



The Greens | European Free Alliance
in the European Parliament

Mr Jean-Claude Juncker
President of the European Commission

Brussels, 26 September 2014

Concern: Sustainability in the new European Commission

Dear Mr President,

The European Union needs a strong Commission at this challenging time. To this end, we welcomed the new political structure for the Commission College you have proposed, which ostensibly seems like a promising attempt for better governance, with a view to defending the European interest vis-à-vis national governments. However, we are concerned by the political direction that you have proposed to accompany this structure, both as regards the make-up of certain key commissioner portfolios, the remit given to commissioners in their 'mission statements' and the restructuring of certain directorates general in the Commission.

From our perspective a sound economic policy is impossible if it does not have sustainability as a central focus. The huge economic cost of taking no action in protecting the environment or mitigating and adapting to climate change is now widely acknowledged. There is also wide evidence that action on climate change and investment in sustainable development can strengthen the economy by driving innovation, creating new markets and, with them, new and sustainable employment.

The EU Treaty has the explicit goal in Article 3.3 that "the Union shall work for the sustainable development of Europe". The role of the Commission is to defend and promote the Treaties but we are concerned that sustainable development, 'green growth' and environmental protection will be a peripheral inconvenience, rather than a central priority of the Commission you have proposed.

Europe's high standards of consumer protection, food safety, health and the environment are one of the major successes of the European Union and the envy of consumers and citizens around the world. The Commission should be seeking to defend and strengthen this but the remit of the 'first vice-president' seems to pick it apart under the guise of 'better regulation', a euphemism for deregulation. In addition, the mission letter of the Commissioner for Environment, fisheries and maritime affairs seems to be mainly driven by deregulation, reconfirming our concerns sustainability and environment are considered unimportant by the new Commission.

None of the 7 vice-presidents proposed has been given a remit to ensure sustainable development. Whether as regards the titles of their portfolios or the 'mission statements' they have been given, the role of these designated vice-presidents seems to be to promote corporate interests, rather than sustainability and social justice. Since you have made clear

that no new proposals are allowed without the accord of one of the vice-presidents, this could mean European policies on sustainable development will come to a complete standstill.

The proposal to merge the energy and climate change portfolios is a major concern. It is hard to see this as anything other than a further downgrading of the EU's commitment to climate action at a crucial juncture. It is clear that the EU's energy policy needs to be designed in a way that ensures it can help the EU meet its climate change goals. However, climate policy goes far beyond energy policy, and should not just be an afterthought for an energy commissioner.

We have similar concerns regarding the proposal to merge the fisheries and environment portfolios, both more than full-time jobs for the previous respective commissioners. There is a real fear that this will lead to a dilution of the EU's commitment in both of these key areas.

The reshuffle of certain services within the Commission is also unsettling and seems to confirm our concerns with the political approach. There are many examples but some of the more prominent include: moving the responsibility for EU policy on biocides from DG Environment to DG SANCO; moving the responsibility for food waste from DG Environment to DG SANCO. It is hard to identify a logical motivation for this, beyond a desire to stifle action in these crucial areas.

We would urge you to urgently redress this by:

- Making one Vice President specifically responsible for sustainability or sustainable development;
- Reversing the proposals to merge the portfolios of energy and climate action, as well as the portfolios of environment and fisheries;
- Re-assessing the mission letters given to key commissioners, with a view to prioritising sustainability and good management of natural resources and biodiversity; and
- Reversing the proposed reshuffle of services.

In its scrutiny and appointment of the Commission, the European Parliament has a duty to European citizens to ensure their interest is defended. We believe the actions outlined above are clearly in the interests of European citizens and we believe they should be addressed prior to parliamentary hearings. If none of these changes are performed it will be impossible for the Green Group in the European Parliament to support the new Commission.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Harms



Philippe Lamberts

Co-Presidents
Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament