

**ANSWERS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE**  
**Stella KYRIAKIDES**  
**Commissioner-designate for Health**

**1. General competence, European commitment and personal independence**

**What aspects of your personal qualifications and experience are particularly relevant for becoming Commissioner and promoting the European general interest, particularly in the area you would be responsible for? What motivates you? How will you contribute to putting forward the strategic agenda of the Commission? How will you implement gender mainstreaming and integrate a gender perspective into all policy areas of your portfolio? What guarantees of independence are you able to give the European Parliament, and how would you make sure that any past, current or future activities you carry out could not cast doubt on the performance of your duties within the Commission?**

The European Union is built on respect for human dignity, human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law. I am honoured by the opportunity to defend these values, in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail. These principles have guided me throughout my political and professional life and will continue to do so if I am confirmed as European Commissioner for Health.

I have devoted a lifetime of service to public causes. I practiced as a clinical psychologist for twenty-seven years, choosing to work only in the public sector. I focused my work and all my professional energy on the mental health of children and adolescents in public hospitals. I have seen first-hand the importance of well-functioning health systems; the collective health of our societies depends on the individual health of every single citizen.

I am an advocate of the rights of breast cancer patients - as a past President of the European Breast Cancer Coalition, Europa Donna, as President of Europa Donna Cyprus, as President of the Cyprus National Committee on Cancer Strategy and as past Chairwoman of the Patient Advisory Committee of the European Cancer Organisation. In Cyprus, I succeeded in guaranteeing that patients' voices would be included in policymaking.

For many years, I have been a committed and passionate parliamentarian. I was elected to the Cyprus Parliament in 2006, 2011 and 2016. I am currently the Chairwoman of the Cyprus Parliament's Standing Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, a Member of the House Standing Committee on Health Affairs and of the Committee on European and External Affairs. I believe that this political experience would be highly relevant to my future role as Commissioner and to serving the European public interest. As a politician, I have always been dedicated to serving the public interest. If confirmed as Commissioner, I would use this political experience to serve the European public interest more broadly.

I am committed to multilateralism, the protection of human rights and the rule of law and as a Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) I serve as the Head of the Cyprus Delegation to PACE, chairing and serving on several committees. I was Acting President and Vice-President of the European People's Party at Pace in 2018-2019, and I have represented PACE in the Venice Commission, serving also as a member of the EPP Ethics Committee. In 2017-2018, I was honoured to be elected as President of PACE.

Gender mainstreaming and the integration of a gender perspective into all areas of public policy has been a constant priority in my political career – and would remain so if I am confirmed as European Commissioner for Health. I was able to promote policies and legislate for gender equality through the Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women of the Cyprus Parliament and also through the work of the Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies, where I served as a Board Member. I am proud to be given now an opportunity to serve under the first gender-balanced College of Commissioners and under the first female President of the European Commission. This will be a Commission that is more representative of European society, and which draws on all of our potential.

Europeans rightly expect the peace of mind that comes with access to healthcare, safe food and protection against epidemics and diseases. Europe has some of the world's highest standards on animal and plant health, and some of the most affordable, accessible and high quality health systems to deliver on these expectations. However, our society is ageing and we need more complex and expensive treatments. The sustainability of our food systems is also challenged by socioeconomic, environmental and demographic changes.

This brings into sharp focus the need for sustainable and effective health systems, supporting health professionals, investing in new technologies, and promoting healthy and sustainable lifestyles.

Health – in its universal sense – requires a holistic, whole-of-society approach, promoting healthy food and a healthy lifestyle, in a healthy social and institutional setting.

For the health of our citizens and future generations, we need a healthy environment. Through the zero-pollution strategy in the European Green Deal, we can strive to reduce dependency on pesticides and help protect citizens from exposure to endocrine disruptors.

Through the European Green Deal, we can also deliver to ensure safe and sustainable food, through a dedicated 'Farm to Fork' strategy covering every step in the food chain.

Healthy food comes from healthy animals. We have to ensure that we are well equipped for when animal diseases occur.

It is important to recognise the role that science and new technologies play in developing new solutions to the challenges society faces. We must therefore ensure that regulatory frameworks remain up-to-date, fit-for-purpose and citizen centred. Open, transparent dialogue with stakeholders and citizens throughout the policy making process is essential to win their trust and support. This is particularly relevant to a number of files in the portfolio of the Commissioner for Health.

If confirmed as Commissioner, I am determined to work on these challenges to secure better outcomes for the health of our citizens and society.

I would like to use my knowledge and experience to serve this cause, to lead, to grasp the opportunities and to tackle the challenges, working hand in hand with people from across Europe and with the governments, Parliaments and institutions that serve them. In the College of Commissioners, once confirmed, we are all determined to decide and deliver together as a team, working closely together with the European Parliament and our Member States, as well as with all the stakeholders in our respective portfolios. This type of engagement is key to ensure that health is reflected in all policies.

