



Brussels, 27 June 2024

## Executive Vice-President for People and the Environment

Dear colleague,

Earlier in June, EU citizens headed to the polls to vote for lawmakers that will shape the EU over the next five years. We now have the responsibility to strengthen our governance and the rule of law to protect them, and our planet.

The EU is facing a triple crisis with climate change, biodiversity, and pollution threatening the security and prosperity of all Europeans.

If we do not act, these crises will continue to threaten our economy and our ability to compete on the global stage. It will also make us more energy dependent, create geopolitical instability, stir social unrest, and lead to more forced migration.

To protect our future, we need urgent action. I believe that the green transition is also an opportunity for the future of Europe – we must prioritise reconciling different interests. By recognising their interdependence, we can work together on a green and social transition that addresses everyone's legitimate concerns. This collaborative approach will ensure a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

Five years ago, the European Commission concluded that Europe's future depended on a healthy environment. We adopted the 'European Green Deal' – a set of ambitious laws and policies that aimed to restore and protect our environment for the long-term benefit of people. The European Green Deal set the foundation for genuine change by giving the environment a seat at the decision-making table.

It was only a start. The European Commission's job will be to implement and enforce the European Green Deal and to take it further, by integrating environmental requirements in all EU policies and decisions as well as taking into account the cost of inaction. This agenda will provide benefits for people's health, strengthen our resilience to these crises, and ensure the sustainable development of our economy. People must now be put at the centre of this agenda. This must be achieved by better planning for the social impacts and benefits of the green transition and making sure that it is fair and just for everyone. This will only be possible by upholding the rule of law and protecting our *acquis communautaire*.

**\*Disclaimer - « Ceci n'est pas une Mission letter »**

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*ClientEarth AISBL, Company no 0714.925.038*

## Your mission

I would like to entrust you with the role of **Executive Vice-President for People and the Environment**.

As Executive Vice-President, you will be responsible for setting the strategic direction and chair the Commissioners' Group on People and the Environment. This Group will include your colleagues responsible for Health and Food Safety, Transport, Energy, Environment, Agriculture, Cohesion and Reforms, and Climate Action.

### **Environmental & social integration**

As Executive Vice-President, you will make sure to integrate environmental and social requirements into the definition and the implementation of all legislative and policy proposals. This will be done through a coherent planning of the transition across the EU – temporally and spatially. A thorough assessment of the implications of each decision for people, the environment, economies and territories, and for all sectors (agriculture, restoration, energy, industry, etc.) must also be systematically carried out.

- You will do so thanks to the **impact assessments** undertaken prior to the adoption of each legislative proposal and in concertation with relevant other DGs responsible for each file. This will ensure the identification of the relevant stakeholders to consult, as well as the independent scientific, economic and technical evidence needed to adopt fact-and science-based decisions and be as inclusive as possible.
- I want you to be in charge of verifying and ensuring the **consistency** across all environmental laws and coordinating the planning of their implementation.
- You will ensure that any revision of **environmental policies** is stress-tested against robust environmental and health impact assessments to avoid any additional harm to people and the environment and further deregulation.
- You will make sure **EU climate targets consistency checks** – as required by the EU climate law – are conducted and that impact assessments are made publicly accessible as soon as they are adopted, in accordance with [the ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union \(CJEU\)](#).
- I want you to provide guidance on the redefinition of the mission of the **Regulatory Scrutiny Board**. With a clarified role and a transparent functioning, the Board will provide you with the support you will need to ensure the full integration of environmental protection requirements and consistency across EU policies.
- You will be responsible for upholding the **rule of law** in all the decision-making processes i.e. make sure that rulings from the CJEU, decisions of the European Ombudsman and of relevant compliance and complaint mechanisms, such as the ones of the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee, are fully complied with by all the Commission services.
- You will **represent** the European Commission in international negotiations and diplomatic discussions around the environment (UNFCCC, CBD, etc.).

