

Commitments made at the hearing of

MAROŠ ŠEFCOVIČ

Executive Vice-President of the Commission on the European Green Deal



The Executive Vice-President of the Commission, Maroš Šefčovič, appeared before the European Parliament on 3 October 2023 to answer questions put by MEPs from the Committees on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI); Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE); Transport and Tourism (TRAN) and Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI). During the hearing, he made a number of commitments which are highlighted in this document. These commitments refer to his portfolio, as described in the [mission letter](#) sent to him by Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, including the European Green Deal.

Please note that the quotes included in this document only make reference to oral commitments made during the [hearing](#). The [verbatim report](#) of the public hearing is available on the [dedicated website](#) for the changes in the European Commission in 2023. The Executive Vice-President was also sent some written questions in advance of the hearing to which he provided [written answers](#). He also replied to some [additional written follow-up questions](#) after the hearing.



The European Green Deal (EGD)

Finalising current proposals

"I will seek to drive this process forward, and you will have my full support in your work, together with the Council, to get open files across the line. As nature is our best ally in fighting climate change, and crucial for our food security, the Nature Restoration Law is of paramount importance. [...] We cannot have food security without addressing climate change, biodiversity and the sustainability of our soil. Regarding the circular economy pillar, Ecodesign is vital. [...] So I hope we can conclude the negotiations on the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation to put the European economy on a firm path towards circularity, saving energy and reducing costs for citizens. Likewise, we should seek to finalise the rules on packaging, end-of-life vehicles, waste shipments, and textile and food waste in short order. And the Critical Raw Materials Act will be crucial not only for circular economy by promoting recycling of these key materials, but also for reducing our dependencies and boosting our open strategic autonomy."

"The outstanding climate action files include reducing the climate footprint of our transport sector, notably of heavy-duty vehicles, and I stand ready to help find an agreement. We also need to finalise negotiations on the Trans-European Transport Networks and the greening freight package. We must finish work on the electricity market design, the decarbonised gas market and hydrogen package, the regulation on methane emissions in the energy sector, and the Energy Buildings Performance Directive."

Proposals to be put forward under this Commission's mandate

"We have put in place a big part of the legislative foundation, having delivered on 90% of President von der Leyen's political guidelines. But let me be clear, our job is far from done. Now we must combine continuity with bringing the European Green Deal to the next level, with the ambition needed for accelerating its concrete roll out."

"I am fully aware of the importance of the files the Commission has yet to put forward, notably on the targeted revision of REACH, animal welfare, microplastics, forest monitoring, and the food sustainability framework. Together with my team of Green Deal Commissioners, we will seek to further work on these files."

"This autumn, we will focus on wind power and grids. I will work closely with Member States on their updated national energy and climate plans for 2021–2030. I also intend to steer an initiative on relieving water stress, that

increasingly affects different parts of the economy and our societies."

Implementating the EGD

"The priority for me will be the proper implementation and roll out of the files which have been agreed. This means helping our Member States, our citizens, our industry, to take the actions necessary to achieve the green transition. And it means making the most of the opportunities our green transition provides to preserve our future prosperity. That is why the European Green Deal is our growth agenda, proving to the world that modernisation and decarbonisation can go hand in hand. With it, we are fighting for our industry to remain a global leader when it comes to green tech, clean tech, bio-economy and net-zero technologies. Frankly, the race is on to be at the centre of green production, rules, and financing. Which is why we need to have a Green Deal, with European capacity in key sectors like critical raw materials, batteries, and wind turbines."

Engagement with citizens

"To be sure that the Green Deal is accessible to citizens we must step up engagement with them. That means listening, explaining, working together and providing support where needed, to come up with the best possible solutions. And I know that it works, the proof that this approach delivers can be found in the Just Transition Fund. [...] So it is a clear priority for me to organise green social dialogues to fully engage with our citizens, directly. This will help us to cultivate and strengthen public support for the Green Deal, and I would be kindly asking you for the support and assistance in that effort."

