

**Question for written answer E-003128/2019**  
**to the Commission**  
Rule 138  
**Virginie Joron (ID)**

**Subject:** Smart protectionism and protecting the European way of life

On 10 September 2019, Ursula von der Leyen, President-elect of the Commission, announced that she wanted to lead the European Union in such a way as to 'protect our European way of life'.

It's an excellent idea, but it's worrying that it should once again be doing the rounds in Brussels. In 1951, for example, the precursor body to the Commission was responsible for 'providing guidance' on the European coal and steel markets<sup>1</sup>. In 1957, one of the principal objectives of the common agricultural policy was 'to ensure a fair standard of living for the agricultural community'<sup>2</sup>. We all know what happened next. Millions of people were left unemployed, and what remained of the European steel industry was taken over by Mittal, the Indian steel company. As regards farm produce, France will import more than it exports by 2023<sup>3</sup>, and French farmers reportedly have a suicide risk 20 to 30 times higher than any other profession<sup>4</sup>.

The Digital Age is upon us. Margrethe Vestager received a mandate to tackle the dominance of the Big Five tech companies (GAFAM), to promote local industries and to work to achieve the strategic autonomy of Europe<sup>5</sup>.

Will the Commission therefore at last apply a policy of smart protectionism by taxing and breaking up these foreign monopolies?

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<sup>1</sup> Article 5 of the Treaty of Paris establishing the European Coal and Steel Community; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:11951K:EN:PDF>

<sup>2</sup> Article 39 of the Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:11957E/TXT&from=FR>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.leparisien.fr/economie/exportations-l-agriculture-francaise-en-alerte-rouge-10-06-2019-8089995.php>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/societe/le-suicide-des-agriculteurs-en-chiffres-1517491824>

<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/mission-letter-margrethe-vestager\\_2019\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/mission-letter-margrethe-vestager_2019_en.pdf);  
[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/mission-letter-sylvie-goulard\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/mission-letter-sylvie-goulard_en.pdf)