

Open letter to the European institutions

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**To the European Commissioners,
To Members of the European Parliament,**

Dear Sir or Madam

The European Platform Against Windfarms (**EPAW**) was founded in Paris on 4 October 2008 through an initiative by French, German, Spanish and Belgian organisations. Since then, they have been joined by over 300 European and pan-European associations and groups based in the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Ireland, Sweden, Romania, Denmark, Bulgaria, Greece and two non-EU countries, Norway and Switzerland. A list of these groups is available on the **EPAW** website: www.epaw.org.

Messages of support have been received from countries as far afield as, amongst others, Canada, Australia, the USA, Mexico or Puerto Rico. These can also be found on the **EPAW** website.

EPAW supports renewable energy schemes when it can be demonstrated that they are effective and socially, economically and environmentally acceptable. In order to meet these criteria, it is imperative that affected communities are fully consulted about each proposal.

EPAW finds it deplorable that renewable energy installations are often deployed within the European Union after pressure from financial or ideological interest groups. The disturbing consequence is that such projects do not fulfill the basic criteria for sustainable development.

EPAW maintains that wind farms represent the worst case scenario. Their effectiveness remains unproven and yet for decades they have absorbed the greatest proportion of funding ring-fenced by governments for renewable energy projects. Worse still, they contribute to the degradation of the environment.

EPAW wishes to draw your attention to the fact that wind farms have been shown repeatedly to be completely at odds with European policy for sustainable development, in that:

- the contribution of wind farms to the reduction of CO₂ emissions is insignificant because of the need to resort to thermal power plants to compensate for the intermittent nature of electricity generated by wind turbines. This also means that wind energy does not significantly reduce the costly and increasingly politically sensitive importation of fossil fuels;
- the growing number of wind farms makes it necessary to upgrade the high voltage transmission system across Europe and to build more control installations because experience shows that grid stability is threatened by the erratic nature of wind energy. The new high tension lines incur high costs and cause further unacceptable damage to the environment;

- even after several decades of technical development, wind energy remains economically unviable. Thus, wind farms devour colossal amounts of public money leading to their dependence upon an artificial market for their very existence. Moreover, the excesses of this artificial market allow scandalous personal fortunes to be amassed at taxpayers' and consumers' expense with no ecological benefit. In fact, real damage is done;
- wind farms are significantly altering Europe's natural and cultural heritage by their harmful effect on landscapes and historic buildings. They have a severe impact on property values which for homeowners often represent the fruits of a lifetime of work;
- wind farms degrade the local residents' quality of life, even damaging the health of some;
- wind farms imperil wildlife and destroy natural habitats which have hitherto escaped the destructive powers of earth-moving equipment, concreting operations and other highly invasive human activities.

Confronted with the blatant contradictions between the sustainable development objectives of the EU and the alarming results of its present wind farm policy, **EPAW** formally requests that the European Union:

1. **Places an immediate moratorium on all wind farm projects in the European Union, including those which have already been granted planning consent.**
2. **Commissions an investigation by a panel of truly independent experts into the effects of European Union wind farm policy - a "reality check" - paying particular attention to:**

- **Carbon savings:**

The panel should evaluate the quantities of carbon dioxide emitted during the construction, maintenance, surveillance and complete dismantling of wind farms. It should also assess the indirect effects of grid integration, such as the quantity of extra CO₂ emitted as a result of the need to compensate for the power fluctuations inherent in wind-generated electricity. Back-up generation leads to the unavoidably inefficient operation of fossil-fuel power stations.

The actual contribution of EU wind farm policy to the objectives of the Kyoto Protocol should then be estimated and presented in summary form.

- **Economic impact:**

The panel should evaluate the direct and indirect costs of the deployment of wind farms, detailing the impact on overall public expenditure and, over the long term, on electricity charges for households and industrial and commercial consumers.

The cost analysis should include:

- subsidies, fiscal advantages, and regulatory tariffs which benefit the wind farm industry;
- the cost of building fossil-fuel power stations to balance unstable wind power, of installing HT power lines to link the wind farms to the grid, of building control centres to regulate the wind's unpredictable variability, and of upgrading electricity networks.

As wind farms absorb considerable amounts of public funds, **EPAW** demands that the EU commissions an audit of the wind power industry's financial transactions and

practices. The audit should include an investigation into company structures and the degree to which tax avoidance schemes such as tax havens are employed.

▪ **Social impact:**

The panel should investigate the impact of wind farms on human health. A representative group of local residents should be invited to participate.

The panel should appraise the effects of changes to the environment on local residents and assess the impact of the presence of wind farms on the value of land and buildings and tourism over time.

▪ **Environmental impact:**

The “reality check” should include an inventory of degraded natural habitats and of landscapes sacrificed as a result of the installation of wind farms in violation of the European Landscape Convention, which stipulates: *“As a reflection of European identity and diversity, the landscape is our living natural and cultural heritage, be it ordinary or outstanding, urban or rural, on land or in water.”*

EPAW considers it unacceptable that European institutions should promote the despoiling of the European landscape by a process of homogenisation into an industrial “brownfield site” with thousands of wind farms stretching from Lapland to Gibraltar, some planted in the heart of nature reserves. These were established at great cost through the EU's Natura 2000 programme.

The EU should therefore set up a panel of independent ornithologists and biologists who are acknowledged by all parties to be impartial. The panel should objectively evaluate the individual and cumulative effects of existing and proposed wind farms and associated HT power lines on European flora and fauna and their habitats.

Finally, the “reality check” should include an investigation into the ways in which the construction and operation of wind farms causes pollution of ground cover, topsoil, streams, rivers and groundwater. Particular attention should be paid to the effects on the environment of contamination resulting from lubricants leaking from worn or collapsed wind turbines, detergents used to remove oil and insects from turbine blades, the large-scale use of concrete for their bases and the construction of access roads.

EPAW wishes to emphasise that the ill-conceived and poorly implemented EU wind farm policy adds oil to the fire of euro-scepticism. Many ecologically-conscious and well-informed people in the EU have the feeling that the European institutions have set their hearts on industrial wind power generation without pausing to consider its real impact on the environment and the acceptable limits of its exploitation. In the critical context of building the EU's energy base, observers find it inconceivable that the Union's energy policy can be founded on the wind farm lobby's myth of clean wind-generated electricity.

The negative effects of industrial wind turbines on people, landscapes, tourism, property values, wildlife, and the economy are widely understood and accepted. It will be disastrous if the European Union refuses to perform a “reality check” on its wind farm policy.

Respectfully yours,

