

QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT

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Questions from the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Question 1

What concrete steps will you take to ensure the full and timely implementation of the environmental acquis, including the recently adopted legislation under the Green Deal?

Will the Commission carry-out an analysis of the investment gap for each Member State to deliver the climate and environmental goals and

Will the Commission propose measures to mobilise the necessary investments for the green transition, possibly through additional and new funding options?

What will you do to ensure further progress on the Green Deal objectives, can you provide an overview of all the measures and proposals scheduled for adoption?

The European Green Deal, which is our growth agenda, is a necessity to counter climate change and biodiversity loss. As Executive Vice-President, I will make sure that the European Green Deal continues to thrive; this includes implementing the agreed legislation, finalizing the proposals that are under negotiations and complementing them where needed with additional measures. With the Green Deal, the European Union has embarked on a whole-of-society transition and economic transformation, which means that work will have to continue.

Under the European Green Deal, 24 agreements between co-legislators have been reached so far on new pieces of EU legislation and I expect many more in the near future given the number of files under discussion. Implementation will be my strong focus in the upcoming months. By no means does this mean that the Green Deal and the green transition are completed. On the contrary, much continues to be done, also with a view beyond 2030, and I will put all my efforts into the opportunities this offers.

Turning new legislation into reality on the ground requires a significant effort at all levels.

The Commission has always put an emphasis on implementation to make sure that the proposals we have put forward impact the life of citizens and companies, for the better. I want to translate this into an active monitoring of the concrete obstacles we face as well as the opportunities that may open up. And I commit to continue working together with my colleagues Commissioners to quickly bring forth the coordinated response this would demand. I will work with the European Parliament, the Council and national authorities in partnership. I will regularly inform the European Parliament about the implementation progress of the European Green Deal flagship proposals.

For implementation to be a success, I consider that the Commission must provide support, but also enforce if needed. The concrete steps to ensure the quality and timely implementation I intend to focus on are threefold:

- First, I will keep a regular and open dialogue with all actors. I regularly meet key stakeholders to hear their views on the practical implementation of EU law. For example, I intend to hold Green Social Dialogues to let citizens have their say and we will also organise a series of Clean transition dialogues with industry, as announced by the President in her State of the Union speech, with the first dialogue dedicated to hydrogen. There will also be dialogues with agricultural stakeholders, who are essential partners when it comes to reaching our environmental objectives. I plan to be inclusive and will gather different views and interests, including from the scientific community and civil society.
- Secondly, making the Green Deal a success is a transformative change process that requires massive investments and unprecedented support from the EU is available. The Commission helps Member States

and guides them towards effective implementation by organising regular policy exchanges. To improve the administrative capacity of Member States, the Commission provides technical assistance to design and implement necessary reforms in Member States¹; the Commission facilitates exchanges of best practices; and we organize trainings for national judges, prosecutors and court staff on environmental matters. The spending targets in the EU budget are witness to this support for transition. In practice, this means mainstreaming environmental goals in the Recovery and Resilience Plans, the Cohesion policy funds, including the Just Transition Fund, the Common Agricultural Policy, etc. ensuring that we meet the climate and biodiversity targets in the multiannual financial framework. The Commission aims to ensure that neither EU funds nor State Aid are used to harm the environment but that they instead contribute to environmental priorities. More generally, actions taken under the sustainable finance framework, such as the taxonomy, direct private funding to environmentally sustainable investments.

- Thirdly, in line with its role of guardian of the treaties, the Commission stands ready to launch infringement procedures where the *acquis* is not properly applied. Mapping infringements and building the legal case to defend it can be challenging, but the high number of infringement cases concerning environmental law² reflects the Commission's sustained effort to enforce legislation, but also the practical difficulties on the ground. The cost of not enforcing the current EU environmental legislation is estimated at around EUR 55 billion annually (as recalled in the 2022 Commission Communication on Enforcement³). This figure shows the importance of the good enforcement of the European Green Deal and is the reason why my mission letter⁴ states implementation and enforcement as a top priority.

