

M. Juncker, President of the European Commission,

M. Timmermans, First Vice-President of the European Commission, in charge of Better Regulation, Interinstitutional Relations, the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights,

M. Šefčovič, Vice-President of the European Commission for the Energy Union,

M. Katainen, Vice-President of the European Commission for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness,

M. Cañete, Commissioner for EU Climate Action and Energy,

M. Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries,

Ms. Bieńkowska, Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs,

December 1st, 2014.

Dear President, dear Vice-President, dear Commissioner,

The Commission is currently defining its priorities for the years to come and preparing its Work Programme 2015. In this context, we wish to emphasize that, as already agreed in the 7th Environmental Action Programme in 2013, a progressive clean air policy and an efficient circular economy are of fundamental importance in achieving two of the **7th Environmental Action Programme**'s main objectives, namely "*to turn the Union into a resource-efficient, green and competitive low-carbon economy*" and "*to safeguard the Union's citizens from environment-related pressures and risks to health and well-being*".

With this letter, we would like to reaffirm our **strong support to the Resource efficiency and Circular economy package** that was published in July 2014, as well as to the **Clean air policy package** that was adopted in December 2013 by the European Commission. The Council and the Parliament have already started negotiating both proposals.

The benefits of the two packages far outreach the environmental sphere as both packages are also important elements for implementing the **Europe 2020 Strategy**, the European Union's ten-year growth and jobs strategy aiming at creating the conditions for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. One of its Flagship Initiatives, 'Resource-efficient Europe' supports the shift towards an economy that is efficient in the way it uses all resources, reduces greenhouse gases emissions and air pollutant emissions, enhances competitiveness through efficiency and innovation and promotes greater energy and resource security.

In this context, we call on the European Commission to analyze very carefully the opportunities offered by the **Circular economy package**, not only as the only way towards sustainable growth but also as an adequate means to fulfil the European Union's "jobs and growth agenda" and in its social dimensions.

On October 28th, the Environmental Council unanimously recalled that the *"transition towards a circular and low-carbon and climate resilient economy and sustainable consumption and production patterns, will create global business opportunities that will benefit competitiveness and employment in the Union"*. [...] *"Therefore for our future competitiveness and long-term sustainable and inclusive growth, a transition towards a resource efficient circular economy - where natural resources are extracted and used in a more efficient and sustainable way, where the loss of valuable material is prevented, less energy is consumed, less waste is generated and more generated waste is re-injected in the economy through preparing for reuse and recycling - becomes essential"*.

The European Parliament has also put forward the advantages of the package – namely the amendments to waste directives – both for the environment and the economy. Higher and

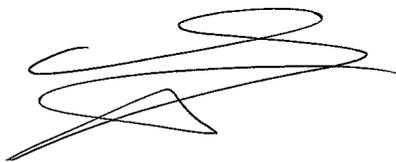
continued improvements of resource efficiency performance are within reach and can bring major economic benefits.

As far as **Air Quality** is concerned, we would like to remind the European Commission that air pollution remains a major economic and social burden to the European citizens, resulting in significant and widespread damage to health and the environment. In addition, this is an area where a large majority of Europeans, 79% according to a recent Eurobarometer, want the EU to act. Air pollution is a transboundary problem that only can be tackled by co-operation between Member States. European legislation is crucial for the effectiveness of air policy – being a transboundary issue – but it also constitutes a necessity to safeguard an European level playing field.

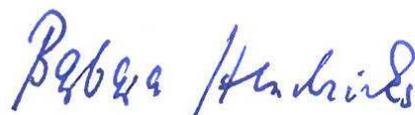
Co-benefits of these policies are important as it can also represent a source of major savings, namely by avoiding increased health care costs and loss in productivity as well as by achieving better quality of life for European Citizens.

For all these reasons, we invite the European Commission to keep viewing the Circular economy and the Clean Air Policy as high priorities for the coming years.

Yours sincerely,



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Belgium



Dr Barbara Hendricks
Federal Minister for the Environment,
Nature Conservation, Building
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Mr. Yiannis Maniatis
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Ms. Isabel GARCIA TEJERINA
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