If confirmed and appointed as European Commissioner, I will never engage in any actions that could cast doubt on my independence or compromise the exercise of my duties. I will always be guided by the founding Treaties of our Union, the mission that the President-elect of the Commission has honoured me with, the decisions of the European Parliament to confirm us as a College of Commissioners and the Code of Conduct for Commissioners, which I will wholeheartedly subscribe to.

My declaration of interests is complete, public and I will make sure that it is updated if any changes arise to my personal circumstances. My intention is to resign immediately from all other current positions I hold, if I am confirmed and appointed Commissioner by the European Parliament.

## **2. Management of the portfolio and cooperation with the European Parliament**

**How would you assess your role as a Member of the College of Commissioners? In what respect would you consider yourself responsible and accountable to the Parliament for your actions and for those of your departments? What specific commitments are you prepared to make in terms of enhanced transparency, increased cooperation and effective follow-up to Parliament's positions and requests for legislative initiatives? In relation to planned initiatives or ongoing procedures, are you ready to provide Parliament with information and documents on an equal footing with the Council?**

If confirmed and appointed as European Commissioner for Health, I see my role as one Member of a College of Commissioners, which functions on the principle of collegiality: working as one team, following a whole-of-government approach, where each Member has his or her own say, but decisions are taken collectively, with strong collective ownership of what is agreed – and always deciding with the collective European interest in mind.

I would work in close cooperation with other Commissioners, in particular with the Executive Vice-President-designate for the European Green Deal on issues relating to food safety, animal and plant health, and the Vice-President-designate for Protecting our European Way of Life on public health matters. I would also work with the Executive Vice-President-designate for a Europe fit for the Digital Age on matters relating to digital health and food policy.

My overriding objective would be to do my utmost to promote the wellbeing of European citizens, bringing together human, animal and plant health in a holistic and comprehensive approach. I am thoroughly convinced that food, health and environment are inseparable and expect my contribution to the Green Deal to be essential through the new “Farm to Fork” strategy and delivering on the zero-pollution ambition.

This objective can only be achieved through inclusive and collective action. First and foremost, the Commission should work as closely as possible, and in a relationship of mutual transparency and trust, with the European Parliament – our citizens’ elected representatives to whom I am accountable.

As a three-times elected Parliamentarian in my home Member State, I wholeheartedly commit to full, constructive and fruitful cooperation with the European Parliament, and particularly the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) and the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI). I will be present and active in Parliamentary debates. And I will ensure that the Parliament is regularly briefed, notably before major events and at key stages of international negotiations, as the President-elect has requested.

As part of the next College’s commitment to a deepened partnership with the European Parliament, I will work hand in hand with Parliament at every stage in debating resolutions under Article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). I commit to work closely with the relevant parliamentary Committees, and be active and present during the preparation of Article 225 TFEU resolutions. I strongly believe that this will improve dialogue, foster confidence and a sense of working together towards a common goal.

The Commission will also effectively respond to Parliament’s resolutions within three months after their adoption, in accordance with the Framework Agreement. The Commission will ensure political oversight over the process.

## **HEALTH**

### **1. Cancer**

**According to the mission letter, Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan is intended to have actions at every stage of the disease: prevention, diagnosis, treatment, life as a cancer survivor and palliative care. Areas where the EU could have a significant impact would be treatment, both in terms of research and access to treatment, prevention of some of the main avoidable causes of cancer, including tobacco use, alcohol use and poor nutrition, as well as environmental degradation, pollution and exposure to carcinogenic toxic substances. What concrete actions do you foresee in these areas?**

Cancer represents the first cause of death in an increasing number of European countries. 40% of us will face cancer in our lives. This in itself is sufficient cause to raise it to the top of our priorities in the area of health. Beating cancer will require all hands on deck, and a truly horizontal, health-in-all-policies approach. To be successful, we must tackle cancer holistically, from multiple angles and involving multiple stakeholders, in true partnership at all levels. Everything from the food we eat, to the lifestyles we lead, to the medicines, care and technology we have access to, are highly relevant to beating cancer. Patients have the right to have access to affordable medicines to meet their needs, and industry needs to be encouraged to remain an innovative world leader. Research, prevention, diagnosis, treatment, survivorship issues and palliative care are all vital pieces of the same puzzle, and of the same journey of each cancer patient.

For this to work, I will pursue the political commitment and engagement of all: Member States, who are primarily responsible for healthcare, but also academia, healthcare professionals, policy-makers, NGOs and patients, as well as industry. The European Parliament is a fundamental part in this effort. Crucially, the Parliament has shown its determination to contribute in its February 2019 Resolution on women’s cancers and comorbidities, which echoes many of the points I will develop below. As a parliamentarian myself, I know from personal experience the value of building solid partnerships between the executive

and the legislator. By joining forces, pooling knowledge, data, resources and infrastructure, we can make a difference. We can beat cancer.

**Research** is an area where Europe can make a huge impact against cancer. Knowledge and understanding are our best allies. This is why a research ‘mission’ on cancer in the future ‘Horizon Europe’ programme will form a key building block in our plan to beat cancer. Effective and horizontal collaboration will also be necessary within the European Commission and I look forward to working closely with the Commissioner-designate on Innovation and Youth in our cancer-beating strategy.