The Commission has produced in 2022 the latest version of its Environmental Implementation Report. This has identified priority actions for all Member States, which are monitored in each subsequent report. As an example, thanks to our enforcement action, all Member States have now transposed the Waste Framework Directive which will help them achieving their transition to a more circular economy and reduce strategic dependencies e.g. by having access to recycled raw materials rather than primary ones. Last June, the Commission adopted the “early Warning Reports” identifying Member States at risk of not meeting the 2025 recycling targets set out in the Waste Framework Directive and the Directive on packaging and packaging waste and providing specific recommendations.

More recently, the Commission has been very active on the implementation of the Single-use Plastics Directive, with guidelines and two implementing acts adopted over the past two years. Our action bears fruits: between 2014 and 2021, we have halved the number of air quality zones in breach of the EU rules concerning microparticle matter PM10 and by five those in breach regarding nitrogen dioxide NO₂. This directly improves the health of people.

Investment is essential to the success of the Green Deal precisely because the Green Deal is our growth agenda. For example, in 2020, the Commission provided an assessment⁵ of investment needs to deliver on the 2030 targets. These now need to be complemented and updated. Member States are currently in the process of updating their national energy and climate plans in view of Fit for 55 and REPowerEU. As part of the plans, Member States are evaluating the investment needs to achieve the climate and energy targets and outline the way they intend to use available EU funds and attract investments.

As a next step, the Commission will assess the received draft updated plans before the end of this year. This will be an opportunity to exchange on the investment needs analysis by Member States. I am committed to continue cooperation with Member States on these aspects. As foreseen in the Governance regulation, the Commission will inform the Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the plans in the framework of the State of the energy Union report, so that they can address the progress achieved by the Energy Union on all dimensions of Energy and Climate policies to identify investment gaps, if any.

Overall, **the Green Deal strands require significant investment, and the EU budget is geared towards helping to support it.** In the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (MFF), climate expenditures are expected to reach 33% of the EU spending, including NextGenerationEU, exceeding the agreed 30% target. In 2022 alone, EUR 119 billion (36% of the EU budget, including NextGenerationEU) contributed to climate

¹ In particular, the Technical Support Instrument provides tailor-made technical expertise to EU Member States to design and implement reforms in a wide range of policy areas, including the Green transition (e.g. climate action, circular economy and energy transition).

² There are currently 354 active infringements in the environment field, 60 of which for non-communication and 294 for non-conformity or incorrect transposition, bad application, and failure or late review, adoption and report. Most of these cases concerns waste (95), water (88), air (74) and nature (70).

³ [COM\(2022\) 518 final](#)

⁴ [mission-letter-Maroš-Šefčovič-2023_en_0.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁵ [EUR-Lex - 52020SC0176 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

objectives. I will support the efforts towards providing increasing annual spending under the MFF to biodiversity objectives, from 7.5 % in 2024 to 10 % in 2027. In addition to funds under the MFF 2021-2027, the Commission has also put the European Green Deal at the core of the economic recovery by setting a target of 37% of the Recovery and Resilience Facility dedicated to climate.

What is more, the REPowerEU Plan, introduced in May 2022 as the EU's response to the global energy crisis, builds on the Recovery and Resilience Facility, in achieving secure, affordable, and clean energy. Under this Plan, the Facility supports Member States in putting forward critical reforms and investments to rapidly phase out the EU's dependence on Russian fossil fuels and at the same time foster zero-carbon sources and energy resilience. Overall, close to EUR 270 billion of REPowerEU funds are available for Member States. The Commission is currently assessing these REPowerEU chapters submitted by Member States.

This is an unprecedented effort in favor of green funding, especially for the deployment of renewable energy and energy efficiency. Yet, we also need to deliver this together swiftly on the ground.

