

ANSWERS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE
Kadri SIMSON
Commissioner-designate for Energy

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?

My work in Estonia as a Minister for economic affairs and infrastructure, responsible also for energy policy, has given me ample opportunities to demonstrate my commitment to promoting the European interest and further strengthening the EU. In 2017, I am proud to have contributed actively to the successful first Estonian Presidency of the Council, helping to shape the Presidency's priorities, chairing the meetings of the Council and holding extensive exchanges with the European Parliament, as part of the legislative negotiations. I believe to have played a pivotal role in facilitating agreement on major files for our citizens and the European Union as a whole, notably on the Clean Energy for all Europeans package. I believe, therefore, that I hold the right qualifications and professional experience to be an European Commissioner, and to give a positive contribution to the work of the Commission in the next five years.

What motivates me is the work I have been doing for 16 years in my home country as a Member of Parliament, and as minister, as well as my personal experience growing up as a European in a country that worked hard to be able to join the European Union, and has greatly benefited from its membership.

If confirmed as a Commissioner, I will contribute to Europe's stability and progress by implementing the Union's policies and projects, as agreed with the European Parliament and the Council. The priorities President-elect von der Leyen has set out for this Commission in her Political Guidelines, put before the European Parliament in July 2019, will be the compass guiding my action as a member of the College responsible for energy.

In particular, I strongly believe that leading the transition to a climate neutral economy and society, which will be at the heart of the mandate of the new Commission, is an extraordinary opportunity for Europe. Energy plays a key role in this transition. Together with Executive Vice-President-designate Timmermans and my other colleagues, we will have to design and

propose to the European Parliament and the Council policies that enable us to make Europe climate neutral by 2050.

I am fully committed to take the Political Guidelines forward, and I will work with the European Parliament and the Council to ensure these priorities are turned into concrete actions to the benefit of all European citizens. In my every day work, I will strive to build a Europe, which unites, integrates, and includes. We will address the climate and energy challenges with ambition and courage, meeting the needs of all, in cities and rural areas alike, whether they are from the East or the North, the South or the West.

As a member of the first female-led European Commission, I will pay particular attention to promoting gender mainstreaming. This principle is enshrined in Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), according to which “in all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality between men and women”. President-elect von der Leyen has put gender equality high on her agenda and committed to lead by example by forming a fully gender-equal College. I intend to apply the same principle to my team and will make sure that men and women are equally represented in my cabinet. I am also committed to build on the No Women No Panel initiative launched in February 2019. Gender mainstreaming also means an attention to factor in the preparation of any new initiative the impact this may have on women’s role in economy and society at large. In the area of energy policy, there is still much work to do on this front. For instance, the European Parliament recently published a study demonstrating that energy poverty affects more women than men. Furthermore, according to recent studies, the share of women in the energy sector is on average 22% in the global oil and gas industry and 32% in renewable energy. I am ready to engage with Parliament, stakeholders and civic society organisations to see how this can change in the future.

I intend to perform my duties as a Commissioner in the same spirit of public service as I have done in my previous political experiences. I can therefore commit to you already today to comply without fail, as soon as I am appointed, with the Treaty obligations on independence, transparency, impartiality and availability, as defined in Article 17(3) of the Treaty on European Union and Article 245 TFEU and the obligation of professional secrecy in Article 339 TFEU. I will comply with the ethical standards set out in the same Articles and in the Code of Conduct for Commissioners.

Serving as a government minister, my personal organisational and financial arrangements have been thoroughly scrutinised, and I have made a complete declaration of interest available to the European Parliament. I commit to updating it promptly, should it be subject to changes. If I am confirmed as Commissioner, I will fully respect the letter and spirit of the Treaty, in particular the obligation to act in the European interest and without taking any instructions. I will respect and honour the word and spirit of the Code of Conduct of Members of the European Commission and commit myself to the highest levels of transparency and ethics in my work as Commissioner.

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 as a Commissioner, I will take full political responsibility for the activities in my area of competence, as set out in the mission letter sent to me by President-elect von der Leyen on 10 September. I attach great importance to the principle of collegiality and will collaborate fully with other Members of the College. In my daily work I will adhere to the working methods of the new Commission, based on the principles of inclusion and loyal cooperation among all the members of the College.

As energy has a central role to play in delivering the European Green Deal and given that many of the elements within this framework are closely intertwined, I will invest in coordination and cooperation to ensure we deliver coherent and well-designed policies. In particular, I will cooperate closely with the Executive Vice-President-designate for the European Green Deal Frans Timmermans. I will actively take part to the Commissioners' Group chaired by him, which will steer and coordinate the work in this area. I will also participate to Commissioners' project teams set up to shape specific new initiatives. I will strive to ensure that the energy policy dimension is taken into account into the collegiate discussions, including on external relations in line with the spirit of a geopolitical Commission. I will pay a particular attention to ensuring that the synergies between the different parts of the Commission services working on energy related files are maintained and fully exploited, as I believe that a joined up approach is the best guarantee to deliver results.

I intend to engage actively with and listen to external stakeholders, including civil society and non-governmental organisations, continuing and strengthening where possible the existing consultation mechanisms and fora in the area of energy. I will also engage with citizens and ensure that the European Union and its policies are better understood, in particular in my home country. I will visit every Member State within the first half of my mandate at the latest.

I am fully aware of the importance of equal treatment of the Parliament and the Council, and of the special partnership between the Parliament and the Commission. I will be particularly vigilant in ensuring that relevant provisions in the 2010 Framework Agreement between the two institutions are fully respected in the area under my responsibility.

As a former Member of Parliament myself, I value the democratic dialogue with the European Parliament. I commit to proactively engage with the European Parliament at all stages of the policy-making and legislative processes, including participation in trilogue meetings, and stand ready to appear before the European Parliament whenever called. I will ensure the European Parliament is regularly briefed, notably on topical issues within my portfolio. I will work closely with the relevant Committees, and be active and present during the preparation of resolutions requesting that the Commission legislates.

President-elect Ursula von der Leyen supports a right of initiative for the European Parliament. She committed that her Commissioner will follow-up to Parliamentary resolutions adopted by a majority of its members with a legislative act, in full respect of proportionality, subsidiarity and better law-making principles. I fully support this objective and I will work hand in hand with Parliament at every stage of Article 225 TFEU resolutions.

Transparency is a priority for this Commission. I will make public on the respective web pages all the contacts and meetings I hold with professional organisations or self-employed individuals on any matter relating to EU policy making and implementation, in accordance with the applicable rules of the Commission. I will work with Parliament in a transparent way, in a spirit of loyalty, mutual trust and cooperation.

3a) What are the main priorities you intend to pursue in order to fully accomplish all five dimensions of the Energy Union (energy security; internal energy market; energy efficiency; decarbonisation; research, innovation and competitiveness)?

The Energy Union constitutes a solid foundation for taking forward energy policy in the course of my mandate in accordance with the political guidelines of the President-elect Ursula von der Leyen. It provides the right balance between sustainability, security of supply, and affordability, thereby ensuring acceptance and citizen empowerment across the Union. I will strive to maintain this balance and continue work across the five dimensions on Energy Union within the framework of the European Green Deal. I will work to ensure that the decarbonisation of the energy system delivers for all citizens and for all regions. Europeans must have access to affordable, secure, reliable and clean energy.

My first priority will be to complete the Energy Union in all its five dimensions, working in close cooperation with the European Parliament and the Member States.

Over the past years, there was clear progress in this regard, which would not have been possible without the support of the European Parliament and of Member States. New legislation was approved, including an enabling framework to address economic, social, environmental and industrial issues. In this context, the Governance of the Energy Union constitutes a key instrument for ensuring that we will deliver on all the five dimensions of the Energy Union through the National Energy and Climate Plans and above all reach our headline targets for renewable energy and energy efficiency. The national plans, the progress reports and the annual State of the Energy Union reports will be the basis for political monitoring by the European Parliament and Council. They will also provide the basis for exchanging best practices within the Union and among Member States, and a framework for dialogue with citizens and stakeholders. We must further ensure regional cooperation between Member States and close involvement of stakeholders and citizens.

The accomplishment of all five dimensions of the Energy Union relies on the full implementation of the energy acquis, and in particular the Clean Energy for All Europeans package. In the area of the internal energy market, new rules for wholesale and the retail electricity markets aim at ensuring cost-effective delivery of our ambitions and at empowering consumers and will require action at the national and cross-national level. One important example is enhancing cross-border electricity trade to the benefit of consumers and of security of supply, which will require close monitoring to ensure that Member States fulfil

the provisions, included in the new Electricity Regulation, to maximise the interconnector capacity available to the market.

Open and competitive markets in Europe are the most effective way to secure low carbon energy at affordable prices. Well-functioning electricity and gas markets, based on fair competition between energy suppliers across borders, empowering consumers, and ensuring the integration of renewable energy, will help us to deliver a decarbonised, competitive and innovative energy sector. In order to deliver greater benefits to consumers, we need to address the missing links in the energy system and the new trends in our markets.

Stopping unnecessary subsidies to the most carbon-intensive fossil fuels plants under capacity mechanisms is another key provision of the new Electricity regulation that will favour the transition and requires close monitoring. In the context of security of supply legislation, I will also monitor the full implementation of cross-border solidarity provisions.

I will need to step up our action to decarbonise the energy sector. The Clean energy package already provides a strong basis for action, and the Commission's monitoring of progress with the annual State of the Energy Union Communication will allow drawing attention to areas where additional action is needed, be it at Union level or in Member States. Based on this monitoring and in view of the comprehensive plan to increase by 2021 the EU's target for 2030 towards 55% in a responsible way, I will assess whether there is a need to review legislation in the energy field.

A priority area will be to ensure that energy-efficiency-first principle is implemented across the board. I will examine how to improve the energy performance of buildings and increase renovation rates. I will also propose initiatives based on the new, solid evidence base of national energy and climate plans and the related progress reports. In this regard, I will also work on the smart integration of the electricity, building, heating and cooling, transport and industrial sectors.

I will assess the role of gas, including decarbonised gases like hydrogen, in the transition towards a climate-neutral economy.

The Energy Union would remain incomplete without more progress in research, innovation and competitiveness. In that area, it will be important to better coordinate our policies with Member States, in order to ensure that clean technologies, such as storage, hydrogen and batteries are further developed and support Europe's competitiveness by maintaining large parts of the value chain within the Union. I will explore with other members of the College how we can ensure that the Union leads in research and innovation in support to clean energy transition. I will further explore the potential of the Strategic Energy Technology Plan.

Beyond these priorities, we need to reap the benefits of the Energy Union internationally, pursuing the clean energy transition in line with the Paris Agreement, while encouraging other major emitters to raise the level of their ambition and providing opportunities for European energy investment in third countries. Ensuring the Union's energy security will require a further strengthening of the external dimension of the Energy Union and in this context, I will also assess how sources of natural gas supply can be diversified at competitive prices, in particular by making use of the potential of liquefied natural gas.

3b). What are the specific legislative and non-legislative initiatives, including financial instruments, you envisage to put forward within your mandate and in particular as part of the ‘European Green Deal’ to be presented within the first 100 days of the new Commission? What would be the main content and timetable of those initiatives?

I will contribute to the work of the Commissioners’ Group on the European Green Deal under the guidance of the Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal and work with relevant colleagues.

As energy represents about 75% of the EU’s greenhouse gas emissions, energy policy will be central in delivering the climate targets, which are an essential part of the European Green Deal. The deal will provide the overarching framework for taking forward climate and energy policies in the coming years. My job will be to ensure that the transition path in the decarbonisation of the energy sector enables the fulfilment of the climate neutrality objective, while ensuring security of supply and affordability. Energy and climate policies can also improve the environmental footprint of energy supply and demand, such as by contributing to air quality improvements.

Firstly, the Commission will have to set out in the first 100 days a roadmap for achieving climate neutrality by 2050. The centrepiece will be a European climate law enshrining in EU law the 2050 climate neutrality target. This will be supported by a legislative proposal on the Just Transition Fund. I will actively contribute to designing those proposals under the steering and coordination of the Executive Vice-President-designate Frans Timmermans.

I attach a lot of importance in ensuring that the transition to climate neutrality is a just transition for all. Not all Member States and Regions start from the same point and will be affected to the same degree. The transition will be more difficult and costly for those which rely heavily on coal or on industries with high emissions, and for islands which need to transition out of fossil fuels for their electricity supply.

Nobody should be left behind in course of the transition. This is also a condition for building a broader basis of consensus for the climate neutrality objective. The Just Transition Fund will therefore aim to support the most affected regions in the development of restructuring strategies through the financing of targeted projects facilitating the shift to low-carbon technologies and cushioning its social and economic impact.

Furthermore, the President-elect intends to put forward a comprehensive plan to increase the European Union’s greenhouse gas emission reduction target for 2030 to 50% and possibly towards 55% in a responsible way. This has a direct connection with the energy sector and with our policies.

An increase in ambition is likely to require a higher amount of investments, with a higher share of renewable energy in the mix and additional efforts in energy efficiency. Therefore, we will need to assess the need to review the legislation in light of the increased ambition of the European Green Deal based on a thorough impact assessment. In order to do that, I will ask my services to begin a robust impact assessment process, including by assessing the final National Energy and Climate Plans and their level of ambition with regard notably to the current 2030 renewables and energy efficiency targets.

In parallel, I will invest in ensuring the full implementation of the Energy package. Engaging in a ‘tour des capitales’ in the first half of the mandate of this Commission, I will conduct

implementation dialogues with Member States to identify and exchange best practices based, inter alia, on key subjects of the energy transition identified in the final National Energy and Climate Plans.

Once these building blocks are in place, in the course of my mandate, I will develop further initiatives to contribute to the European Green Deal. In particular, I consider that well-functioning, integrated markets and energy efficiency will be key levers to promote climate neutrality, as I indicate in the reply to question 3a.

Working with my colleagues, I will also seek to ensure that the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan and the Strategy for Green financing promote the transition in a manner which is consistent with the needs of the energy sector. Building on the lessons learnt from Smart Finance for Smart Buildings initiative and other energy efficiency instruments (European energy efficiency fund, Private Finance for Energy Efficiency); I will contribute to the implementation of new financial instruments under the next multi-annual financial framework, in particular through InvestEU. New financial instruments should also focus on SMEs, and aiming to facilitate the market for energy services companies.

Facilitating the smart integration of the electricity, building, heating and cooling, transport and industry sectors has the potential to speed up the deployment of clean energy across the economy. To exploit this potential, I will push for the smart integration of the electricity, heating, transport and industry sectors.

To ensure adequacy of generation capacity, I commit to work closely with Member States, also in the context of high-level groups that will enhance regional cooperation based on National Energy and Climate Plans. I intend to actively promote the synergies between the different groups of regional cooperation in pursuit of the overall objectives of the European Green Deal.

Increased ambition for emissions reductions by 2030 will also mean accelerating the completion and modernisation of energy grids.

I will work with other members of the College on the Circular Economy Action Plan, in particular on issues related to the buildings sector and strategic clean energy technologies, including eco-design and energy labelling.

As mentioned above, I would assess the role of gas in the transition towards a carbon-neutral economy, as well as for security of supply, and how to ensure a well-functioning gas market to the benefit of all, notably the consumers.

Throughout my mandate, protecting vulnerable consumers and tackling energy poverty will be a priority area: these aims are closely tied to delivering an economy that works for people, the commitment to fight poverty and to fully implement the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The competitiveness of our low carbon technologies sector will deserve a priority attention, notably within the context of the long-term strategy for Europe's industrial future. I will work on the international dimension of the Green Deal through a strong energy and climate diplomacy, notably engaging with major emitters in bilateral energy dialogues and promoting the deployment of EU led clean energy technologies in third countries.

3c) How will you concretely apply the ‘One In, One Out’ principle in relation to any legislative proposal related to the Energy Union?

The Commission will develop a new instrument to deliver on the ‘One In, One Out’ principle. Every new legislative proposal creating new burden should relieve people and businesses of an equivalent existing burden at EU level in the same policy area. It will be applied at the level of the entire policy area going therefore beyond each individual piece of legislation imposing new burdens. This will ensure that the overarching policy objectives are achieved efficiently and with minimum burden and the Commission always has the leeway to act where needed. I will ensure that this principle becomes a key component of the energy agenda.

