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European Trade Union Confederation [ETUC]
Confédération européenne des syndicats [CES]

EMBARGOED UNTIL 1 PM

Cut energy consumption, not jobs say environmental NGOs and trade unions

23 May 2012

The largest European federation of Green NGOs (European Environmental Bureau) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) have come together to demand that European leaders meeting in Brussels today to move away from austerity towards smart investments to stimulate Europe's recovery and job creation through a greening of the economy. European leaders are tonight meeting for an informal European Council dinner to exchange views on how to get the European Union out of the current economic turmoil.

Environmental NGOs and Trade Unions welcome the fact that Council President Herman Van Rompuy, in his invitation letter to Heads of State, mentioned the energy efficiency directive as a 'crucial dossier' and listed it as one offering a sustainable way out of the crisis.

Judith Kirton-Darling, Confederal Secretary of the ETUC said: 'European businesses spend more on over consuming energy than they do paying their employees. This

'lamentable fact is evidence in itself that economic recovery should not come through cutting jobs or wages but by reducing the energy used by businesses and households alike'.

"In order to get us out of the crisis, any economic policy will need to be socially and environmentally sustainable. In the first place, this means putting a halt on the growing economic and environmental cost of our energy imports and ensuring that we in Europe invest to reduce our energy consumption." added Jeremy Wates, Secretary General of the EEB.

Financing mechanisms exist to generate the upfront capital needed for energy efficiency investments, such as building retrofitting. In particular obligations on utilities and the use of unspent EU funds appear as promising ways to deliver financing. At the moment it is the political will that is lacking and we hope today's discussion will shed the light on the need to adopt an ambitious Energy Efficiency directive.

The report "Employment Impacts of a Large-Scale Deep Building Energy Retrofit Programme in Poland" presented at a conference held today on "Investing in a more energy efficient infrastructure as an economic driver for Poland" has shown that rolling out retrofitting programmes in Poland would trigger major new business opportunities and lead to the creation of up to 250 000 jobs in Poland, as well as generate a positive fiscal impact from reduced government expenditures on unemployment and welfare, healthcare, operating costs of public buildings, and tax revenue.

Notes to Editors:

1. **European Environmental Bureau.** Created in 1974, the EEB is now Europe's largest federation of environmental organisations with more than 140 member organisations who gain their membership from the general public. Because of this, the EEB is guided by the voices of 15 million European citizens, and act as the ears and voice of our members towards the EU decision makers.
2. **European Trade Union Confederation.** The ETUC exists to speak with a single voice, on behalf of the common interests of workers, at European level. Founded in 1973, it now represents 85 trade union organisations in 36 European countries, plus 10 industry-based federations.

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