Looking ahead, in order to reinforce the social component, a swift and ambitious implementation of the Social Climate Fund will be essential in providing support to our citizens to face costs of the green transition and ensure that no one is left behind. I will be particularly attentive to the setting up of the new Social Climate Fund over the next year, to ensure the most vulnerable households and small companies can already benefit from the support ahead of the start of the new Emission Trading System for buildings, road transport and additional sectors.

Furthermore, we need to further accelerate the development and manufacturing of key technologies for the green transition, so that the European Green Deal can continue being a source of growth and competitiveness. This is where additional funding is needed. The new Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) has a potential to leverage and reinforce existing EU instruments for a quick deployment of financial support for the uptake of critical technologies needed for the green and digital transitions. STEP will provide flexibility in existing funding instruments. In light of overall constraints, the Commission has proposed targeted budgetary reinforcements worth EUR 10 billion to further scale up the investments stemming notably from InvestEU, the Innovation Fund or the European Innovation Council. Taken altogether, these reinforcements could lead to additional investments of up to EUR 160 billion.

Finally, the scale of the challenge is such that public finance alone will not suffice, private capital to support the green transition is necessary. This is why I will speed up work with investors to mobilise private capital and direct it where it is needed, aligned with the Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal biodiversity framework, and leverage the sustainable finance tools and frameworks the EU has put in place over the last years.

What is crucial for the successful green transition is for people, industry and stakeholders to have the means and incentives to invest in clean and circular technologies and more environmentally sustainable business models.

As announced in the RePowerEU Plan and during the President's State of the Union speech, I will also explore organising the demand aggregation of hydrogen, building on the positive experience with organising the demand aggregation of gas under the EU Energy Platform. This would allow to match potential international producers of hydrogen with European off-takers, and would allow the EU to leverage its political and market weight and secure supplies of hydrogen at affordable prices, hence reducing a need for public financial support.

The proposals we have put forward under the European Green Deal since the beginning of this Commission set us on the path towards 2030, 2040 and 2050. They translate the ambitious objectives into legislation and provide the supporting framework for the green transition and increasing resilience. They will improve the life of our citizens and provide renewed growth potential for our economy and our businesses. They also require an important change in the way we produce and consume.

We are aware of the high expectations the European Green Deal has created. The EU is deeply engaged in the green transition. Its success relies on the mutually reinforcing pillars of the European Green Deal. This is why we need to progress on this agenda while engaging with our citizens and businesses. I want to be very ambitious in delivering its tangible and lasting benefits to people and helping companies seize its opportunities.

Hence, it is absolutely crucial that we conclude all Green Deal files in co-decision. I will work tirelessly with my team of Green Deal Commissioners to support you and the Council. At the same time, the Commission will continue to deliver further on its Green Deal agenda with initiatives such as the wind power package, the water resilience, the 2040 climate targets, a plan to boost electricity grids, the Ecodesign work programme and the Industrial Carbon Management Strategy. As Executive Vice President in charge of Better Regulation, I pay particular attention to ensure that all proposals are well prepared, clear on their objectives and based on science and a broad evidence base.

It is clear that this is the first College with the Green Deal mandate and agenda, and certainly not the last, and I shall be proud to contribute.

Question 2

How will you deliver on the circular economy and zero pollution ambitions?

Can you confirm that the revision of REACH will be proposed without further delay and in this regard how are you planning to improve the registration and assessment of co-formulants, in particular concerning cumulative effects?

Being clear about our ambitions for circularity across the economy and providing necessary legal certainty is central to the European Green Deal and instrumental for the EU's competitiveness and open strategic autonomy. Our policy is defined by the **Circular Economy Action Plan**⁶ adopted in March 2020. As stated in the European Green Deal, our overall aim is to decouple economic growth not only from emissions, but also from resource use, enabling the development and uptake of circular technologies, building a well-functioning secondary raw material market and boosting circular business models, thereby increasing our industrial competitiveness globally. Circularity will drive resource efficiency and make our growth model more sustainable and resilient to energy and security of raw material supply challenges. The stronger we are on circularity, the more jobs and innovation we create in Europe and the less dependent we are on others, with strong benefits for climate and nature.