In this spirit, some steps have already been taken with the Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action. In particular, the introduction of the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) has contributed to integrating and streamlining most of the current energy and climate planning requirements of Member States as well as the Commission's monitoring obligations, thus reducing disproportionate administrative burden.

A concrete area to reduce burden is with regards the energy and climate reporting obligations. As the latest example of the Energy Union Governance Regulation shows, our aim will continue to be streamlining the reporting obligations stemming from EU legislation across energy, climate and other Energy Union related policy areas, in order to achieve an even greater simplification. The Commission will also work with Member States to ensure that, when transposing the ‘Clean Energy for all Europeans’ legislation, they do not add unnecessary administrative burden.

In line with the above examples, I will consider the ‘One In, One Out’ as a guiding principle for any new legislative proposal related to the Energy Union to ensure further integration of energy policies and overall consistency of the energy acquis. Our proposals will be evidence-based, widely consulted upon, subject to an impact assessment and reviewed by the independent Regulatory Scrutiny Board. They will also respect the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity and show the clear benefit of European action.

3d) Furthermore, how will you ensure full and effective implementation of existing legislation in the field of energy, in particular the ‘Clean Energy for all Europeans’ package? What concrete means and measures will you apply to ensure implementation and enforcement of the EU acquis by the Member States?

Full and correct implementation of the entire energy acquis is key for the success of the Energy Union and the European Green Deal. The Commission, as guardian of the Treaties, has the task to monitor the complete and correct implementation. I commit to providing continuous support and guidance to Member States on the implementation of the entire energy acquis, and to take enforcement action, including infringement procedures, if needed, to ensure that Member States fully implement energy legislation and comply with EU law.

The ‘Clean energy for all Europeans’ and the Energy Security packages consist of various Directives and Regulations which recently entered into force. The implementation of this legislative package should enable seizing the potential synergies within the energy and climate policies, in a spirit of cooperation with Member States; drive the cost-effective deployment of renewables, while promoting an active role for consumers; drive the effort of reducing our energy consumption, reducing gas imports and creating new jobs. New rules for

the wholesale and the retail markets are fit to ensure cost-effective delivery of our ambitions while empowering consumers to play a more active role. The Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action through the integrated national Energy and Climate Plans provides a comprehensive tool to guide and monitor the transition and to make the most out of the synergies within the energy and climate policies, in a spirit of cooperation with Member States. Other legislative initiatives have reinforced energy security, as it is the case for the Regulations on the Security of gas supply and on Risk preparedness.

While the Regulations are directly applicable in the Member States from their date of entry into force, Directives require Member States to transpose them into national law by a set deadline. Given the relevance of the Clean energy package, the Commission has been assisting Member States from its entry into force, to ensure its best possible implementation before the expiry of the transposition period. My services and myself will continue systematic exchanges with Member States to promote good practice in implementation of National Energy and Climate Plans and to ensure solid transposition of the energy and climate legislation.

I will ensure support to Member States with concerted actions, regular meetings, implementation guidance, and continued dialogues, both at political and technical level. In particular for the Governance Regulation, which is a core part of the package as it aims to ensure the achievement of the 2030 targets, I will support my services so that they continue to meet Member States in a technical working group. We have done so in view of assisting Member States in the preparation of the Plans and will continue to do so in order to accompany closely the implementation of the Plans. This way, Member States can exchange on best practices and get detailed guidance by the Commission on all provisions of the Regulation.

I will use the visits to all capitals to ensure full and effective implementation of the energy acquis and promote good practice in the implementation of National Energy and Climate Plans by effective policy instruments and an integrated approach across the energy system.

I will use the National Energy and Climate Plans and regular State of the Energy Union reports for close dialogue with Member States. I will closely monitor progress on the achievement of the 2030 targets and regularly report to the European Parliament and the Council on these.

3e) How will you ensure that the 2030 targets on energy efficiency, renewables and electricity interconnection are reached?

Ensuring ambition and delivery, exploring synergies between different policies and close cooperation with Member States in the implementation of our policies are the key principles that will ensure our success in delivering the Union's 2030 targets. The Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action sets out how to put these principles in practice by a process of planning, implementing and monitoring the transformation of the energy sector and the economy more broadly. The aim of this process is to set up the right targets, policies and measures that allow the Union to fulfil its Energy Union objectives along all five dimensions, and in particular the 2030 energy and climate targets. Both Parliament and Council have a clear role in the political monitoring of these targets.

National Energy and Climate Plans, a key element of the Governance process, are an unprecedented opportunity for us collectively to better explore synergies between policy areas and to adopt a true ‘whole of government/whole-of-society’ approach. In particular, in relation to the 2030 targets on energy efficiency, renewables and electricity interconnection, such synergies are clear. The less energy we consume, the less generation capacity we need to install. The more electricity markets are interconnected and competitive, the better we will manage to deploy renewables across the Union and deliver their benefits to consumers. Therefore, I am fully committed to continue to pursuing this ‘whole of government’ approach with Member States when pursuing the achievement of the Union’s 2030 targets.

Member States’ draft National Energy and Climate Plans provide a strategy of how they intend to contribute to meeting the EU-wide 2030 targets and to other dimensions of the Energy Union. The draft NECPs present some important gaps in terms of ambition for 2030, with regard to the Union renewables target. In a number of instances, Member States also have not addressed the 2030 interconnection target adequately. Based on this assessment, the Commission has recommended to Member States to increase their ambition levels to achieve the 2030 targets in a spirit of solidarity.

