, and continued support for genetically modified organisms all contributed to another low score of 4/10 on biodiversity policy.

Although polls consistently show that citizens are concerned about the impact that the environment plays on their health, the Commission has only achieved a mark of 5/10 for its health-related policies. The positive outcome of a global mercury ban and proposals to reduce air pollution have been contrasted by internal disagreements over legislation to ban dangerous chemicals.

To download the Green 10 report, go to:

<http://green10.typepad.com/docs/G10assessment2004-9.pdf>

Notes to editors:

[1] Please refer to the end of this press release for a summary of the marks in each policy area.

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The Green 10 are ten of the largest environmental organisations working at EU level. They coordinate joint responses and recommendations to EU decision-makers, to ensure that the environment is placed at the heart of policymaking. Membership of the Green 10 is more than 20 million people. www.green10.org

REPORT ON: European Commission 2004-2009	
COMPILED BY: Green 10	
ISSUE	FINAL GRADE (2009)
1. Agriculture	4/10
2. Biodiversity & Ecosystems	4/10
3. Budget & Cohesion Policy	4/10
4. Climate	7/10
5. Energy	6/10
6. EU Law Enforcement	5/10
7. External Dimension & Trade	4/10
8. Health	5/10
9. Natural Resources	3/10
10. Sustainable Development Strategy	2/10
11. Transparency	3/10
12. Transport	6/10
OVERALL GRADE:	
4.4/10	