Many initiatives under the Circular Economy Action Plan have already been adopted.

A striking example is the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation⁷, still under negotiation. The proposal establishes a framework to set eco-design requirements for specific product groups to significantly improve their circularity, energy performance and other environmental sustainability aspects. By 2030, the new sustainable products framework can lead to 132 million tonnes oil equivalent of primary energy savings, which corresponds roughly to 150 billion cubic meters of natural gas, almost equivalent to EU's import of Russian gas in 2021. The new digital product passport, will provide information about products' environmental sustainability, that will help consumers and businesses make informed choices when purchasing products, facilitate reuse, repair and high quality recycling and improve transparency about products' life cycle impacts on the environment. Work will continue with an ambitious programme to roll out its implementation starting with products where most environmental sustainability gains are to be made. I count on the Parliament to make sure that this file is concluded as soon as possible that we can step up the work even further.

Another example of what we have achieved is the adoption of the Batteries Regulation, which entered into force last August. Batteries are an indispensable energy source. They are also a key technology in the transition to climate neutrality, and to a more circular economy. Global demand for batteries is increasing rapidly and is set to increase 14 times by 2030. The EU could account for 17% of that demand. The Batteries Regulation will ensure that, in the future, batteries have a low carbon footprint, use minimal harmful substances, need less raw materials from non-EU countries, and are collected, reused and recycled to a high degree in Europe. This will support the shift to a circular economy, increase security of supply for raw materials and energy, and enhance the EU's strategic autonomy. In the current energy context, the new rules will promote the development of a competitive sustainable battery industry, which will support Europe's clean energy transition and independence from fuel imports. At the same time, providing legal certainty will additionally help unlock large-scale investments and boost the production capacity for innovative and sustainable batteries in Europe to respond to the fast-growing market.

I will also do my utmost to bring the other important ongoing legislative procedures with co-legislators over the finish line, such as the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation, the Waste Shipment Regulation as well as the recently tabled proposal for a Regulation on End-of-life Vehicles and the targeted revision of the Waste Framework Directive, including Extended Producer Responsibility for textiles and food waste reduction targets. I will also engage with industry and other stakeholders on how to boost the uptake of circular business models, from reuse and repair to product-as-a-service and reverse logistics, and on how to increase material circularity and ensure the more supply and competitiveness of high quality recycled materials.

The **Zero Pollution Action Plan**⁸ and the Chemical Strategy for Sustainability are pillars of the European

⁶ COM(2020) 98 final

⁷ COM(2022) 142 final

⁸ COM(2021) 400 final

Green Deal complementing climate and biodiversity actions to address the triple planetary crisis, climate/biodiversity/pollution. It is also crucial to protect the health of our citizens.

We pledged to reduce pollution levels in air, water and soil by 2050 to levels that harm neither human health nor biodiversity. A clean and circular economy, powered by clean energy, is key to deliver on this ambition.

Likewise, the Zero Pollution Action Plan will strengthen the EU green, digital and economic leadership, whilst creating a healthier, socially fairer Europe. It will do so notably by promoting collective changes across our society, showcasing zero pollution solutions, creating living labs for green digital solutions, promoting digital solutions for zero pollution, and stimulating knowledge and innovation. A clear example is the revision of the Industrial Emissions Directive. The revised Directive will increase investment in new, cleaner technologies taking into account energy use, resource efficiency and water reuse whilst avoiding lock-in to obsolete technologies, support more sustainable growth of sectors that are key to building a clean, low carbon and circular economy and, at the same time, ensure better implementation, with tighter permit controls on air and water emissions. In addition to this proposal, we have proposed stronger rules on industrial emissions, ambient air, surface and groundwater pollutants, treatment of urban wastewater and fully new provisions on our soil. They will ensure a significant pollution reduction by 2030 as a step towards the long-term objective of zero pollution in 2050. There is a strong social dimension to these proposals as well. For example, more than 300 thousand lives are lost prematurely every year in the EU due to air pollution. Low-income groups are often more exposed as they live closer to busy streets or industrial sites. Therefore, I call on the Parliament to adopt the pending zero-pollution proposals as soon as possible. I am determined to do everything to help you and the Council to reach such an agreement.