I will do my utmost in the remaining months before the end of the year to support the Council Presidency and Member States in their efforts to close the gap between national contributions and the minimum targets of the Union for 2030. Closing the ambition gaps for renewables and energy efficiency would also further reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help achieving the binding national emission reduction targets for sectors outside of the EU Emissions Trading System. If the assessment of final National Energy and Climate Plans still confirms a gap and a lack in policies and measures underpinning national ambition levels, I will consider measures to fill the gaps.

In light of the priorities of the European Green Deal presented by the President-elect, Member States should also reconsider how national untapped potential could be better exploited.

In parallel, I will monitor the delivery of the 2020 energy targets, which are a key milestone on our way to 2030. The Union is not on track to deliver its 2020 target of improving energy efficiency by 20%. The Union is on track to meeting its 2020 renewables target and Member States will be required to maintain as a minimum their national renewable energy target also in the time after 2020. In order to learn from our policies supporting these targets, I will ask services to conduct swiftly an ex-post evaluation of policies and measures delivering the 2020 energy efficiency and renewable energy targets. This evaluation will serve as a dialogue with Member States on how to improve delivery against the 2030 targets and complement action to tackle potential gaps in the delivery of 2030 targets, the Commission’s assessment of progress, the State of the Energy Union reports and dialogues with investors on financing required to achieve the 2030 targets. Instruments available under the next multi-annual financial framework will support the delivery of the 2030 ambition levels.

4a) What concrete initiatives in the field of energy, in particular with regard to the 2030 targets on energy efficiency and renewables, do you envisage in order to fulfil the ambition set out in the political guidelines for the next European Commission of reducing emissions by at least 50% by 2030 and increasing the Union's target for 2030 towards 55% in a responsible way?

The current objective for 2030 is to reduce emissions by at least 40% and all the legislation to achieve this objective is already in force. The full implementation of the legislation at stake, such as the Energy Efficiency Directive, the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, the Renewables Directive, Effort Sharing Regulation and Emissions Trading System Directive, should result in EU-28 greenhouse gas emission reductions of around 45% by 2030.

To fulfil the ambition of reducing emissions by at least 50% by 2030, set out in the political guidelines, it is essential to ensure first the full application of the existing framework of the Clean Energy for All Europeans package also through the adoption of the required tertiary acts.

Member States will finalise their national energy and climate plans by the end of this year. I can reassure that the European Commission will make sure that they deliver. We must join all forces to make the best of synergies, including at regional level. Furthermore, I am also fully committed to assess the ambition levels of final National Energy and Climate Plans.

Already today, we can encourage Member States to step up their ambitions on energy efficiency and renewables. The recently agreed 2030 targets for energy efficiency and renewable energy are minimum targets (at least 32.5% and at least 32% respectively). With the Communication ‘United in delivering the Energy Union and Climate Action - Setting the foundations for a successful clean energy transition’ and related Recommendations to Member States, the Commission has provided guidance for the finalisation of National Energy and Climate Plans. Member States have been requested to increase their ambition and to be clear about the policies they intend to use to deliver on their ambition.

Despite all these efforts, there could be a need to be more ambitious when it comes to EU 2030 targets. I want the services under my responsibility to start an analysis of whether raising the ambition to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50%, with a view to increase the EU’s target for 2030 towards 55% in a responsible way, may imply a revision of the legislation in the energy area. For this, we will conduct a comprehensive assessment of the economic, social and environmental impacts and consult widely with stakeholders and ensure Member States are fully engaged.

Any increased ambition will need to be delivered jointly by the energy sector and other sectors of the economy. The energy sector, and in particular clean energy solutions, can support decarbonisation in some of those other sectors.

Initiatives to facilitate the smart integration of the electricity, building, heating and cooling, transport and industry sectors (also known as sector integration and sector coupling) would help to accelerate the clean energy transition and the decarbonisation of the European economy. At the same time, smarter, decentralised, digitalised and more open energy networks will allow us to provide new sustainable energy services for empowered consumers. More broadly, initiatives mentioned under other questions will contribute to achieving the long-term climate neutrality objective.

4b) How will you ensure Europe follows the energy-efficiency-first principle across the board as mentioned in your mission letter?

The energy-efficiency-first principle is now enshrined in our energy acquis. We will now have to turn to implementation. The President-elect has indicated with the mission letter that I

should ensure Europe follows the energy-efficiency-first principle across the board. The whole energy system will have to contribute to become the first climate neutral economy and the energy efficiency first principle will be decisive in supporting these efforts.

In this context, I want to look at how Europe can significantly improve the energy performance of buildings and increase renovation rates. Much stronger renovation rates are key for reducing energy demand and emissions in this sector.

The services under my responsibility will also investigate how to best apply the energy-efficiency-first principle in our future investment decisions in energy infrastructure and how it could contribute to the internal energy market or address the security of supply issues.

It is equally important to properly look at the energy demand side, as energy efficiency could be easier and a more cost-effective solution, with additional benefits in terms of health and well-being of European citizens. Therefore, energy system and actions to moderate demand should be properly analysed whenever they are most cost-efficient.

All this would require a solid analytical base and proper assessment of energy savings potential, so that consideration of energy efficiency as an option is actually technically possible. More data, especially on the EU building stock, as well as benchmarks for energy efficient technologies, products and services will be required and I will support my services in their on-going work to collect and share this information. Finally, I would like to continue to put emphasis on the wider benefits of energy efficiency, in terms of job creation, health or increased level of comfort. Energy efficient behaviour must be a part of the shift to consumers and companies conscious of their impact on the environment and climate.

4c) How will you work to ensure that the 2050 climate-neutrality target, referred to in the political guidelines, is achieved, without prejudice to the right of each Member State to determine its own energy mix?

