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EPSU
Mr Jan Willem Goudriaan
Deputy General Secretary
45, rue Royale
B – 1000 Brussels

Subject: Position of Social Partners on smart meters

Dear Mr. Goudriaan,

I have received your letter and the attached position of the European social partners of the electricity sector. I very much welcome the political backing of the social partners to the roll-out of the new technology. The Commission fully shares your analysis of the benefits of smart meters, as identified in your position paper. The European approach to Smart Grids and smart meters is that the new technology must bring clear benefits to the consumers, ensure their active participation and their health and safety. A business-centric approach focusing solely on the utilities' profits will not be pursued.

The views expressed in the letter touch upon pertinent issues. Undoubtedly, conditions for smart meters roll-out should be carefully assessed and thoroughly discussed with broad range of stakeholders, including with the representatives of employees and employers. You refer in your letter to Directive 2009/72/EC, obliging the Member States to carry out their own national cost-benefit analysis to assess the conditionalities of the smart meters roll-out. The practical approach to and the details of such assessment are fully in the competence of individual Member States. The Commission has not been asked to provide any further guidance on the assessment. Would such request be raised within the public consultation that will follow after the publication of the Communication on Smart Grids in April 2011, the Commission might reconsider its position on this issue.

In either way, the Commission is convinced that each serious impact assessment should automatically include assessment of social impacts, including impacts on the level of skills and the employment in general. Ensuring full compliance with national and EU health and safety provisions when rolling out smart meter is a sine qua non condition for public acceptance of the new technology.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Philip Lowe', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Philip LOWE