With these key on-going legislative actions, we have now reached 75% of delivery with regards to the 9 flagships and 33 actions announced in the Zero Pollution Action Plan. I will ensure that we will make further progress by next year, in line with our commitments.

The Zero Pollution Monitoring and Outlook 2022 has demonstrated that existing pollution laws are not fully implemented yet in all Member States. This needs to be a real priority. We also need to ensure that implementation is effective and cross-cutting. Together with Commissioner Sinkevičius, I will deliver an update of the Zero Pollution Monitoring and Outlook in 2024 to check on the progress we have made and identify the areas for which we need further efforts.

To build further consensus on the green and digital transition we need, I intend to put more focus on showcasing positive examples of how it can work – and already starts working - in practice. Across businesses, households, workplaces, cities and regions as a whole. This is not only a scientific and technical challenge, but also one of communication and inclusion.

For the EU's **chemical policy**, the Commission's Chemicals Strategy on Sustainability presented in October 2020 charted a long-term ambitious vision. A targeted revision of REACH, announced in the chemical strategy for sustainability and the zero pollution action plan, has the aim of securing European competitive advantages and innovation by promoting sustainable chemicals, simplifying and streamlining the regulatory process, reducing burden and protecting human health and the environment.

The assessment of risk is also at the heart of the considerations around mixtures in pesticides, the so-called co-formulants. The Commission is examining whether to make co-formulants subject to REACH registration in a forthcoming REACH review, to ensure that the risk assessment would take into account that people may be exposed to a range of relevant substances with cumulative effects (the so-called 'cocktail effect') by use of a Mixtures Allocation Factor or alternatively by a specific risk assessment.

We need to find a balance to reap the opportunities of the European Green Deal in industrial leadership, secure the EU's competitive advantages and boost innovation by promoting sustainable chemicals, simplifying and streamlining the regulatory process, and protecting human health and the environment, in line with the commitments made in the EU Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability. We are in the process of careful analysis and consultations to make sure that the changes to the legislative framework would help us significantly reduce health hazards and environmental damage from chemical pollution and address the chemicals of very high concern, while ensuring the availability of chemicals that are essential for the key green transition technologies, guaranteeing the level playing field vis-à-vis our international competitors and avoiding too high an administrative burden on European businesses.

Question 3

In the context of the Farm to Fork strategy, when will the Commission adopt the legislative framework for sustainable food systems, and other related initiatives, such as harmonised mandatory front -of-pack nutrition labelling, origin labelling, a revision of legislation on food contact materials, a revision of animal welfare legislation, the establishment of science-based nutrient profiles and the export ban on hazardous

pesticides?

How will the needs of relevant stakeholders, including consumers, producers, farmers, foresters and rural communities, be taken into consideration?

As announced by President von der Leyen in her speech on the State of the European Union, the Commission will launch a strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture in the EU. This strategic dialogue will contribute to strengthening the understanding of current and expected challenges, listening to the concerns of farmers and citizens, and working together on the sustainable transition of agricultural systems. It will also be the place where new initiatives can be discussed and further developed like, for example, measures for animal welfare. It is important to have the support of all stakeholders of the supply chain to make these proposals a success. We will take stock of what remains to be done to ensure that EU policies provide the best possible contribution to support the transition to make agriculture more sustainable.

