

REPLIES TO THE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT

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1. In your hearing, you committed to act according to the Advisory Board's advice, and defend a target of at least -90% net GHG emissions reduction by 2040. But you did not reply to the question whether scenarios that do not uphold the recommendation of the Board will also be included in the assessment. Could you precise exactly which scenarios will be included in the analysis in accordance with Article 4(5) of the Climate Law, and how will you take into account sufficiency and lifestyle changes? It is also clear from the Advisory Board's advice that early action is necessary to improve the fairness of the Union's contribution to the global effort to staying below 1,5°C. How do you intend to take this into account, in particular with regards to the 2035 target?

Response:

The EU has and must continue to lead by example, setting ambitious targets in line with the goals set out in the Paris Agreement and in line with best available science.

As mentioned, the work on the Impact Assessment for a 2040 Climate target is already well underway. We will work with Commission services to ensure that the Impact Assessment looks at the projected impacts of scenarios covering a full range of pathways from 2030 to 2050 and 2040 targets, including those in the recommendations of the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change on the 2040 pathways and carbon budget. On this basis, we will defend a minimum target of at least 90% net reduction by 2040. The assessment will also look at a variant ('LIFE' case), exploring how lifestyle changes including dietary changes, changes in mobility and increased resource efficiency can support ambition. We will also look into relevant scenarios that were not identified as feasible by the Scientific Advisory Board.

Taking the 2030 target of at least -55% as the point of departure, the 2040 target and corresponding carbon budget will set a clear trajectory for the decade between 2030 and 2040, thereby providing clarity and predictability to economic actors as well as citizens. Such a trajectory will also show where the EU should be by 2035. This should also apply to our Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) for 2035.

Once we have set our 2040 target, the NDC update for 2035 will be a milestone on the path between 2030 and 2040. Of course, the more we manage to reduce our emissions by 2030 the better our starting point for the next decade and the lower the overall emissions into the atmosphere. The Fit for 55 package is already expected to bring us to -57% by 2030 and we commit to seek every opportunity to work with Member States and stakeholders alike to overachieve the EU's NDC in 2035, in addition to overachieving the 55% NDC in 2030.

2. Can you specify the concrete timeline for the adoption of the key legislative files that are still pending under the Green Deal, without prioritisation, including the following:

- REACH,
- *micro-plastics (unintentional release),*
- *sustainable food systems,*
- *animal welfare package,*
- *forest monitoring,*
- *corporate fleets,*
- *multimodal digital mobility services*

Response:

Additional key legislative and non-legislative files under the Green Deal are planned as follows:

1. European declaration on cycling - October 2023
2. Wind power package – October 2023:
 - a. Action Plan for the European Wind Power Package
 - b. Communication on delivering EU offshore renewable energy strategy
3. Regulation on preventing microplastic pollution (plastic pellet) - October 2023
4. Mobility package – November 2023:
 - a. Communications on common European mobility data space
 - b. Revision of package travel
 - c. Review of Passenger's rights framework
5. Revision of the Combined Transport Directive - November 2023
6. Action plan to facilitate grids roll-out – November 2023
7. Regulation establishing a monitoring framework for resilient European Forests – November 2023
8. Protection of animals during transport – December 2023
9. Communication on carbon storage technologies – Q1 2024
10. 2040 Climate Target Communication – Q1 2024

11. Communication on water resilience - Q1 2024

Preparations will continue on the targeted amendment of the Regulation EC/1907/2006 on the Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals (REACH) to protect human health and the environment and foster competitiveness and innovation for substitution; on sustainable food systems to ensure their resilience and sustainability; and on multimodal digital mobility services. In the meantime, we are taking action to boost multi-modal transport through a revision of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2017/1926 on multimodal travel information services by the end of this year to improve the quality of services for passengers, particularly by informing on real time arrival and departure times and the possibility to bring bicycles on-board.

Throughout this work, engagement with stakeholders will be key, be it through the industry decarbonisation roundtables or the strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture in the EU. We will make the most of the strategic dialogue on agriculture to ensure that the voices of our stakeholders are heard on food systems as such, and to inform our work on animal welfare and sustainability at large. By the end of the year, the Commission will launch a public consultation in preparation for future action to accelerate the electrification of corporate fleets by 2030.

3. Do you commit to defend the EU position on the energy embargo against Russia in all national capitals of the EU, including the one you know best.

Response:

As I have previously stated, I will continue working on the phasing out of Russian energy supplies in all EU Member States, to further boost the Union's energy autonomy.