Engagement with industry and farmers

"We should bolster our engagement with industry. We want our message to be clear: the Green Deal is an advantage to industry, it will help them to grow and prosper, here in Europe. It should ensure predictability and transparency in planning for the future. A clear direction of travel. So we will organise a series of clean transition dialogues, with the first dedicated to hydrogen, in a few days."

"I think we need to intensify the interaction with industry and to focus on what are these crown jewels of the European economy, like the car industry, to make sure that they will have a smooth transition as possible. The best cars, the most sustainable ones, the cleanest have been always manufactured in Europe and this must stay like this. We have to help them with manufacturing batteries. We have to help them with getting critical raw materials, and we have to help them to train the workforce, which is an increasingly difficult challenge."

"It is also important to strengthen dialogue with stakeholders from agriculture and forestry, who are essential partners in the green transition. There can be no food security without our farmers. So I want to engage with them, and parties across the food chain, so that we produce better, with less environmental impact, in harmony with nature. While ensuring decent incomes for farmers."

Climate action

The 2040 target

"I think that what is now ahead of us, it's very clear that we have clear goals for 2030 and we have a climate law which says that we have to be climate neutral in 2050. So what we need to do is to build the bridge between 2030 and 2050 so everyone will have clarity, legal predictability how to get there. I think that science has already provided us with an input."

"It is very clear what the scientists are telling us between 90-95%. And as I said that I am glad that Commissioner-designate Hoekstra shares my ambition. He was referring to 90%. So that's the number that am referring to as well. [...] But OK, we can we can go for 'at least' [90%]."

COP28

"We know that Europe cannot ensure a habitable planet alone. Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution are global problems. I will work to maintain Europe's leading role on the world stage. Bringing together all key partners, COP28 will be an opportunity to send the message that we must all live up to our promises. I was happy to see that the Commission's proposal to triple renewables and double energy efficiency was taken on board by the COP28 Presidency. And the implementation of the Kunming/Montreal biodiversity framework will remain of the utmost priority. Ultimately, we must show the world that the European Union will remain a reliable global green champion, willing to work in close cooperation and provide support to ensure fair and sustainable growth and prosperity."

"If you look at the climate financing, this very famous USD 100 billion of private and public finances to be transferred to the developing countries, you may guess who is the only one who is faithfully respecting our obligation. It's the European Union. For 2021, it was in the realm of USD 23 billion. So, we really have to talk to our American friends, to major economies like China, to Gulf countries and to everybody else who clearly can contribute more to climate finance, but also to the Loss and Damage Fund. This is what we will bring to the table."

"We will focus on the use of loss and damage for the most vulnerable, least-developed countries and small island nations, because I think they are suffering the most."

Therefore, it has to be targeted. And it should become the last piece of the mosaic which is there for the international financing instrument and mechanism to support developing countries in tackling the climate change."

Green transition

Renewable energy

"We have to invest much more intensively in our grid for transporting the energy. If we want to have more renewables, we have to smarten our grid. It has to be more digital. We have to be able to store this intermittent energy coming from solar, from wind. We have to be much better interconnected than we are right now and we have to prepare our grid networks for making sure that we will have in Europe 2 to 3 times more electricity power generation than we have right now, because in 2050 everything will be electric and we need to get prepared for that. And therefore also our investment in the infrastructure in the grids through the Connecting Europe Facility or from REPowerEU instruments really have to go in that direction. Then, of course, we have to make sure that we will accelerate the build-up of renewables because this is our energy, it's our indigenous source, it's our wind, it's our sand. I mean, we do not need to import it from anywhere and we simply have to accelerate the rollout of renewables even more than before and bet much more on hydrogen, because that's clearly the fuel of the future."

Nuclear energy

"The energy mix is a sovereign prerogative and sovereign decision of every Member State. Currently, we have 12 Member States which are operating nuclear power plants. Most of them want to stay with it. Some of them want to build the new nuclear power plants. And what is the European responsibility in this regard is to make sure that we have clear rules on safety, on all the rules regarding proper treatment and, of course, all the safety and environmental standards harmonised across the EU. [...] For us, technological neutrality is the key, and I think that to get to climate neutrality in 2050, we need all the low-carbon sources of energy we can get."