Food sustainability is fundamental for health, environment and food security. The Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food-system adopted in 2020 is an integral part of the European Green Deal. It sets out the pathway towards a sustainable food system that safeguards food security and safety, whilst at the same time ensuring access to healthy foods sourced from a healthy planet.

Without a transition towards a more sustainable farming model as set out in the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies, food security will be severely at risk in the medium and long-term. Farmers, foresters, landowners, retail and consumers are key partners in the transition.

The reformed common agriculture policy 2023-2027 makes a much stronger contribution to the goals of the European Green Deal. It includes providing support to boost farms' income and resilience, stepping up climate action, protecting natural resources, preserving and restoring biodiversity as well as strengthening the socio-economic fabric of rural areas. Each Member State's CAP strategic plan, now in implementation, is obliged to display a higher ambition on environment and climate action compared to the previous programming period to accompany the transition. The uptake of the new tools in the CAP and the implementation on the ground will be also crucial in this field.

However, Russia's instrumentalisation of food exports and surging international prices, have prompted fears about food security. The Commission March 2022 Communication on "Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems" makes it clear that food security in the EU is not at risk, but that affordability is an issue. The Communication laid out short term measures to support food security and agriculture in Ukraine, global food security, as well as producers and consumers in the EU. The Commission has also published a study on the drivers of food security in January 2023 which provides a fact-based assessment of the key drivers of food security and their interlinkages. This is why additional short-term support to Europe's farmers was needed. A robust framework is in place to accompany shocks and transition that has to go hand in hand with the long-term transition.

Several key proposals are currently in the inter-institutional legislative process: the 2022 Commission proposal for a new Regulation on sustainable use of plant protection products aims to reduce pesticide use by 50% in 2030 and replace the chemicals thanks to knowledge, better practices, innovation and non-chemical alternatives. The 2022 Commission proposal for EU Nature Restoration Law aims to contribute to enhancing the resilience and productive capacity of agricultural land as well as lakes, rivers and seas, and thereby ensure food production and food security. More recently, the Commission adopted on 5 July 2023 two legal proposals on plant reproductive material and forest reproductive material to align current legislation with the objectives of the European Green Deal. This will provide farmers with high-quality seeds that guarantee stable and sustainable yields. As part of the same package, a proposal on New Genomic Techniques was presented, to contribute to the sustainability goals of the Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy.

All this demonstrates how we are committed to promote sustainable farming practices, reduce deforestation, enhance biodiversity, and improve food security and nutrition outcomes, both in the EU and through international cooperation, bilaterally and multilaterally. The EU relies on a well-developed and demanding rule book. Improving it will be central to my work with further initiatives being prepared:

- To improve consumer information, facilitating more sustainable food decisions and thus the shift towards healthy, sustainable diets, labelling can help consumers make informed food choices. The Commission is working on a number of proposals that will contribute to sustainable food consumption such as the legislative framework for sustainable food systems and the review of the Regulation on Food Information to Consumers.

- Equally, with respect to the animal welfare, the Commission has been acting for over 40 years, progressively making the lives of animals better and adopting welfare standards in legislation that are amongst the highest in the world. Animal welfare is and will remain a priority for the Commission. The Commission is now reflecting on and carefully assessing important aspects, including the related costs and the appropriate length of the transition period.
- We must protect not only EU citizens from harmful substances. Therefore, a ban on the production of hazardous chemicals that are not allowed for use in the EU must be legally effective while striking a balance between international trade and a high level of environmental protection. In the interest of ensuring a robust legal proposal the Commission needs more time to consider the many aspects that have come up in the current preparations. As a first step, we need to evaluate the Prior Informed Consent Regulation.

Facilitating stakeholders' contributions has been a top priority for me. Gathering the concerns, ideas, feedback and suggestions for improvements from our citizens, businesses and other stakeholders is crucial for good policy-making and to sustain trust in the European Union.