**Prevention** is the other area we need to devote great attention to. Almost half of all cancer deaths are **preventable** if we follow well-established science, such as the recommendations of the European Code against Cancer. Tobacco, for example, is a major risk factor in several types of cancer, while we are learning more and more about the role played by environmental conditions and healthy lifestyles. Our zero-pollution ambition is designed to protect citizens from dangerous exposure to harmful chemicals, polluted air or toxic industrial emissions. Prevention can help to bring down the high economic, social and human costs of cancer, reduce the growing pressure on national health and social systems, and contribute to economic growth. Tackling the upstream determinants of cancer is an essential aspect of investing in prevention. We will opt for the most proportionate and effective combination of tools in every case. For example, the EU tobacco control policy is composed of both legislation and soft tools reaching out beyond the health sector. Talking about prevention also requires promoting healthy lifestyles. This includes nutrition and I am delighted to be leading the new ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy to provide Europeans with nutritious, affordable and safe food. Additionally, this will be an integral part of the European Green Deal.

**Cancer prevention and health promotion** necessitate working with sectors outside health, such as environment, education, taxation, agriculture and research. To bring these other sectors on board, we need to make the case for health promotion with robust evidence. This is well developed in the EU with Eurostat and the analysis of national health systems. I look forward to working with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies and the World Health Organization to place prevention at the very heart of EU public health policy.

Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan will be linked to a diverse array of health initiatives. In that respect, I would also like to stress the role of vaccination against human papillomavirus (HPV) and viral hepatitis B as part of cancer prevention and I am looking forward to working with the European Parliament, Member States and stakeholders on vaccination more generally – explaining the benefits and combatting the myths, misconceptions and scepticism that surround the issue.

We know that an early **diagnosis** dramatically increases survival rates. Significant progress has been made in all EU Member States since the adoption of the 2003 Council Recommendation on cancer screening. However, we can and should still do more; in particular by further improving access to population-based cancer screening by supporting Member States to apply for EU funding, in particular cohesion and reform funds.

Artificial intelligence can significantly support this critical diagnostic step. In order to do so, it needs to be fed with large volumes of data so that algorithms are as accurate and reliable as possible. The **European Health Data Space** will help promoting data exchange and support research on new preventative strategies. Of course, we will also ensure the protection of personal data and I will work closely with Executive Vice-President-designate Vestager and Commissioners-designate Goulard and Reynders on this issue.

In the area of **treatment**, we see a rich pipeline of cancer medicines, especially for adult cancers, including breakthrough gene therapies and personalised treatments. However, not every development will succeed and not every new medicine translates automatically to improved outcomes for patients and ‘value for money’ for health systems. Moreover, there are still important gaps, in particular for

paediatric cancers. I want to ensure the affordable and accessible supply of medicines to all patients – wherever they live in the EU, whatever their age, gender, or socio-economic background. As Chair of the Cypriot House of Representatives Committee on Human Rights and Equality, I am deeply committed to the principles enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Pillar of Social Rights. Access to healthcare is a fundamental right in the European Union: it is not a privilege. This goes hand in hand with the necessity for a more patient-centred approach based on people’s needs. Therefore, patient outcomes and the way they experience care need to be measured in a more systematic and rigorous way. Only then can we ensure the quality of the care delivered to all patients.

I want to emphasise that patient participation is crucial at all stages, from clinical trials to patient-reported outcomes and patient-centred care. I will build on the efforts initiated by patient groups and Member States and at the EU level, including by the European Medicines Agency.

When it comes to cancer, we observe shortages of inexpensive essential medicines for which patients sometimes have no alternative and at the same time, highly innovative, expensive medicines that are not available in all Member States. It is unacceptable to impose such an additional stress on patients. I will work with the industry and Member States to mitigate shortages of medicines in Europe. I am also committed to supporting Member States in their efforts to ensure affordable, accessible and high quality medicines. I believe that increasing the evidence base across the EU and working together will help to inform national decisions on new medicines. Cancer is an obvious priority for this type of cooperation. Tackling inequalities in cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment, including access to cancer medicines, will be an important element of my overall mission to fight cancer.

Let us also bear in mind that cancer is not one disease. There are many types of cancer, each with their own specificities, where the EU can add value by connecting specialists throughout Europe. Many cancers (and all paediatric cancers) are rare diseases and are included in the European Reference Networks. These Networks will continue linking healthcare providers across Europe, allowing them to share expertise, learn together and discuss complex conditions and highly specialised treatments.

Finally, thank you for mentioning survivorship and **palliative care**. Increased survivorship in itself, is posing new challenges that cancer patients are faced with, and which we need to address. Palliative care is something that we owe to every patient. We can work with Member States and stakeholders to identify and share validated best practices across Europe, as you may know, I am speaking from personal experience. I can therefore assure you that I will spare no effort to deliver on this priority.