Let me highlight certain actions from the previous Commission mandate when I steered the preparation and implementation of the Energy Union strategy. This flagship initiative, put forward on 25 February 2015, aimed at building an energy union that would ensure EU consumers – households and businesses – have access to secure, sustainable, competitive and affordable energy. The strategy was built on five closely related and mutually reinforcing dimensions, including “Climate action, decarbonising the economy”, “A fully integrated

internal energy market”, and “Security, solidarity and trust”. Under the strategy, I oversaw the work on the Clean Energy Package for All adopted in 2019. The Package – with proposals on renewable energy and energy efficiency at its core – marked a significant step forward towards decarbonising the EU’s energy system, moving away from fossil fuels towards cleaner energy, and, more specifically, delivering on the EU’s Paris Agreement commitments.

In addition to putting into place policy and regulatory frameworks, I have also successfully advocated implementing strategic energy infrastructure projects, including electricity and gas interconnectors, often with the financial support of the EU through the Connecting Europe Facility. These energy projects, such as the interconnectors linking Poland and Lithuania (GIPL) and Estonia and Finland (Baltconnector), or the LNG terminals in Klaipeda (Lithuania) and Świnoujście (Poland), have enabled the Baltic States and Central and Eastern Europe to break off their historic dependence on Russian gas supplies. Furthermore, by proposing a revision of the Gas Directive, I helped ensure that the operation of the Nord Stream II project would have been governed by European rules, including on third-party access, tariff setting, and transparency, and that it would have been supervised by independent energy regulators from the relevant EU Member States.

I remain fully committed under this Commission to continue working – with the same dedication and consistency that I have demonstrated throughout my 14-year career as a Member of the College of Commissioners – towards further strengthening Europe’s energy independence in line with the Fit for 55 package and the RepowerEU plan. I fully support the recent legislative acts proposed by the Commission and agreed by the European Parliament and the Council aimed at accelerating the broad rollout of renewable energy and low carbon fuels, promoting energy efficiency measures, and phasing out Russian energy sources in the shortest possible timeframe. As Executive Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for the European Green Deal, I will continue working tirelessly to ensure their swift transposition and homogenous application across all EU 27 Member States without any exception. I will continue working on developing the necessary infrastructure and grids, both in terms of transmission and, importantly, distribution.

I have also successfully implemented the joint purchase of gas under the EU Energy Platform, which explicitly excludes Russian gas and Russian energy companies. The joint purchasing has made a significant contribution to ensuring that gas storages in Europe have achieved high levels, as well as keeping energy prices on the European market in check, hence strengthening Europe's overall energy security ahead of winter 2023/2024. Importantly, I have secured the participation of some of Europe's partners in the neighbourhood, including Ukraine and Moldova, in the Platform. I have recently proposed to replicate this successful model to scale up the production of hydrogen in Europe, ensuring we have the necessary supplies to allow for an accelerated decarbonisation of energy intensive industry.

4. What is your vision of the best way to achieve technological neutrality and the need to foster a level playing field in the energy sector with regard to the need to preserve and improve the environment?

Response:

Technological neutrality has always been a core principle of the European Commission and has contributed to the success of our European policies.

Equally, Member States have the freedom to choose between different energy sources and the sovereign right to determine the general structure of their energy supply. This is a fundamental principle enshrined in Article 194, paragraph 2 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

When choosing their national energy mix, Member States are bound by the climate goals we have all agreed upon, as well as by the environmental legislation we have adopted together. We have a range of regulations and agreements that set goals in terms of greenhouse gas emission reduction and environmental protection.

The current legal framework foresees targets for the share of renewables in the energy mix. The more renewables in our energy mix, the better we are protected against the high prices of imported fossil fuels because renewables are much cheaper and less volatile than fossil fuels. Therefore, we must stay the course, to make green and renewable energy available for

Europe. That is what we intend to do, including by helping bringing forward the revision of the Electricity Market Design as well as the Hydrogen and Gas Decarbonisation Package in the coming months.

At the same time, to fulfil the climate neutrality ambition and to reduce emissions by at least 55% by 2030, all energy sources that reduce emissions substantially can be useful including nuclear and bioenergy depending on the situation in each Member State.

At the European level, we have strived for decades to create the most comprehensive conditions for nuclear safety in the framework of Euratom. Moreover, the Commission supports research and innovation to further improve nuclear technologies for example to address the challenge of nuclear waste.

5. The Commission has already been tasked in 2021 through Article 10 of the Climate Law to engage with sectors of the economy to prepare roadmaps towards climate neutrality. What concrete steps do you intend to make to finally implement this?