And let me flag out that since I have been in charge of Better Regulation, we have also mainstreamed the consideration of the sustainable development goals, integrated strategic foresight and ensured that the 'do no significant harm' principle is applied across all our policies in line with the European Green Deal.

Question 4

As an honest broker, how do you envisage facilitating the negotiations on the Nature Restoration Law to ensure that a compromise solution is found that gains support in the Parliament and the Council?

What actions from the Biodiversity Strategy 2030 do you intend to still deliver and when will the Commission come forward with the legislative proposal on an EU Forest Observation, Reporting and Data Collection?

Restoring nature is essential to reverse biodiversity loss and mitigate climate change, increase the resilience of ecosystems and ensure their productive capacity, inter alia for food and materials from agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and better prepare and adapt our economies and societies to the inevitable impacts of climate change. The Nature Restoration Law is the flagship of the European Green Deal's biodiversity pillar and a crucial proposal for meeting the EU climate, environmental and bioeconomy ambitions. The Commission and myself as Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal, will fully play our role in supporting the co-legislators in these negotiations, and I fully share the goal to reach an agreement before the end of the year.

While I am aware that finding an agreement may be challenging, I am happy to see that the discussions are progressing in a constructive spirit. The Commission has listened very carefully to the full range of concerns expressed by the co-legislators and wishes to find constructive solutions to move forward, as highlighted in its non-paper circulated in June. The Council and the Parliament are close on many issues, and I can assure you that my colleague Commissioner Sinkevičius and myself, along with the whole Commission are committed to supporting the co-legislators in their search for compromise solutions.

The **EU Biodiversity Strategy** for 2030 is the most ambitious biodiversity strategy that the EU has ever had, corresponding to the severity of the biodiversity loss and the related challenges we face. The Commission has made major progress since its adoption, with almost half of the Strategy's actions already delivered and many files in negotiations. And I want to keep this pace.

I will continue working with Member States and stakeholders to ensure that the EU is on track to deliver by 2030 on the Strategy's targets - to protect and restore nature, reduce pressures and manage ecosystems in a more sustainable way. The Commission intends to publish an assessment of implementation progress in March 2024. On top, it is working on reinforcing EU biodiversity governance, increasing biodiversity financing from public and private sources and on further building up implementation capacities in the Member States. Improving water resilience by addressing water stress and shocks such as drought, flood, pollution, continuing to provide safe and clean water reliably. Work on this new initiative will be a priority work strand for me in the months to come. Specifically on **forests**, this summer has shown once again how climate change and biodiversity loss can have devastating consequences for the EU's forests and a direct negative impact on people's lives and livelihoods, rural communities and bioeconomy. Policymakers as well as foresters and land managers benefit from a framework enabling them to take action in response to the new pressures while ensuring that forests are resilient and continue being able to perform their multiple functions. Since the

presentation of the Commission's 2030 Forest Strategy in July 2021, guidelines have been published on old-growth forests, re- and afforestation, closer to nature forest management and payment schemes for forest ecosystem services. Preparations on a proposal for an EU Forest Observation, Reporting and Data Collection are currently in an advanced stage and could be concluded shortly.

Question 5

How do you see your role coordinating climate action, in particular the preparation of the 2040 target, and ensuring policy coherence and synergies?

What challenges do you anticipate during the implementation of CBAM, and how do you intend to address them in your role as Executive Vice-President responsible for the Green Deal?

When I was Vice President in charge of the Energy Union under the previous Commission, I realised the extent to which tackling climate change requires great efforts across most sectors of the economy. This is even more so today as we strive closer to a net zero world. This knowledge will inform my mandate as Executive Vice President for the European Green Deal.

Climate action requires efforts to both mitigate climate change and to adapt to it. It goes beyond purely economic and environmental measures to encompass social actions, solidarity within and across Member States being a necessary feature for a fair transition. In other words, successful climate action requires a great deal of careful coordination. And I will do my utmost to contribute to this.