## **2. Health Action Plan/Access to medicines and medical devices**

**The mission letter sets out the full implementation of the One Health Action Plan against Antimicrobial Resistance, communication on vaccination and ensuring the supply of affordable medicines as three of the key tasks for you. How do you plan to address issues related to Antimicrobial resistance, vaccination, bringing new antibiotics for humans on the market, access to medicines and medical devices - including aspects related to medical research, availability of pharmaceutical ingredients, as well as the crucial fight against HIV/AIDS, TB and hepatitis, which are targets under SDG3?**

Europeans expect the peace of mind that comes with access to healthcare and protection against epidemics and diseases. Indeed, Europe has some of the world’s highest standards as well as the most affordable, accessible and high quality health systems. Our EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Pillar of Social Rights recognise everyone’s right to timely access to affordable, preventive and curative health care of good quality. I intend to devote all my energy as European Commissioner for Health to delivering concrete and positive outcomes, which are true to these fundamental values of our Union.

I understand ‘One Health’ as describing a principle, which treats human and animal health as interconnected, and which encompasses fully our environment – the connecting factor between humans and animals. In this landscape, the health of humans, animals and plants are mutually dependent and mutually reinforcing. Achieving ‘One Health’ will require action which is comprehensive and sustained across all of these fronts.

This is an area where the EU can be proud of its achievements, but not complacent. Increasing antimicrobial resistance is threatening the achievements of modern medicine. Mistrust about vaccination and distrust in science are shifting the public focus away from the benefits of vaccination and the countless lives it has saved from smallpox, polio, measles, diphtheria or meningitis. Health professionals and patients across Europe report concerns about access to medicines related to availability, affordability and shortages. Communicable diseases and other health threats can spread rapidly across borders.

Many of these are global concerns and I believe we must deliver concerted action at European level and do our utmost to find common solutions and provide global leadership. Delivering on the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals** will require close collaboration and cooperation with the entire College and with multiple stakeholders across multiple sectors. I believe we should mobilise all relevant instruments from public health, research, medicines policy, development cooperation, or structural funds support to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. The President-elect has committed to refocus the European Semester so that it integrates them fully.

I am committed to ensuring that this Commission does whatever is necessary to help find sustainable solutions to overcome **antimicrobial resistance**. As a first step, I will work hand in hand with the European Parliament, the Member States and all relevant stakeholders to fully implement the European One Health Action Plan against Antimicrobial Resistance adopted in June 2017, paying utmost attention to the Resolution adopted by the European Parliament on this issue in September 2018. I intend to work across human health, animal health and environment sectors in a ‘One Health’ approach to prevent the further development and spread of antimicrobial resistance. In addition, I will mobilise all available resources at EU level to support the Member States and make the EU a best practice region.

This mobilisation should start from our operational EU agencies in the area of health: the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the European Medicines Agency and the European Food Safety Authority, to provide the best scientific evidence to support the European Union in this effort. At the same time, I will consider other possible options to fight against antimicrobial resistance. For example, I will work with Commissioners-designate Goulard and Gabriel together with public authorities, industry and other stakeholders to encourage the development of new business models fostering innovation on new antibiotics. We need to create the right incentives for the development of antibiotics while safeguarding their prudent use. In this respect, we also need to encourage as much as possible the development of new vaccines, which could also be part of the solution.

I will also promote alternative methods to the use of antimicrobials, including by improving infection prevention. I intend to follow closely the implementation of the new EU Regulations on veterinary medicinal products and medicated feed. This new legislation is indeed a crucial step to fight antimicrobial resistance and promote the responsible use of antimicrobials in animals. This work will complement and contribute to the new ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy on sustainable food contained in the European Green Deal. I will ensure that due attention is paid to the environmental dimension of antimicrobial resistance, in line with the EU Strategic Approach to pharmaceuticals in the environment adopted in March 2019.

The European Union – like every other region – cannot overcome antimicrobial resistance alone. But it can provide leadership to the cause. Antimicrobial resistance is truly a global threat and requires a global answer. In our globalised world, with ever-growing travel, trade, environment and climate change threats, antimicrobial resistance can rapidly cross borders and requires multilateral and coordinated responses. I will therefore work closely with our international partners and advocate for a global agreement on the use of and access to antimicrobials. I count on you as an ally in this endeavour. The

Parliament's relations with its international counterparts can provide important impetus towards this goal.

As regards **medicines and medical devices**, I will do my utmost to ensure that Europe has the supply of affordable medicines to meet its needs and to support innovation in a sector where European industry is a world leader. In the short term, based on the findings from the evaluation on orphan and paediatric medicines regulation, I will consider measures to provide the right incentives for innovation in areas of unmet needs, with a view to ensuring that new treatments are accessible and affordable across the EU. In doing so, I will of course take into account the European Parliament's calls from 2016 and 2017 to act on the Regulation on paediatric medicines and improve access to medicines. The orphan and paediatric legislation has played a role as an enabler for therapeutic developments in neglected areas, but it is important to keep them fit for purpose.