Defining the energy mix is a sovereign right of Member States and the EU has a variety of mixes across the territory. This flexibility and variety of choice is well reflected by the diversity of Member States' national renewable energy and energy efficiency action plans for 2020 and their National Energy and Climate Plans for 2030.

The Long Term Strategy analysed options for energy system to move towards net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. This analysis shows that it is possible for the Member States to determine- their own energy mix in order to decarbonise and deliver the energy transition. This is because of the wide variety of pathways, technologies and fuel types that are available for Member States to choose from.

Planning early for climate-neutrality by 2050 will allow the Member States, businesses and citizens to make choices and tailor their pathways to national circumstances, industrial fabric, resource endowments or consumer preferences. Even in areas where it is difficult or too costly to decarbonise completely, remaining emissions can be balanced by carbon sinks and carbon capture and storage (CCS).

I will take due account of national specificities when cooperating with Member States on the development of the European Green Deal, the implementation of the Clean Energy for All Europeans package, national energy and climate plans and on long-term strategies. Member

States will be in a position to develop their own cost effective pathways to bring the EU to net zero.

4d) What measures do you envisage to support the most affected and most exposed by the transition to a cleaner and more efficient energy system? What concrete measures will you take in order to support Europe's coal and carbon-intensive regions in transition? How do you intend to align your activities with other portfolios in this context? How will you work to ensure that energy-intensive industries, such as the steel industry, become fossil-free in the future?

As part of my contribution to the European Green Deal I will ensure that communities most affected by the low-carbon transition in industrial, coal and carbon-intensive regions, as well as energy islands receive targeted support. Under the coordination of Executive Vice-President-designate Timmermans, I will contribute to the design and implementation of a Just Transition Fund to be put forward by Commissioner-designate Elisa Ferreira, to address the distributional and geographical impact of the transition to climate neutrality.

A just transition in coal and carbon-intensive regions and energy islands can only be achieved if we make use of all available funds and support tools at regional, national and European level. That is why I will work closely with other Commissioners especially with the Commissioner-designate for Cohesion Policy and Reforms, under the guidance of Executive Vice-President-designate for the European Green Deal.

I would like to highlight also the importance to tackle energy poverty, a phenomenon that concerns today as many as 50 million Europeans. The Clean energy for all Europeans legislation, notably under the Governance Regulation and the Electricity Directive should be rapidly implemented. I will engage with Member States to ensure that they take effective action and give energy poverty the necessary priority as they develop and implement their National Energy and Climate Plans. As a good example, energy efficiency obligation schemes in four countries have already included clear targets to tackle this issue. Similarly, I will also ensure that national Long-Term Renovation Strategies required under the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive contribute to the alleviation of energy poverty, as more performing housing means that it is easier for citizens to maintain indoor comfort in winter while lowering their energy bills.

I will also facilitate the sharing of best practice between Member States and support local authorities – making the Energy Poverty Observatory a consolidated tool of our work and engaging with the Covenant of Mayors.

Finally, I will be attentive to the impact that the climate transition has on energy intensive industries, I will monitor the evolution of the sector and on their energy efficiency level. I will contribute to the work on the review of the Energy Taxation Directive and on a carbon border tax that will be led by Commissioner-designate Paolo Gentiloni.

5. What concrete initiatives, including financial instruments, do you envisage to increase the interconnection of energy networks in order to fully realise the internal energy market and to improve the Union's energy security?

A forward-looking, modern, secure and smart energy network infrastructure is a precondition for achieving an integrated and competitive internal energy market, security of supply and the

large-scale deployment of energy from renewable sources. This is necessary for the success of the Green Deal.

Investments of more than EUR 200 billion worth in electricity transmission, storage and smart grids projects will be needed until 2030 in the EU. This is 30% more than the necessary investments in the previous decade. This steep rise in investment needs is driven by rapidly increasing use of electricity in sectors so far dominated by fossil fuels, such as transport, and heating and cooling.

The EU's policy on trans-European networks for energy has been instrumental in delivering the necessary projects and investments – which are the hardware for well-functioning markets and energy security. The Trans-European Network-Energy (TEN-E) Regulation, covering electricity, gas, oil and CO2 networks, provides for a focused approach to identify and implement Projects of Common Interest (PCIs) based on strong regional cooperation. Projects of Common Interest may receive financial assistance under the Connecting Europe Facility programme (CEF) and CEF has already provided the necessary co-funding to many emblematic infrastructure projects. Indeed, thanks to this financing, gas infrastructure projects key for energy security are on track for completion in the coming years.

The focus of the trans-European energy infrastructure policy mirrors the increasing role of electricity in the energy system, where renewable energy will constitute half of the electricity generation by 2030, driving the decarbonisation of sectors so far dominated by fossil fuels.

The Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 will provide a number of tools to support investments in the energy networks. The European Parliament has reached a partial political agreement this spring on two important programmes providing EU financial support to an interconnected European energy system: the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and the InvestEU Programme. It will be crucial to secure a sufficiently high budget for CEF Energy under the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027. The Commission proposed a budget of EUR 8.65 billion.

In this context, I will implement the new window under the Connecting Europe Facility that will finance cross-border projects in the field of renewable energy from 2021. I will also deliver on the Renewables Financing Mechanism as foreseen under the Energy Union Governance. At the same time, I will continue ensuring solid management of the CEF programme to continue speeding up the implementation of infrastructure Projects of Common Interest.

I will also facilitate the best use of InvestEU building on the success of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), which has catalysed close to EUR 6 billion of financing for trans-European energy projects.