Hydrogen

"I think that the importance is to focus on the infrastructure of the future and where we can to refurbish and prepare our pipelines, our connections so that they can carry the hydrogen in the future. Because simply you have to have different steel for hydrogen than you have for gas. So to do the renovation interconnection with that upgrade, which is already now building in the infrastructure for the future, which is able to carry the hydrogen. And I think that for that we need to work not only with the public budgets, we need to work much

more with the EIB, with the EBRD, with the financial sectors, because this is the investment into the future and smartening the grids, having the hydrogen-proof network of pipelines, all these are the investments we need for accelerating the green transition and to make sure that we will be climate-neutral by 2050."

Agriculture and forestry

"Agriculture looks differently than it was before, and we have to find a way how we would develop the new financial instruments which would bring more investment and more money to the agriculture."

"The carbon certificates I think that this is clearly one of the areas where we have to work, because I think it would be important also for the farmer and forestry community actually to monetise the carbon certificates for carbon sinks. So if you are a responsible farmer, from the point of view of biodiversity, if you manage your forests in a sustainable way and there is clear carbon sink effect, in that case, we should find a way how farmers or forest managers should be rewarded for this activity and bring additional financing and funding into agriculture and forest management."

"I think that we have to find the common solution where we would promote biodiversity and, at the same time, promote sustainable farming. And I think it's our task to find this balance, to demonstrate that this is possible and indeed goes hand in hand."

"What we are suggesting here now is to have proper monitoring, good dialogue, adequate data, so we can really work in that area as well because bioeconomy is important and sustainable management of the forest is not only possible, it's important. I think that we have to develop this approach in good discussions with the farmers and foresters."

Industry

"We want to do is indeed to start intensive interaction with the industry. So we'll have a series of clean transition dialogues. What I mean concretely by that: we want to get together power generation with energy-intensive industry. We want to get in one room the industries of the future: photovoltaics, wind industry, future hydrogen producers. We clearly need to work more closely with

automotive industry batteries and critical raw material processing. So these are, I would say, the three groups which we kind of set for ourselves."

Transport

"We have clear tasks in the field of transport. I know that, especially in the Transport Committee, there is huge enthusiasm for the EU declaration on cycling, and I know because cycling is very popular with the people, passenger rights, digital mobility package, combined transport and, of course, initiative for the water resilience."

"If it comes to the combined transport where we want to find the best possible way how to move the cargos from the trucks and put it on the trains, you're right, it's delayed, but it's coming."

"The same if it comes to digital mobility package. This should also take place this autumn. Passenger rights, where we want to make sure that let's say the intermediaries who are selling the tickets cannot hide behind the algorithm and softwares if it comes to claims for the cancelled flights or cancelled tickets."

"When it comes to the aviation, the fact that they are under the ETS, that there will be gradual withdrawal of the free allowances, is kind of clearly demonstrating that every part of the road sector, of the transport sector, has to contribute to tackling climate change."

Relations with the European Parliament

Working together

"I would like to conclude with is coming back to the track record we established together. I have been working with many of you for many years. I believe in close collaboration; I'm always available; I'm ready to look for compromises, and what I want to see are the results."

"I hope you will help me to introduce this element of dialogue, be it in green social discussions with our citizens, be it in strategic dialogue with farmers, or be it in structured clean transition dialogues with industry. We need to have all that consolidating effort to make sure that the Green Deal is widely supported and seen as our growth strategy and as a policy which brings tangible and intangible benefits to our European citizens."

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Manuscript completed: October 2023; Date of publication: October 2023

Administrator responsible: Georgios AMANATIDIS and Ariane DEBYSER; Editorial assistant: Marleen LEMMENS

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to thank Davide PERNICE and François NEGRE for reviewing this briefing.

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This document is available on the internet at: www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses/IP/A/ENVI/2023-10

Print ISBN 978-92-848-1199-1 | doi:10.2861/839807 | QA-09-23-457-EN-C

PDF ISBN 978-92-848-1200-4 | doi:10.2861/70895 | QA-09-23-457-EN-N