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## Regenerative food systems and land / ocean stewardship

- In the **first 100 days in office**, you will focus on addressing the gaps left from the **European Green Deal**.
- Your role will be to ensure that we safeguard the level of ambition of existing EU legislation aimed at protecting biodiversity in Europe, particularly the **Nature Directives**, and improving their enforcement in Member States.
- You will also be responsible for mainstreaming biodiversity considerations in sectoral EU policies, including the **Common Fisheries and Common Agricultural Policies**, so that they are fully aligned with relevant obligations and commitments under biodiversity laws (including the **Nature Restoration Law**). This will help mitigate the destructive environmental impacts of industrial farming and fishing, so that they neither undermine the achievement of EU conservation and restoration targets, nor jeopardise the future viability of these sectors.
- You will support the Commissioner for the Ocean in tabling an overarching and bold **EU Ocean Deal** to bring full policy coherence to sectoral ocean policies and make sure that they deliver full implementation of the EU's environmental and social commitments.
- You will support the Commissioner for the Ocean to create an **EU Ocean Fund** for the long-term restoration and conservation of the marine environment and the just transition of ocean-related economic sectors towards more sustainable, fair, decarbonised, and low impact activities.

## A sustainable and responsible economy

- You will ensure that all **financial flows** are directed towards activities that do not harm the planet, and that companies are conducting their business responsibly.
- You will make sure that the **EU's State aid policy** is aligned with climate and environmental objectives. We need to prevent public finance from fuelling fossil fuels, including fossil gas, across all sectors.
- You will develop guidelines and introduce specific requirements clarifying companies' obligations to establish and implement climate, biodiversity and circular economy **transition plans**.
- You will work closely with your colleague from DG TAXUD to integrate the **polluter pays principle** in taxation.
- You will lead the work on the identification, the transparency and phasing out of environmentally **harmful subsidies**, in collaboration with the rest of the College of Commissioners.

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## A reformed and resilient energy system

- You will work with your team on a proposal for **absolute resource-use reduction targets** for energy and materials across economic sectors. Overall final energy demand – whether renewable or fossil – must structurally decrease so we can live well within our Earth’s limits.
- We need to incorporate “**energy sufficiency**” as a new guiding pillar of the EU energy policy, to ensure that all legislation and policy initiatives that relate to energy prioritise achieving well-being for all and respecting planetary limits.
- We need to revise our approach in relation to investment incentives to comply with our commitments under the Paris Agreement. You will make sure to **remove fossil gas and biomass as ‘sustainable’** under the taxonomy. Currently, under the **EU Taxonomy Regulation**, it is possible to invest in fossil gas or biomass, and have that investment be considered sustainable. This must be rectified.
- You will address the key gap regarding **fossil fuel demand reduction** by tabling a legislative proposal modelled on the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, including a European-wide fossil fuel advertising, promotion and sponsorship ban.

## Environmental justice, implementation & enforcement

- You will coordinate with Member States and a range of relevant stakeholders, including with civil society organisations, to identify the **blockers and levers of a correct implementation** of environmental legislation.
- You will make sure to **increase the capacity of DG ENVI** so that they can initiate the necessary infringement proceedings against Member States that are in breach of EU environmental laws.
- You will be in charge of strengthening **environmental democracy** to uphold access to information, public participation, and access to justice rights to enable civil society to play its role in enforcing relevant laws.
- You will systematically include **access to justice and compensation rights** in relevant pieces of EU environmental law. Individuals should be able to challenge breaches of environmental legislation before the courts and claim compensation more easily when their health has been impacted due to a breach of EU environmental laws.
- You will increase transparency to **improve individuals’ and civil society’s access to information** on the extent to which Member States comply with environmental and climate laws, particularly within the framework of EU infringement procedures initiated by the European Commission.
- You will prioritise and ensure **effective resourcing of the EU’s transparency obligations**, in particular for maintaining and updating online document registers for all EU institutions, bodies and agencies.
- You will take the necessary measures to **increase transparency** within legislative processes at EU level including the inter-institutional negotiation process.

You will have my full collaboration and guidance to fulfil your mission. You will also be supported by the following Directorates-General: DG CLIMA, DG ENER, DG ENVI, DG SANTE, DG MOVE and DG REGIO.

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## The way forward

This is only indicative of the work you will be entrusted with. You will have to be reactive to any opportunities and challenges that occur, including attempts to derail us from our obligation to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 and comply with our legal commitments both at EU and international level.

These are challenging times, so we must act boldly. The survival of the EU, and the values it represents are at stake. In this critical decade, I look forward to working closely together, and to lead a Commission that will guarantee the wellbeing of present and future generations across the EU.

Yours sincerely,

Future President of the European Commission\*

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