Response:

Article 10 of the European Climate Law asks the Commission to “engage with sectors of the economy within the Union that choose to prepare indicative voluntary roadmaps towards achieving the climate-neutrality objective”. The Commission’s role is to facilitate dialogue at Union level, and the sharing of best practices among relevant stakeholders. The President underlined the importance of the dialogue with the different sectors in her State of the Union speech and it will be a crucial task for the whole Green Deal team in the Commission for the upcoming months.

But we are not starting from zero: Starting from the Updated EU Industrial Strategy in 2021, the Commission has engaged with several European industrial ecosystem to prepare sectorial “transition pathways” ([EU Transition Pathways \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)). To this effect, the Commission and the EU’s [Industrial Forum](#) have developed a [blueprint](#) for the transition pathways of industrial ecosystems, which includes also an addendum to address the need for an accelerated green transition to ensure energy efficiency and autonomy as well as more control over strategic value chains, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Currently, the transition pathways have been prepared for the following ecosystems: tourism, chemicals, construction, proximity and social economy and textiles. Such pathways, covered under other industrial strategies exist also for energy intensive industries, renewables, health, creative and cultural industries, digital and electronics. As you can see, some sectors that are key for the transition like construction or chemicals are already covered and the work will be intensified in the upcoming months.

One example of a well-developed and tuned towards green transition pathway is the Transition Pathway for the Chemical Industry, the implementation of which started in spring 2023. Already at its early stage of implementation the Pathway is supporting the industry transition towards climate neutrality by:

- Providing regular updates on the regulatory and research initiatives at the EU level that directly impact the chemical industry;
- Providing an overview of EU funding programmes relevant to the chemical industry for the implementation of the Transition Pathway's actions;
- Creating dedicated Task Forces involving the Commission and stakeholders to investigate in detail e.g. initiatives to implement different types of circular feedstocks, and future needs for energy and alternative feedstock for chemical industry.

At the moment, transition pathways on mobility, agri-food and retail ecosystems are under preparation.

As announced by the President in the State of the Union 2023, we are now engaging in Clean Transition Dialogues with a number of sectors, covering their entire supply chains. The rules and legislation for 2030 have been agreed, as well as our common goal for Europe to be climate neutral in 2050, but in addition to discussing with them the challenges and opportunities of the transition and see how Europe can step up its pace, we want to discuss any issues arising during this implementation phase to see how best to address them. We will also pay particular attention to SMEs in the transition.

We will work for these dialogues to be regular and to lead over time to sectoral roadmaps or transition pathways in line with Article 10 of the European Climate Law.

6. When will you set a deadline for the phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies consistent with the ambition of limiting global warming to 1.5 °C, in line with Article 3 of the 8th Environmental Action Programme? Can you commit to use all means at your disposal to ensure that Member States include clear science-based targets for the phase-out of fossil fuels subsidies, in their national energy and climate plans, as well as concrete measures to meet those targets, including if necessary taking additional EU action? Can you commit to push for an ambitious Union's position for COP28 to phase out all fossil fuels?

Response:

We will push for action to accelerate the phase out fossil fuel subsidies. Taking into account the “do no significant harm” principle, we will ask the Commission services to analyse the amount of subsidies allocated through the EU budget and we will strongly recommend and encourage Member States to also apply this principle and work towards a “green budgeting” approach.

This year, for the first time Member States reported on the phasing out of energy subsidies under the Governance Regulation on the basis of a common methodology. The Commission is compiling this information in a dedicated report on Energy Subsidies scheduled for adoption end of October together with the State of the Energy Union Report which will show the scope of the challenge. We commit to pay particular attention to this aspect and the policies and measures proposed to phase out fossil fuel subsidies in Member States’ draft updated National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) and to make recommendations as part of the Commission’s assessment by the end of the year.

The Commission has also started an evaluation of the Governance Regulation itself and will report on that evaluation by second quarter of 2024. We will prepare for the inclusion of specific provisions and a date for the phase out of fossil fuel subsidies as foreseen in the 8th Environmental Action Programme.

We look forward to working with Commissioner Gentiloni to try to speed up the discussions on the Energy Taxation Directive, which is a very important building block of the Fit for 55 package. In parallel, together with Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis and Commissioners Gentiloni and Hoekstra, we will propose a discussion on the phase out of fossil fuel subsidies at a forthcoming ECOFIN Council.

As President Ursula von der Leyen said at the New York UN climate summit, the EU will phase out unabated fossil fuels well ahead of 2050. At the Environment Council on 16 October which will adopt conclusions on the EU's position for COP28, the Commission will argue for dropping or limiting the reference to unabated fossil fuels. In any case, we strongly believe that carbon capture and storage should be prioritised for hard to abate sectors in Europe that really need it as part of their decarbonisation pathway.