The role of the EIB Group as well as other future implementing partners of the InvestEU Programme will be crucial in achieving the 2030 climate and energy targets and the objective for interconnections.

I will work closely with my colleagues to contribute to the best use of cohesion policy funding also in the future to deliver the necessary financing for regional and local infrastructure projects. Under the current financial framework, it has been the main contributor to the energy sector by funding volume in the EU budget.

I will intensify regional cooperation. It has showed its clear added value in trans-European infrastructure development. We now need to step up regional cooperation also in the areas of renewable energy and energy efficiency in all the four High Level Groups: Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP); North Seas Energy Cooperation; Interconnections for South-West Europe and Central and South Eastern Europe Energy Connectivity (CESEC). In this context, I will also ensure the strategic guidance and coordination to progress and complete priority projects such as the Baltic synchronization.

6a) How will you and your services ensure efficient coordination with other Commissioners whose policy areas have an impact on, or are affected by, your portfolio, and in particular the Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal, the Vice-President for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight (in relation to the European Battery Alliance and the energy aspects of strategic foresight), the Commissioner for Internal Market (in relation to digitalisation in the field of energy), the Commissioner for Transport (in relation to synergies between energy and transport), the Commissioner for Innovation and Youth (in relation to research and innovation in the energy field), the Commissioner for Economy (in relation to the review of the Energy Taxation Directive and the design of a Carbon Border Tax), and the Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms (in relation to the Just Transition Fund and regional cooperation)?

I attach great importance to the principle of collegiality and will collaborate fully with other Members of the College. I will in my daily work adhere to the working methods of the new Commission, based on the principles of inclusion and loyal cooperation among all the members of the College. I will make sure that my services work in efficient and effective coordination with other services dealing with policy areas linked to energy, to ensure we deliver coherent and well-designed policies.

I will work closely with the Executive Vice-President-designate for the European Green Deal and Commissioner-designate for Climate Action, Frans Timmermans, and under his guidance as far as the Green Deal is concerned.

I will collaborate closely with the Vice-President-designate for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight, Maroš Šefčovič, concerning the work on the European Battery Alliance, working also with Member States and stakeholders. In doing so, I will draw from his solid experience as Vice-President for the Energy Union during the last 5 years.

I will coordinate with the Commissioner-designate for Internal Market, Sylvie Goulard, with regards to the digitalisation in the energy sector. The close connections between technological innovations and the energy sector have proved to be strong during the last years (if we just think to smart integration of the electricity, heating, transport and industry sectors). For this reason, we will work together to enhance Europe's technological sovereignty, looking at investments in new technologies, such as blockchain and Artificial Intelligence, among others. In this spirit, while working on the digitalisation of the energy sector, I will also rely on the close cooperation with the Executive Vice-President-designate for a Europe fit for the digital age and Commissioner-designate for Competition, Margrethe Vestager.

Cooperation with the Commissioner-designate for Transport, Rovana Plumb, will be crucial regarding the concept of smart integration. A sustainable and smart mobility will be key to make the transport sector fit for a clean, digital and modern economy. As part of this, we will

promote a higher uptake of sustainable and alternative transport fuels for road, maritime and air transport.

To make progress towards a clean energy system, we will need to foster research and innovation in the energy field. With this ambition, I will cooperate with the Commissioner-designate for Innovation and Youth, Mariya Gabriel. I will make best use of the Horizon Europe Programme, especially in relation to the cluster including climate, energy and mobility issues. To reach this goal, it will be very important to work with Member States, the research community, civil society and other Commissioners, making sure that research, policy and economic priorities go hand in hand.

Together with the Commissioner-designate for Economy, Paolo Gentiloni, I will contribute to the revision of the Energy Taxation Directive to ensure that it is consistent with our climate-neutral commitments and end fossil-fuel subsidies. I will also contribute to the design of a Carbon Border Tax, as key tool to avoid carbon leakage, which should be fully compliant with WTO rules. In this spirit, I will also work to increase the use of the euro in energy markets, given that, despite the EU being the world's largest energy importer, roughly 85% of EU imports are currently paid in dollars.

People and regions will be the main actors helping to drive the transition to a cleaner and more efficient energy system. Therefore, I will cooperate with the Commissioner-designate for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa Ferreira, on the design and implementation of the new Just Transition Fund. The objective is to ensure that it provides targeted support to industrial, coal and energy intensive regions, as well as islands under the Clean energy for EU islands initiative. Together, we will support all regional cooperation efforts towards better integrated markets, while keeping the consumers at the heart of the energy system. To demonstrate that the consumers are really the priority of our work, I will make use of the Energy Poverty Observatory to help Member States identify areas needing the most support.

As a team player, I will work with all the members of the College in line with the principle of collegiality.

6b) How will you personally ensure the good quality of legislative proposals, full transparency of lobbying activities (directed at you and your services), and consistent and balanced consultation of all stakeholders taking also into account the need to carry out thorough impact assessments, in particular concerning the impact of all proposed legislation on SMEs?

I intend to design, negotiate and implement energy policy fully in line with the President's-elect Political Guidelines, and in full compliance with the principles of transparency, accountability, collegiality and personal independence.

I will ensure that EU legislation in the energy field is effective, proportional and fair, prepared in the framework of an open, inclusive, transparent and evidence-based law-making process, and in full respect of the proportionality, subsidiarity and Better Regulation principles.

In line with the President-elect Political Guidelines, I will work closely with Executive Vice-President-designate Timmermans and my other colleagues to deliver the European Green Deal. I will contribute by designing and proposing energy policies based on thorough impact assessment of their social, economic and environmental consequences, which will be reviewed by the independent Regulatory Scrutiny Board, and on in-depth consultation of

experts and citizens. They will also respect the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity and show the clear benefit of European action.

