



To: Mr Dimas, European Commissioner for Environment
Re: Open Letter to Commissioner Dimas concerning the Expert Groups Formed by DG Environment

Brussels, 9 August 2008

Dear Mr Dimas,

In May this year, representatives from the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation in the EU (ALTER-EU) met with Vice President Kallas to raise our concerns about the composition of some of the Commission's Expert Groups. Mr. Kallas told the meeting that responsibility for ensuring that Expert Groups are balanced lies with the Commissioner in whose field of responsibility the group works.

As the Commissioner responsible for providing political guidance to the Directorate-General for Environment this would make you responsible for the 98 Expert Groups registered on-line as operating under this directorate.¹

President Barroso and Vice President Kallas had announced that the names of individuals and organisations participating in all Expert Groups would be published by summer 2008.² ALTER EU has today also written to them concerning progress on this. Up to now, almost no progress appears to have been made regarding the transparency of the DG Environment Expert Groups; only three of the 98 Expert Groups listed include membership details. The membership of 95 groups (97%) remains unknown to the public.³

ALTER EU is concerned that a number of these groups are dominated by particular sectors. Expert Groups 'Surveillance de la moyenne des émissions spécifiques de CO₂ dues aux véhicules particuliers neufs' and 'Supervisory group of the voluntary commitments of car manufacturers to reduce CO₂ emissions' are currently carrying out a consultation on behalf of the Commission but are only consulting the views of business. However, CO₂ emissions from cars is an issue affecting the whole of society and not just car industry.

Without full details of the membership of the other 93 groups and especially the 31 having industry membership, it is impossible to say whether or not they are also dominated by corporate advisors or whether they can provide a broad assessment of the issues.

Both the lack of transparency and the privileged access of business groups in advisory bodies are at odds with the Commission's White Paper on Good Governance (latest version: 25.07.2001) which emphasises the intention to "reduce the risk of the policy-makers just listening to one side of the argument or of particular groups getting privileged access." The dominance of business representatives among other non-governmental actors in certain groups is also at odds with the Commission's codes of conduct on consultation and use of expertise.


We would therefore like to ask

- What measures you intend to take to ensure that Expert Groups include all relevant interests in society in a balanced proportion?
- How do you intend to address the above mentioned (and other) examples of clearly imbalanced Expert Groups in order to bring them in line with the Commission's codes of conduct on consultation and use of expertise?

ALTER-EU is contacting other Commissioners on the lack of transparency and privileged access of business groups to advisory bodies that fall under their direct competence. Moreover, we are calling on the College of the Commissioners to develop a common, coordinated approach on transparency and balanced composition of the Commission's expert advisory bodies.

Yours sincerely,

On behalf of the Steering Committee of ALTER-EU



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Notes

- ¹ Accessed on 6 August 2008 - <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/search.cfm?l=all>.
- ² 'The process of collecting and publishing the names of members of the different groups shall be completed by the summer', said Mrs Rampi to FT Europe (25/3). On the same date Associated Press and the International Herald Tribune wrote: 'EU Commission spokeswoman Valerie Rampi told reporters the EU's executive office was going to make public online the names of expert group members and who they represent by the summer'.
- ³ Accessed on 6 August 2008 - <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/search.cfm?l=all>.