There can be no success in climate action without action in all areas of the Green Deal. As Executive Vice President for the European Green Deal but also as the Executive Vice President in charge of Better Regulation within the Commission, I intend to take full advantage of my position to ensure the synergies across the full range of the Commission policies. We have advanced but there is scope for more, for example by doubling down on our efforts to minimise administrative burden, or by analysing the impact that our proposals have on climate neutrality and climate resilience, as required by the Climate Law.

With the clean transition dialogues I will intensify exchanges with our industrial sectors across the entire value chain, including a discussion on regulatory hurdles and bottlenecks as well as opportunities to strengthen the industrial policy dimension of ongoing initiatives and needs for long term policy support.

I will also look at ways to better leverage our EU funds to provide the support the transition will need, looking at how to boost the role of our Innovation Fund which is the world's largest clean tech fund, looking at how the CAP can help to lay the foundations for a fair transition in the land sector and working with the Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms to accelerate the deployment of the Just Transition Fund.

The same spirit will inform my coordination of the preparations of the **2040 target**. It will be my duty as Executive Vice President for the Green Deal and for Better Regulation to make sure we prepare a robust and comprehensive impact assessment, that looks at the environmental but also the social and economic consequences of different targets and pathways to 2040.

I will make sure to look at all the recommendations recently made by the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change as well as to analyse a wide array of impacts, across the EU, across all sectors and across different stakeholders, notably our citizens and our SMEs.

This will allow for an informed debate on climate in the European elections, and will prepare the way for a formal legal proposal from the next College. We have to ensure that the 2040 target will keep us on our path to climate neutrality by 2050.

The **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** is part of the 'Fit for 55' package that will enable the EU to deliver on its international commitments under the Paris Agreement. It is our landmark tool to put a fair price on the carbon emitted during the production of carbon intensive goods that are entering the EU, and to encourage cleaner industrial production in non-EU countries. The gradual introduction of the CBAM is aligned with the phase-out of the allocation of free allowances under the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) to support the decarbonisation of EU industry.

The CBAM will be phased in gradually and will initially apply only to a selected number of goods at high risk of carbon leakage: iron and steel, cement, fertiliser, aluminium, hydrogen and electricity generation. Over the 2023-2025 period, a simplified system will be in force, implying reporting obligations on the emissions embedded in relevant imports. The CBAM is a new tool, and the transitional period that started on 1 October is a learning phase for all stakeholders.

As it has been the case so far, the Commission's work to implement CBAM will continue to be informed by constant dialogue with all relevant parties, whether with national authorities, operators, declarants, or third

countries willing to understand and comply with the mechanism. Dialogues as part of the clean transition dialogues to decarbonise the industry, as announced during the President's State of the Union speech, will also help to inform the CBAM implementation.

The coming year will therefore be one of implementation and assessment. During this phase, the Commission will collect data and information from the importers of CBAM goods and check the accuracy of the quarterly CBAM reports. The information collected will be fed into the review of the mechanism by 2025, i.e. before introducing financial obligations under CBAM from 2026. The Commission will in particular analyse the impact of CBAM on carbon leakage including exports, covered sectors, international trade, least developed countries and will assess the possibility of expanding its scope (both in terms of sectors and emissions). The Commission will also analyse the quality of the data and the level of compliance with CBAM rules. This analysis will feed the reflection regarding a possible amendment of the regulation by the end of 2025.

During the transitional period we will also work on secondary legislation to lay out rules for the definitive phase, which will start on 1 January 2026.

Importantly, the CBAM is part of a broader set of policies to help Member States decarbonise their industry. This includes the work of the Innovation Fund and the Modernisation Fund, both of which shall support investments to decarbonise sectors of high relevance to the EU Emissions Trading System and the CBAM. I am sure this topic will be discussed in detail in the planned decarbonization dialogues with industry.