



Ursula von der Leyen
President-elect of the European Commission
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Brussels, 22 July 2019

Dear Ms von der Leyen,

Re: Honouring the 'green wave' through an ambitious European Green Deal

We are writing to offer our warm congratulations on your election as the next President of the European Commission and also on your political guidelines 'A Union that strives for more: my agenda for Europe'.

The EEB is the largest federation of environmental organisations in Europe. Established in 1974, we bring together **150 member organisations from 35 countries representing more than 30 million individual supporters**. Being encouraged by the strong emphasis on environmental issues in your political guidelines, we take the liberty to share our thoughts with you on what will be needed to deliver on those commitments.

We particularly welcome your commitment to come forward with a proposal for a **European Green Deal** within your first 100 days. This will be essential to tackle the existential crises of climate change and biodiversity loss as well as prevent the spread of toxic chemicals and promote the circular economy. Over the past year, we have been cooperating closely with among others DG Environment and the governments of Austria and Germany (the former during its EU Presidency, the latter in view of its upcoming EU Presidency) on the potential content of an Eighth Environment Action Programme, the Seventh being due to come at an end at the end of 2020. We see this preparatory work as perfectly matching your commitment to and providing the foundation for a European Green Deal, and we stand ready to support you and your services in delivering on that commitment.

Three elements will be crucial in ensuring effective delivery on your political guidelines: the composition of the new College, the structure of new Commission and the allocation of sufficient resources. The 'green wave' which was such a prominent feature of the recent European elections should be reflected in all three aspects.



As regards the **composition of the College**, we welcome your commitment to achieving gender parity in the new College, and we would find it reasonable to insist if necessary that Member States present you with a choice of a male and a female candidate. At the same time, this would be an opportunity to remind Member States to nominate candidates whose values and experience are consistent with those inherent in your guidelines. In particular, we hope that you will seek the nomination of highly motivated and experienced Commissioners dealing with the environment-related portfolios as this will be a crucial part of shaping and then delivering a European Green Deal. This should be done in recognition of the millions of voters across the EU who voted for candidates promoting greener policies, and irrespective of the way that MEPs voted during your election. Indeed, it is precisely because the Green/EFA group did not (at least as a group) support your candidacy that we feel it necessary to emphasise this point.

As regards the **structure of the new Commission**, we understand that you plan to have two executive Vice-Presidents within your leadership team. This is clearly a different approach from that of the Juncker Commission, but irrespective of the size of the leadership team, some principles remain relevant. First, we believe there should be a Vice-President with specific responsibility for delivering on the environmental aspects of the political guidelines (alongside the collective responsibility of the leadership team and indeed the College for the entire guidelines). Second, there should be a sufficient number of Commissioners responsible for the various aspects of environment, e.g. one for climate, one for nature and one for health-related aspects, with the coordination and overview being provided by the responsible Vice-President. Third, insofar as there is a hierarchical filtering process, this should be designed so that proposals relating to activities that can cause environmental damage (energy, agriculture, transport, etc.) are screened for their environmental and social impacts. Some of these principles also apply in relation to the structuring of the Directorates-General, where we would caution against putting topics such as climate, nature or health together with topics that can adversely impact those issues.

New priorities imply a new distribution of **resources**, and it will therefore be important to ensure that there are sufficient resources, including personnel, to carry out the work that drives the transition to a genuinely circular economy that reduces Europe's environmental footprint. This implies among other things strengthening the Commission's enforcement capacities to ensure better implementation of environmental legislation. This will not only be good for the environment; it will reinforce our democracy by strengthening the rule of law.

In conclusion, given the narrow margin by which you have been elected Commission President, it will be important **to convince those who were not convinced on the day of your election**. We believe that the most effective way to achieve this will be by laying plans for an ambitious but realistic European Green Deal that shows that the EU is serious about meeting its obligations under the 2030 Agenda on

European Environmental Bureau

Europe's largest network of
environmental citizens' organisations

www.eeb.org

*International non-profit association –
Association internationale sans but lucratif*

Rue des Deux Eglises, 14-16 - B-1000 Brussels

Tel.: +32 2 289 10 90

Email: eeb@eeb.org

EC register for interest representatives:

Identification number: 06798511314-27



Sustainable Development. This will help to bring on board those who were sceptical about your commitment to a greener Europe, notably the Green/EFA group. It is in this endeavour that we hope you will see in us a strong ally.

In anticipation of a fruitful and constructive relationship throughout your Presidency, we would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with you at an early stage to discuss these matters.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Wates
Secretary General