As stated in my answer to question 3, I will consider the ‘One In, One Out’ as a guiding principle for any new legislative proposal related to the Energy Union to ensure further integration of energy policies and overall consistency of the energy acquis.

I will strive to minimize regulatory burdens on businesses, citizens and public administrations, in particular for SMEs. Where required our impact assessments will be supported by an SME test, which requires specific consultation of SME stakeholders to establish the nature and magnitude of the impacts an initiative might entail for SMEs. The application of the ‘One-in, one-out’ principle will contribute to our objective of cutting red tape.

I fully agree with the need for consistent and balanced consultation of all stakeholders, which is essential in designing energy policy as it impacts citizens lives and businesses to a large extent. To this end, I intend to engage actively with and listen to external stakeholders, including key energy stakeholders, businesses, industry, civil society and non-governmental organizations. Also, I will continue and strengthen where possible the existing consultation mechanisms and fora in the area of energy. This is essential to achieve a just transition that leaves nobody behind, in line with the spirit of the European Climate Pact as envisaged by the President-elect.

I commit to basing the relations with stakeholders on the Treaty obligations on independence, transparency, impartiality and availability. As stated in my answer to question number 2, I will make public on the respective web pages all the contacts and meetings I hold with professional organizations or self-employed individuals on any matter relating to EU policy making and implementation. I will ensure that my cabinet and the services under my responsibility base their relationships with stakeholders on the same principles and obligations and act accordingly.

7) How will you and your services ensure enhanced cooperation with the ITRE Committee? What concrete steps will you take to ensure that the ITRE Committee is given in a timely and proactive manner the same information, as Council and Member States, with respect to planned legislative initiatives or other major initiatives? How will you facilitate scrutiny by the ITRE Committee of legislative and non-legislative procedures, providing at an early stage all necessary information concerning the preparation of legislative acts, delegated and implementing acts, and facilitate monitoring of their implementation? How do you intend to ensure that ITRE is kept appropriately informed and involved in relation to any international agreements in your policy area?

In her Political Guidelines, President-elect von der Leyen has set out her aim to strengthen the partnership with the European Parliament. I will support this aim in every way. In the past, the Commission and the Parliament have already shown that they share a political vision of an energy policy that is guaranteeing affordable, secure, reliable, and clean energy for all Europeans. In this context, the cooperation with the European Parliament, and notably the ITRE committee, will remain of utmost importance, be it in legislative or non-legislative matters.

My aim is to cooperate closely with all Members of Parliament in general, and to continue the structured dialogue with the ITRE committee in particular. As mentioned in my previous answers, I will always be pleased to take part in committee meetings, which will enable me to regularly update its members on legislative acts, delegated and implementing acts. Moreover, committee members will always find my door open when there is a need for exchanging views and discussion. I will also participate in trilogue sessions, to pave the way for compromises on legislative initiatives between the legislators.

As provided for in the Framework Agreement on relations between the Parliament and the Commission, I guarantee that I will apply the principle of equal treatment for Parliament and the Council as co-legislators, especially as regards the provision of information.

Together with my services, I will ensure that any information on planned legislative initiatives or other major initiatives to be provided to the Council will equally and pro-actively be shared with the ITRE committee without timely delay. I will be in close contact with the ITRE Chair in that regard.

President-elect Ursula von der Leyen supports a right of initiative for the European Parliament. She committed that her Commissioner will follow-up to Parliamentary resolutions adopted by a majority of its members with a legislative act, in full respect of proportionality, subsidiarity and better law-making principles. I fully support this objective and I will work hand in hand with Parliament at every stage of Article 225 TFEU resolutions.

In view of delegated and implementing acts, I will ensure that articles 290 and 291 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union will be respected. I am committed to a proper application of these provisions in line with the case law of the Court of Justice and with the criteria recently agreed between the Parliament, the Council and the Commission, for delineation between delegated and implementing acts. I will also enhance the close dialogue with the ITRE committee established under the last term, especially with regard to delegated acts; this will include equal information sharing with the Parliament and Council, in full respect of the inter-institutional agreement, and exchange of views in the ITRE committee in case needed. I will also ensure that my services invite the Parliament to participate in the expert groups where delegated acts are discussed. As agreed between the three institutions in the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making, Council and Parliament experts have systematic access to all expert groups preparing delegated acts.

Implementation of adopted EU legislation is essential for the credibility of the Union. Therefore, I am fully committed to respect the Commission's review and reporting obligations towards the Parliament in order to facilitate its involvement in monitoring the implementation of Union legislation.

In view of international agreements in my policy area, I want to involve the Parliament and take into account its views as far as possible. In this regard, my services and I stand ready to regularly brief the ITRE committee on the international dimension under my responsibility. This includes our energy dialogues with third countries, the Energy Community, the Energy Charter Treaty, our Eastern Partnership, and others.

When negotiating international energy agreements, I will fully comply with the relevant Treaty provisions, as well as with the Framework Agreement. This will mean that whenever appropriate, we will ask the Council of the EU for negotiation mandates, seek the

Parliament's consent when relevant. The Parliament is to be fully and immediately informed of proceedings.

In the nuclear field, the Euratom Community is party to all major international Conventions concluded under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency and has entered into several nuclear cooperation agreements with third countries. In accordance with a practice agreed with the European Parliament, we will continue to keep the relevant parliamentary committees informed of all international agreements negotiated on the basis of the Euratom Treaty.