cepAdhoc

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Von der Leyen's tasks for the new EU Commission – Part 2

"A European Green Deal"

				
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On 16 July 2019, Ursula von der Leyen was elected as the new President of the future EU Commission by the European Parliament. On 10 September 2019, she submitted the candidates who are to make up her Commission in the forthcoming 2019-2024 legislative period and who will be confirmed by the European Parliament at the end of November.

This cep**Adhoc** assesses the main tasks which von der Leyen will be entrusting to her proposed Executive Vice-President Timmermans, together with the Commissioners assigned to him, in the areas of climate, energy, environment, transport and economy.

A European Green Deal

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Frans Timmermans (Netherlands), Margrethe Vestager (Denmark) and Valdis Dombrovskis (Latvia) will be given a prominent role in the new Commission. They are all Executive Vice-Presidents and will take on a dual function: Firstly, they are each responsible for a core topic and will coordinate the work of the Commissioners that are responsible for that area. Secondly, they are also responsible as specialist Commissioners for their own policy area and will be supported in this regard by the relevant Directorates General of the Commission.

In addition to the three Executive Vice-Presidents, five additional members of the Commission will become Vice-Presidents. Three of these – Věra Jourová (Czechia), Margaritis Schinas (Greece) and Josep Borrell (Spain) – will also lead individual groups of Commissioners.

The EU Commission still has to be confirmed by the European Parliament. Firstly, it has held hearings of the nominated candidates. Parliament will then vote on the candidates at the end of November. On 1 December, the approved Commission will take up its official duties.

This cep**Adhoc** assesses the core environmental policy tasks which von der Leyen will be entrusting to her future Commissioners. Frans Timmermans is responsible for the topic of "A European Green Deal". He is solely responsible for climate policy and will coordinate the work of the Commissioners that are assigned to him.

Tasks assigned by the Commission President

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Climate</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Timmermans</td><td colspan="2">The first "European Climate Law" will lay down the EU's binding target of climate neutrality by 2050.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>cepAssessment: "Climate neutrality" means that, on balance, the CO_2 emitted cannot exceed that which is absorbed by "carbon sinks" – e.g. forests and seas which remove CO_2 from the atmosphere and store it. Although a long-term EU strategy for the required CO_2 reduction may increase planning certainty, the EU should not commit to the target of "climate neutrality" by 2050 without first being able to estimate the impact of the necessary measures (see cepPolicyBrief).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Increase the EU CO_2 reduction target for 2030 from 40% to at least 50% as compared with 1990 levels.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>cepAssessment: Irrespective of whether an increase in the EU reduction target in accordance with the Paris Agreement is necessary for reasons of climate policy or under international law, the reduction of CO_2 emissions must be effective and cost efficient. This can be achieved in all economic sectors by way of carbon pricing in the form of emissions trading (see cepInput; cepInput; cepStudy).</td></tr>
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Energy		
Simson Timmermans	Observe the **principle of "energy efficiency first"** in all EU legislation. **Increase** the **energy performance of buildings**.	
		cep**Assessment**: Energy efficiency should not be the overriding principle. Instead, the decision on increasing efficiency in the context of binding CO_2 reduction requirements should lie with the market players. Otherwise there is a risk of inefficiency due to unnecessarily expensive energy savings (see cep**Input**). Rather than complying with efficiency requirements, the building sector should be included in an emissions trading system. That is the only way to achieve the energy and climate policy targets in a cost-effective manner (see cep**PolicyBrief**).
	Provide for financial incentives in an "Sustainable Europe Investment Plan" in order to **increase investment in "clean energy".**	
		cep**Assessment**: Although support for basic research in renewable energy is appropriate, subsidising investment is superfluous. Carbon pricing, like that which is already operating in the electricity sector by way of the EU Emission Trading System (EU ETS), already provides the necessary incentives to invest in renewable energy (see cep**Input**).
	Support cross-border cooperation between transmission system operators for a **more integrated internal electricity market**.	
		cep**Assessment**: An integrated EU-wide internal electricity market will increase security of supply, reduce electricity prices by way of greater competition among electricity producers and can balance out local fluctuations in electricity production based on sun and wind. An important prerequisite for this is cross-border cooperation between transmission system operators (see cep**Input**).
Environment		
Sinkevičius Timmermans	Stem the loss of animal and plant species by way of a **biodiversity strategy**.	
		cep**Assessment**: The protection of animal and plant species is necessary to maintain basic natural resources. It is currently unclear whether enough attention is being given to the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of measures.
	Safeguard natural resources by way of an **action plan for the circular economy**.	
		cep**Assessment**: Strengthening the circular economy can prevent waste and safeguard resources. It is currently unclear whether excessive cost burdens on European companies will be avoided so that they are not disadvantaged in international competition (see cep**PolicyBrief**).
	Achieve the **"zero-pollution ambition"** in order to protect air and water from becoming polluted by hazardous chemicals, pesticides and endocrine disrupters.	
		cep**Assessment**: Clean air and water are vital to the environment, human beings and the economy. In achieving the "zero-pollution ambition", environmental, health and economic-policy interests must be aligned (see cep**PolicyBrief**; cep**PolicyBrief**).
Transport		
Vălean Timmermans	Support the increasing **use of sustainable and alternative fuels in maritime and aviation transport** by way of a **strategy for sustainable and smart mobility.**	
		cep**Assessment**: Effective carbon pricing through the inclusion of transport in emissions trading will make a separate strategy for low-carbon "sustainable mobility" superfluous as it means that alternative fuels would automatically prevail over fossil fuels in the market place (see cep**PolicyBrief**).

	Expand the **Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) to include the maritime sector.**	
		cep**Assessment**: CO_2 emissions from maritime transport can be reduced effectively and cost-efficiently by including the sector in emissions trading. This can be brought about without difficulty since CO_2 emissions from ships entering EU ports are already covered (see cep**PolicyBrief**). For the time being, however, an emissions trading system – ideally for both transport and buildings – that is separate from the EU ETS is preferable to simply expanding the EU ETS. Otherwise there is a danger that significantly higher allowance prices in the EU ETS will increase the risk of carbon leakage (see cep**Study**).
	Work towards **global CO_2 reduction in maritime and aviation transport**.	
		cep**Assessment**: The reduction of CO_2 emissions is a global challenge which therefore also requires global measures in third countries outside the EU. This is particularly true for cross-border modes of transport such as maritime and aviation transport (see cep**PolicyBrief**).
Economy		
Gentiloni Timmermans	**Introduce a** WTO-compliant **Carbon Border Tax** in order to even out competitive disadvantages, suffered by European companies at international level as a result of climate protection costs, and to prevent CO_2 emissions from being relocated outside the EU (carbon leakage).	
		cep**Assessment**: Avoiding carbon leakage is important for protecting the international competitiveness of European companies and preventing a rise in global CO_2 emissions (see cep**Input**). A carbon border tax must not, however, be used for the purpose of protectionism or to escalate international trade wars.
	Amend the Energy Tax Directive [2003/96/EC] so that **tax rates for fossil fuels are based on their CO_2 content**. This will have the effect of abolishing the "subsidisation" of these fuels and enable 2030 CO_2 reduction targets to be achieved.	
		cep**Assessment**: Pricing CO_2 emissions is an efficient means of CO_2 reduction. Rather than taxing fuels used for power and heating according to their CO_2 content, it would be better to include the CO_2emissions from these fuels in an emissions trading system (see cep**PolicyBrief**; cep**Adhoc**).