Ensuring that the EU has the supply of affordable medicines is of course also about creating the right conditions and developing cooperation on tools and instruments for national policy making in this regard. We will support the industry and our Member States in constantly improving the quality and sustainability of their health systems through improved information sharing, expertise and the exchange of best practices. Work is already ongoing to revise the fees paid by pharmaceutical companies to the European Medicines Agency for the services it provides. This will ensure sustainability of the regulatory system and it will remove disincentives for innovation and secure the safety of medicines.

Supporting medical research involves turning the EU pharmaceutical and medical technologies' value chain into a needs-driven, innovative, seamless and forward-looking system. I will work on aligning research priorities with the needs of health systems while involving regulators, academia, healthcare professionals and healthcare providers and payers.

Our dependency on non-EU countries for manufacturing pharmaceutical active substances used in EU medicines is another issue that needs to be addressed. To ensure high-quality medicines, I intend to work hard to promote convergence towards agreed international standards and strengthen oversight over the supply chain to guarantee that imported active pharmaceutical substances are produced in line with good manufacturing practices. I am also committed to finding solutions to the problem of shortages of inexpensive medicines in the EU.

I commit to protecting patients with the effective and timely implementation of the new regulatory framework on medical devices. This framework is designed to increase the safety of devices placed on the EU market, foster system oversight and enhance transparency. It is designed to be fit to address new and emerging challenges. I am fully conscious of the short-term priority to meet the deadline of May 2020 – based on the rolling implementation plan and joint efforts with all the Member States. Of course, this is a significant challenge for the whole sector. However, significant progress has already been achieved, and I am determined to ensure the proper implementation of this highly complex regime within the foreseen timelines.

Following the Global Vaccination Summit this September, organised in collaboration with the World Health Organization, I commit to prioritise improving communication around vaccination, explaining the benefits of vaccines, combating disinformation and rebuilding trust. I am aware of the European Parliament's support for action at EU level as expressed in its Resolution from April 2018 and I will continue to work closely with Member States and stakeholders to improve vaccination coverage as well as the sustainability of vaccination programmes and vaccine supply. In particular, I will work with the Coalition for Vaccination, which gathers health professionals' and students' associations to advocate for vaccination. In addition, we will continue to collect best practices and lessons learned in view of addressing the insufficient uptake of vaccines and vaccine hesitancy. This is truly a collaborative effort, and I look forward to working with a wide range of stakeholders to fight vaccine-preventable diseases.

I am familiar with the European Parliament's Resolution of July 2017 on the EU's response to HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Hepatitis C and I intend to continue supporting Member States to tackle



communicable diseases and reach the core capacities of the International Health Regulations. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control is a key partner working with national health protection bodies to strengthen and develop continent-wide disease surveillance and early warning systems. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control also pools Europe's health knowledge to support Member States in the area of HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and hepatitis, vaccination, antimicrobial resistance and produces authoritative scientific opinions about the risks posed by infectious diseases.

I would like also to recall the Commission pledge of EUR 550 million to 'The Global Fund against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria' during the G7 summit in Biarritz that took place in August. I intend to follow up on that pledge and translate it into action.

Throughout my professional career as a clinical psychologist working in public hospitals, I have seen first-hand the importance of well-functioning health systems. I have learned that the collective health of our societies depends on the individual, physical and mental health of every single citizen. I will devote all my energy to these challenges and I am determined to secure better outcomes for the health of our citizens and society.

## **FOOD SAFETY**

### **5. Pesticides**

**As part of delivering on the zero-pollution ambition announced by the President-elect, what do you plan to do to reduce the EU's dependency on pesticides while stimulating the uptake of low-risk alternatives, including non-chemical, and facilitating the uptake of new technologies? What is your view on the scientific and regulatory robustness of the framework for pesticide approvals, and for managing chemicals and chemical-based products? How will you ensure that the current practice of granting authorisations to the continued use of substances of very high concern (SVHCs) while alternatives are available and when the dossier is not complete, is put to an end? How do you intend to respond to the demands of the European Parliament – previous and current – including the conclusions of the PEST committee and the resolution on the implementation of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive?**

Pesticides constitute a major concern for many EU citizens who would like to see our dependency on them and their use reduced. I also believe that we can reduce the use of pesticides in the EU and that farmers should be able to choose the least dangerous option for human health and the environment.

Action on pesticides will constitute a key element of the new 'Farm to Fork' strategy for sustainable food that the President-elect asked me to lead. It will address the first step of the food chain: food production and will contribute to delivering on our zero-pollution ambition. We all agree that we need to reduce dependency on pesticides and stimulate the take-up of low-risk and non-chemical alternatives.

To do this, I intend to listen closely to what our citizens, and their elected representatives in the European Parliament, say on this matter. I will base myself on the results of the Commission's REFIT evaluation of the pesticides legislation that is almost finalised. Evidence-based policy will be a guiding principle during my mandate, and this evaluation will provide the facts on where we stand. While I will be able to comment on it more in detail when its results are published, I can already note that, overall, it indicates that the pesticides' authorisation system is generally effective in terms of the protection of health and the environment. Bans or severe restrictions on substances such as neonicotinoids, which have a negative impact on pollinators, are important measures in that respect. In fact, I was glad to see that the report of the European Parliament's Special Committee on the Union's authorisation procedure for pesticides (PEST) acknowledged that the EU has one of the most stringent legal frameworks on pesticides in the world.

