



17 March 2021

## **Re. Environment Council exchange on European Semester - Ensuring Recovery and Resilience plans deliver the European Green Deal**

Dear Ministers,

If spent wisely, the Recovery and Resilience Facility will enable major public investments in the next critical decade for climate action and environmental protection. 2021 is a decisive year for the EU to financially commit to an ecological transition, and to achieve the vision set out in the European Green Deal to tackle the climate, nature and pollution crises.

Investment decisions made today will shape European economies for decades to come and determine the EU's progress on the pathway towards climate neutrality and ecological sustainability. By 2030 the EU has to achieve at least 65% greenhouse gas emissions reduction, at least 30% protected areas for both land and sea, as well as the restoration of degraded nature, and significant resource use reduction.

Your governments are currently negotiating Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs) with the European Commission prior to submitting them by the end of April. Some information about their content is already giving us cause for concern that RRP's will not deliver on the EU Green Deal, due to a lack of overall environmental ambition, and a failure to financially commit and to push the reforms needed to combat climate change, protect and restore nature and to build a truly circular economy.

**We call on you to seize this opportunity to accelerate the ecological transition in all its dimensions and ensure that RRP's:**

- **Include a comprehensive and ambitious approach to the ecological transition.** Ensure a transformative role of recovery funding by allocating at least 40% of all investments to climate action and to nature protection and restoration.
- **Include commitments to green policy reforms and better, ecologically-sound planning.** Ensure structural reforms, such as the phase-out of environmentally harmful subsidies, greater use of green public procurement, environmental tax reforms or other incentives to enable the ecological transition. Objectives, milestones and targets need to be designed accordingly.

- **Do not finance environmentally damaging projects and false solutions such as fossil gas or hydropower.** Ensure the rigorous application of the Do-No-Significant-Harm principle. No recovery measure should put pressure on ecosystems, nor invest in soon-to-be stranded assets such as fossil gas, a highly climate-polluting fossil fuel.
- **Improve transparency and ensure greater public participation.** Ensuring the involvement of citizens and civil society in the planning and implementation of recovery plans will create ownership and engagement and improve the quality of RRP.

Within this context, the European Semester needs to be greened to ensure that it becomes an economic governance mechanism encompassing all dimensions of the ecological transition.

On the occasion of the Environment Council on 18 March when you will exchange views on the Recovery and Resilience Plans, we urge you to take a leading role in the further development of these plans in order to make them a powerful tool for catalysing the ecological transformation of our economies.

On behalf of the signatories,

**Wendel Trio**, Director, Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe

**Ariel Brunner**, Acting Director & Senior Head of Policy, BirdLife Europe

**Anelia Stefanova**, Strategic Areas Director, CEE Bankwatch Network

**Elise Buckle**, President, Green recovery partnership facilitator, Climate & Sustainability

**Gabriel Schwaderer**, Director, Euronatur

**Jorgo Riss**, Executive Director, Greenpeace European Unit

**Patrick ten Brink**, Deputy Secretary General and Director of EU Policy, European Environmental Bureau