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Fit for the job of environment and fisheries commissioner?

Greens/EFA assessment of Karmenu Vella, following his EP hearing

Greens/EFA environment spokesperson Bas Eickhout and fisheries spokesperson Isabella Lövin give their assessment of the European Parliament hearing with Karmenu Vella, EU commissioner-designate for the environment and fisheries. **What is your impression of how Commissioner-designate Vella performed?** His performance as such was ok, but he certainly did not give the impression of being committed to or wanting to fight for environment protection – he explicitly refrained from making any commitments. He was soft-spoken and rather careful in his responses, reading his speeches from paper, being clearly loyal to the mandate of the new Commission. He did not accept that the new Commission would not have sustainable development as a key objective, with no vice-president responsible for ensuring it is. He did however admit when he did not master the issue. **Were there particular issues of answers that stood out – either in a positive or negative sense?** Positive responses: Environment: Mr Vella gave a convincing response about the proposal to merge the environment and fisheries portfolios, claiming it would reinforce both, as 70% of our planet is oceans, the two can complement each other. He also allayed fears that he would preside over the weakening of EU rules on birds and habitats, whilst supporting EU bans on bee-damaging pesticides and also stressing the problem of monocultures. Fisheries: He underlined his commitment to continue the fight against illegal fishing but did not commit to ensure sufficient resources within the Commission. Negative responses: Environment: Mr Vella was generally non-committal and sought to avoid conflict; notably, he did not give the impression he would confront EU member states infringing EU law. He refused to commit deliver on a number of crucial legislative proposals that are awaiting adoption (for example access to justice, environmental inspections, endocrine disrupters, sustainable food). On shale gas fracking and oil extraction, he abdicated responsibility to EU member states and supports a minimalist, non-binding approach to environment or safety rules at EU level. Fisheries: he was non-committal when asked about the goal of ending over-fishing by 2015 to allow stock recovery, under the new Common Fisheries Policy. He lacked the ability to into detail on key files and seemed overly keen to exploit exploitation of the marine area without worrying about environmental constraints and possible damage. **Do you think he is suitable for the portfolio he has been assigned?** Not really. He is fully loyal to the political direction that has been outlined by Commission president-elect Juncker. He is capable of lip service on sustainable development (green growth), but did not demonstrate any willingness to take on industry opposition. He lacks commitment and conviction about the issues. It is difficult to imagine him confronting commissioners defending industry interests. He did not come across as a fighter, which is disappointing for one of the most important commissioners for the Greens. **Out of ten, what marks would you give his hearing performance?** 5 – while his actual performance was polished he failed to convince that he cares about the issues at stake.

- Greens/EFA Members on the Environment Committee (ENVI)
- Greens/EFA Members on the Fisheries Committee (PECH)

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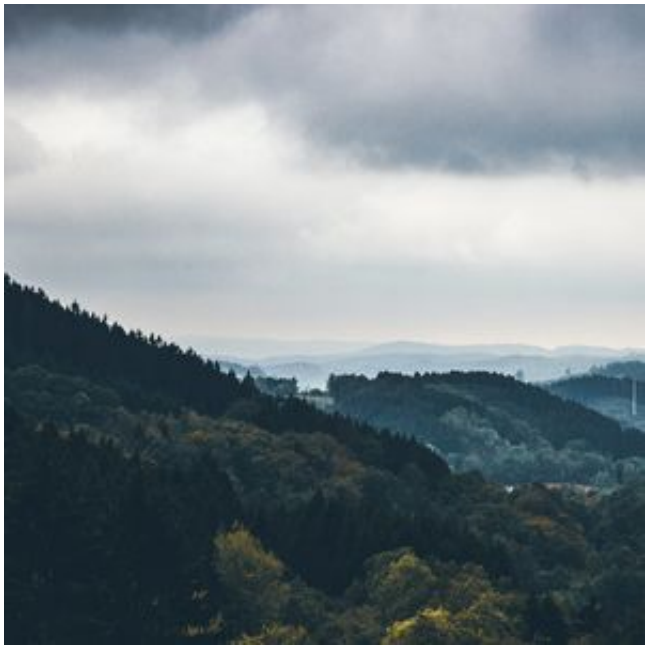


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