Nevertheless, the system can be improved as regards its efficiency. There are different ways to achieve this and I would be happy to further discuss them with you in the coming months.

Furthermore, I believe we could collectively reflect on the possibility of setting an EU-wide mandatory target on reduction of risk from pesticides. This reflection would be based on the new Commission Report to the Council and Parliament on progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Use of pesticides Directive, and the assessment of the functioning of the recently assessed Harmonised Risk Indicators.

You also ask about my views on the current system for managing chemicals in general and the authorisations of substances of very high concern. For what concerns the REACH Regulation, my colleagues Commissioners-designate Goulard and Sinkevičius are better placed to respond.

However, I do want to stress that for pesticides, there is already a general obligation to have all products assessed and authorised by the authorities before they can be placed on the market and used. This is much stricter than for industrial chemicals. While the concept of substances of very high concern is not present in the pesticides legislation, they are identified based on the so-called cut-off criteria, for example their classification as carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic to reproduction, or as endocrine disruptors. Substances that meet these criteria cannot in principle be used in pesticides – apart from some very limited cases of derogations. Already today, less than 2% of the active substances approved meet these criteria and I am confident that the periodic review of all approvals will eventually lead to their full elimination.

The other point that the pesticides file highlights is the importance of a collegiate approach to cross-cutting issues. Pesticides is one of many examples under the health portfolio that touches on, or ties in with work under other policy areas. I will work closely with Executive Vice-President-designate Timmermans and Commissioners-designate Wojciechowski, Goulard, Sinkevičius and Gabriel to ensure a holistic policy approach favoured by the President-elect.

With the Directive on sustainable use of pesticides, I believe we already have the tools in place to reduce the risks and impact of pesticides on human health and the environment. The Directive puts a clear emphasis on using alternatives to pesticides, low-risk products and practising integrated pest management. The Commission will soon start an evaluation of this Directive to see to what extent these are enough.

I agree with the Parliament's resolution that more needs to be done to ensure that this Directive delivers its full potential. In particular, we need to push Member States to implement the Directive more fully and to use integrated pest management more widely. At the same time, I would look at ways to bring low-risk products, in particular those of biological origin, to the market quicker. These products already benefit from accelerated authorisation procedures, longer approval periods and longer periods of data protection. I would promote further simplification to encourage development of more low-risk products and work with Member States to identify actions to achieve this.

I would also like to look at the role that new technologies could play in reducing our dependency on pesticides, always following a science- and evidence-based approach.

Furthermore, I strongly believe that advances in precision agriculture and food production will allow the use of imaging to monitor plant health and ensure pesticides are only targeted where they are needed. We will also continue to support research that provides innovative solutions to reduce dependency on pesticides and other inputs to farming.

The PEST committee called in particular for improved transparency and strengthened policies tackling conflicts of interest and reinforced independence of science in the pesticides' sector. I fully support these objectives and would like to stress that the new legislation on transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain, once applicable, will address several of these issues.

We will work intensively to ensure that studies and data supporting applications for authorisation will be made public proactively and early on in the risk assessment process, and that citizens and independent scientists will have direct access to these studies in accordance with the revised General Food Law and Pesticides legislation. We will also make sure – through the EU register of studies – that companies applying for an authorisation submit all relevant information, including any that may be unfavourable. If necessary, I would not hesitate to make use of the possibility to carry out reinforced controls and audits on testing facilities, or verification studies.

In addition to the strengthened transparency of risk analysis in the food chain, introduced in the recent revision to the General Food Law, I will work more generally to reinforce the transparency and scientific cooperation between our scientific bodies. I will look at ways to improve coherence and ensure benefits and synergies between the work carried out by agencies, such as the European Food Safety Authority and the European Chemicals Agency, and how this can contribute to the Commission's zero-pollution ambition.

Finally, I would work with other Commissioners to promote stronger links between sustainable pesticide use and other key policy areas, for example, measures under the Green Deal, the common agricultural policy for integrated pest management and for environmental monitoring of pesticides in the environment. Our health goes hand in hand with our planet's health.

## 6. Chemicals and Food Safety

**Despite strict safety thresholds and maximum residue levels, the EU food chain accumulates a variety of substances hazardous for health and/or the environment, which can expose consumers to cumulative and cocktail effects. How will you improve safety and sustainability of our food? What legislative and non-legislative measures do you foresee to detect and reduce exposure to dangerous substances and when will you present a new regulatory framework to address exposure to chemicals in the food chain? The European Parliament has asked on numerous occasions to put forward an updated strategy on Endocrine Disruptive Chemicals (EDC) and fix regulatory gaps in order to ensure that the scientific criteria to identify EDCs are used as a horizontal definition in all relevant legislation. When will you present this strategy? How will you further strengthen transparency and independence in the scientific assessment process of the EU agencies?**

The EU food safety system is based on robust scientific risk assessment and is recognised as a global gold standard. For chemical risks and food safety, a comprehensive body of sectorial legislation is in place to ensure that the residues of chemicals in food, such as contaminants, pesticides residues and residues of veterinary medicinal products do not constitute a risk for European consumers. Each year, Member States conduct comprehensive monitoring programmes with a huge number of samples taken from the market. The results show that only a small percentage of samples do not comply with the limits and confirms that European consumers are well protected. For example, 96% of the samples tested for pesticides residues in 2017 were below the health protective maximum residue limits. Sound management of chemicals is not only good for the health of our citizens but also paramount to achieving a sustainable 'Farm to Fork' policy and circular economy objectives.

But I agree that more can be done.

I intend to work very closely with the Commissioner-designate for Environment and Oceans to support him on our zero-pollution ambition, in particular as regards pesticides and endocrine disruptors. There will be important synergies with the new 'Farm to Fork' strategy, which offers an important opportunity to improve the sustainability of our food at every step of the food chain, from production to consumption, and feed into the Green Deal and our circular economy objectives.

The simultaneous **exposure to multiple chemicals** is an issue that has to be assessed. The European Food Safety Authority and the Commission are currently working together on a methodology to assess

cumulative effects of pesticides residues in food. This is an important new step forward to improve food safety based on robust scientific evidence.

How to tackle exposure to different sources of chemicals in risk assessment and management is a clear, recognised challenge. I am well aware of this. In the past 20 years, the EU has made significant progress in understanding and regulating **endocrine disruptors** – and pioneered work in this area by setting scientific criteria to identify endocrine disruptors in plant protection and biocidal products.

More generally on endocrine disruptors, our overall goal should be to protect EU citizens and the environment from the risks presented by these substances and minimise exposure. I am well aware of the views expressed by the European Parliament in the past years on the topic, in particular the last resolution of April 2019.

Working closely with other colleagues in the College, I will make sure that the concrete actions outlined in the Commission's Communication on endocrine disruptors of last year are implemented. In particular, we need to address implementation challenges and policy coherence. The ongoing Fitness Check of the different frameworks for endocrine disruptors is examining this issue – in particular the absence of horizontal criteria and the different regulatory consequences depending on the policy area. The outcome of this Fitness Check, to be finalised early next year, will feed into our reflection on whether legislative changes are necessary, for example in the area of food contact materials (also subject of a specific evaluation).

EU **risk assessment** on food chain matters is carried out independently of the European institutions and EU Member States by the European Food Safety Authority. I am pleased that recent amendments to the EU's General Food Law and eight other sectoral Union acts in the area of food chain will strengthen transparency and independence of the EU risk assessment. This is an important step to reinforce the EU's credibility and accountability.

I think it very important that the new legislation focuses on open communication and partnership via disclosure of scientific studies supporting applications, early on in the risk assessment process. A database of studies and public consultations will also bolster the quality and reliability of the European Food Safety Authority's scientific risk assessment.

A systematic comprehensive risk communication with all interested parties throughout the risk analysis process complements the open and inclusive communication and consultation principle.

In terms of independence, the new legislation maintains and reinforces the rules requiring members of the Management Board and Scientific Panels to act independently and make an annual declaration of interest. It ensures that strict criteria of excellence and independence will continue to apply for the whole appointment process of the Panels' members.

The European Food Safety Authority's independence is regularly scrutinised by the Court of Auditors, the European Ombudsman as well as the European Parliament in the framework of the annual discharge of EU agencies. The European Food Safety Authority as well as other EU agencies has strengthened its policies on independence over the years and is implementing them rigorously.

Overall, I firmly believe the necessary and appropriate guarantees are in place to ensure the European Food Safety Authority continues to operate with a high level of transparency and independence. However, I would monitor this closely, working with our respective partners, to ensure the EU continues to deliver in this respect.

## **7. Farm to Fork strategy**

**What are your ambitions, plans and timeline for the 'Farm to Fork' strategy? How do you plan to give consumers the transparent information they need on making healthy and sustainable**

**choices for all food and drink, while at the same time giving business operators the transparency they need to ensure full traceability and avoid food fraud? When will you put forward a proposal establishing nutrient profiles? What is your view on country of origin labelling? How will you ensure that the policies of other Commissioners, such as Climate, Agriculture and Trade, are part of a real, holistic and sustainable food policy?**

I am delighted to lead the new ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy and would begin work on day one of my mandate. A sustainable food chain is a cornerstone of the European Green Deal and I am determined to deliver it over the course of the next mandate. It plays an essential part in the EU’s ‘One Health’ principle and will deliver on broader economic, social and environmental objectives as well.

It is clear that current consumption and production patterns are not sustainable and there are some uncomfortable realities we need to face. The world population is growing and the global demand for food will follow pace. In the EU, 8% of citizens cannot afford a quality meal each day – which means the current system is letting down some 40 million people. At the same time, over half of the adult population is overweight and we waste over 20% of all food we produce in the EU each year. Our food production systems consume significant amounts of water, energy, generate pollutants and account for around 11% of EU greenhouse gas emissions.

These figures simply do not add up. We cannot afford this imbalance to continue – socially, ethically or environmentally. We need to adopt a systemic and holistic approach to sustainable change, addressing each step of the food chain – from production, storage, processing and packing through to distribution and disposal of food.

Over the course of the next Commission’s mandate, I would like to see greater alignment on the sustainability axis between food production, processing, distribution and consumption. We cannot achieve the global 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda – a plan of action for people, the planet and prosperity – without establishing sustainable food systems.

It is not a question of whether change is needed but how fast we can ensure a fair transition to more sustainable food systems. Sustainability of our food systems is not only an environmental and climate change issue, it also relates to global public health threats such as rising obesity and anti-microbial resistance and has a social and economic dimension. This change is essential to improving lives and well-being of EU citizens, ensuring healthy ecosystems and creating new, green and inclusive economic growth, leaving no one behind.

We are setting the bar for ambition quite high, while being fully cognizant of the level of commitment and effort these ambitions will entail. The challenges we face are diverse yet linked. They are influenced by multiple external factors such as changing demographic patterns, emerging dietary trends, climate pressures, food chain transparency and food fraud, to name just a few. The way to achieve an optimal result taking into account each element requires careful consideration.

An essential part of this process is dialogue and partnerships. I share your view that consumers are increasingly concerned about the methods of production, the origin and the quality of the food they eat. We must listen to these concerns. They reflect a range of environmental and ethical issues such as the use of pesticides and antibiotics, animal welfare, and the impact of farming and packaging on the environment. These views are reflected in new dietary patterns, for example a growing demand for organic and plant-based products.

Transparency is critical across the entire supply chain. It gives credibility and legitimacy to our actions. I am concerned that over one third of foods bearing nutrition claims actually have a high level of sugar, fat or salt. This can mislead consumers and impact on public health. We should explore nutrition and health labelling in a holistic way to ensure they continue to contribute to healthy and sustainable diets.

I am also aware of the current trend towards a variety of labelling rules in different Member States linked to, for example, mandatory origin, animal welfare and nutrition labelling. I would like to see consistent rules in the EU, ensuring that legitimate demands for more information remain compatible with our single market. I would like to look into how we can improve consumer information, starting with the possibilities that exist under the current legal framework.

It is also important to increase our efforts against fraudulent practices so I will be working with the Member States to develop a strategy with concrete measures against food fraud, drawing on the work of the European Anti-Fraud Office.

Several proposed European Citizens' initiatives relate to food. We need to listen carefully to these views and take them into account. The concerns of our citizens are perfectly reflected in the European Parliament, which has taken a very constructive interest in all of these issues. The Parliament is an important interlocutor in this dialogue and your views, expressed through the resolutions and exchanges of views, will be fully taken into account.

As we move towards greater sustainability, we must continue to reassure consumers that the food they eat is safe. The trust of our consumers is critical to the success of our mission. Rules concerning food safety apply to all food consumed in the EU, whether or not it is produced in the EU. We must respect our obligations under the World Trade Organisation and, most importantly, use EU leadership to make a difference in the work of the different standard setting organisations, notably for the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Reducing food loss and waste is a key part of the EU's work towards the Sustainable Development Goals. We need to keep to these commitments, and ensure our work delivers the objectives we have set, for example, halving per capita food waste at the retail and consumer level by 2030, and reducing food losses along the food production and supply chains. To help in these efforts, by the end of 2023, EU Member States will regularly report on food waste levels, which will allow the Commission to consider the feasibility of establishing EU-wide targets for food waste reduction.

To speed up the transition to sustainable food systems that rely less on pesticides and to improve biodiversity and the quality of ground and surface water, we need to develop other ways to protect harvests from pests and diseases against the background of climate change that favours their spread. The 'Farm to Fork' strategy will deliver with full synergy with the other building blocks of the European Green Deal, the climate change component, the zero-pollution and biodiversity initiatives. We can only achieve this by working together.

I very much support the collegiate approach favoured by President-elect von der Leyen. The new 'Farm to Fork' strategy is a clear example of where the different Commissioners and Commission departments need to work together to deliver better systems, that deliver better results for EU citizens, without compromising on food safety. I think it is very important that this strategy falls under the broader aims of the European Green Deal. It means that from day one, we will work very closely with other relevant Commissioners in the Commissioners' group on the European Green Deal, inter alia, for agriculture, climate, trade and environment and ensure coherence across all policy areas.

I will work of course work closely with the European Parliament, Member States and civil society to stimulate and support this needed transition of our food systems.

A sustainable Europe must build on a sustainable food production and consumption model and the EU is well placed to show the way forward. This is a very positive agenda and I am excited to lead development of this strategy in close cooperation with all players.