

QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE**Dan JØRGENSEN****Energy and Housing****1. General competence, European commitment and personal independence**

What aspects of your personal qualifications and experience are particularly relevant for becoming Commissioner and promoting the European general interest, particularly in the area you would be responsible for? How will you contribute to implementing the political guidelines of the Commission? How will you implement gender mainstreaming and integrate a gender perspective into all policy areas of your portfolio? How will you implement youth mainstreaming?

What guarantees of independence are you able to give Parliament, and how would you make sure that any past, current or future activities you carry out could not cast doubt on the performance of your duties within the Commission?

The European Union has been a pivotal part of my entire professional life. I was elected to the European Parliament at the age of 29, a role I was privileged to hold for nearly 10 years.

As a MEP, I gained a profound respect for the European Parliament and its crucial role in shaping Europe's future whilst delivering tangible benefits for our citizens. I got insight into the complexities of EU policymaking and it reinforced my belief in the importance of working collaboratively to achieve meaningful outcomes.

In 2013 I returned to Denmark as a Minister for Food, Agriculture, and Fisheries until 2015, and I was subsequently elected to the Danish Parliament. From 2019 until recently, I have served first as Minister for Climate, Energy, and Utilities, and subsequently as Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy Responsible for both representing Denmark in the Council of the European Union across various configurations and implementing EU legislation. These functions have also given me a solid understanding of how decisions made at the EU level affect Member States in the implementation process. Moreover, my time as Minister for Energy during the energy crisis, caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, was a challenging period that tested both national and EU cooperation on energy security, and confirmed the importance of the energy transition for the resilience of the EU energy system.

If appointed, I believe my familiarity with both the European Parliament and the Council can be an asset in the role of Commissioner. At the same time I am also fully aware that there will be much more to learn in this new responsibility.

In recent years, I have also been actively engaged in international negotiations in the context of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and organizations such as the International Energy Agency (IEA), the World Bank and the African Development bank. These experiences have provided me with extensive exposure to international diplomacy and negotiations, which I hope will contribute to the work the European Commission does in representing the EU on the global stage.

Energy, climate and environmental issues have been at the heart of what motivates me. The green transition is not only an environmental imperative but also a social and economic opportunity. It can drive competitiveness, create jobs, and provide more Europeans with access to clean and affordable energy and more sustainable and affordable housing, all while ensuring that we leave no one behind. I have worked towards this goal in Denmark, particularly through the Danish Climate Act and the negotiations of several political agreements on energy. Energy and housing are complex and multifaceted policy areas that require a deep understanding of both the technical and political dimensions. I certainly have much more to learn. Still, I believe my experience should allow me to contribute

effectively, while also remaining open to the expertise and guidance of my colleagues and indeed the Members of the European Parliament.

As highlighted in the Commissions Political Guidelines, energy is a core pillar in tackling the main challenges faced by the EU: the cost of living and energy poverty; the competitiveness of European businesses and green jobs for Europe's workers; the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the decarbonisation of our economy; securing the supply of affordable, clean energy while ensuring technology neutrality; and strengthening EUs geopolitical role in energy diplomacy, starting with Ukraine and the European neighbourhood.

If confirmed as a Commissioner, I see it as my obligation to tackle these challenges in close cooperation with my fellow Commissioners in order to contribute to building a more sustainable, prosperous and competitive Europe, to strengthen our sovereignty and our societies while preserving and reinforcing our social model.

Since all the challenges are interlinked, so are the policies and actions we must take to address them for example:

- boosting investments in clean energy, starting with implementing the legal framework for 2030, strengthen industrial competitiveness and bring down the cost of living and production for European households and businesses. This will be done through e.g. the Clean Industrial Deal, the Action Plan on Affordable Energy Prices and the Clean Investment Strategy and by strengthening the Energy Union with a robust governance together with the EU Member States.
- ensure a social, just and competitive energy transition by working with the European energy industry and trade unions on making the transition socially inclusive and economically viable.
- reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and further decarbonising our energy system, while delivering on the European Green Deal towards climate neutrality in 2050.
- contributing to lowering prices by upgrading our grid infrastructure and building a secure, resilient and interconnected energy system. This will be supported by an Electrification Action Plan, and a roadmap to ending Russian energy imports.
- strengthening Europe's energy diplomacy, both in our neighbourhood, by working with Ukraine and on the energy dimension of enlargement - and on the global stage.

Exploring the full synergies across my portfolio of 'energy' and 'housing', we will put forward a European Affordable Housing Plan to support the millions of young people and families who struggle to find affordable housing, counting on the support of the European Parliament and all relevant stakeholders. I will put a strong emphasis on the energy efficiency of buildings and contribute to the first EU Anti-Poverty strategy with concrete actions to bring tangible results such as reducing energy costs and energy poverty across Europe. This will not only strengthen our social cohesion but also contribute to our economic growth, and competitiveness towards a more sustainable and prosperous Europe.

EU policies are only truly beneficial for European citizens if reflective of the diversity across our continent and conducted in an inclusive approach. Gender is an important element here as are race, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, disabilities, age, and convictions. I will support the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025 across the areas under my competence and take due account of relevant European Parliament resolutions. Mindful of the gender angle under my responsibility, I will strive to ensure that this imperative is fully factored in across all my initiatives. In addition, I will ensure that my own team is gender-balanced.

The policies of today, especially when it comes to housing, buildings, but also renewables, low-carbon technologies and many more, will have an impact on the lives of the current generation of young people and on the generations to come. As a former young MEP, I will ensure youth participation is at the core of my activity. I will host annual Youth Policy Dialogues, starting in the first 100 days of my mandate, to give young people a regular opportunity to exchange with me on key topics and initiatives, of my portfolio., I will further support the [Young Energy Ambassadors programme](#) to create a community of young people who are driving the clean energy transition

I will act fully in line with the letter and spirit of the Treaties and the Code of Conduct for Commissioners. I will not take instructions from any government or other entity, and I will always act in the European interest. I will engage in conversation with relevant citizens and stakeholders. And always seek to work in a fact-based manner, following the science and guided by facts. I am committed to the highest ethical standards and fully respected the letter and spirit of the EU Treaties and the obligation to act in the European interest. In case any situation arises that might lead to a conflict of interests, or where my impartiality might be questioned, I will immediately inform

the Commission President. My declaration of interests is public and complete, and I commit to making sure that it is updated, should my personal circumstances change.

2. Management of the portfolio and cooperation with the European Parliament

Can you commit to duly informing Parliament about your actions and those of your departments? In what respect do you consider yourself accountable to Parliament?

What specific commitments are you prepared to make in terms of your engagement with and presence in Parliament, both in committee and in plenary, transparency, cooperation and effective follow-up to Parliament's positions and requests for legislative initiatives? In relation to planned initiatives or ongoing procedures, are you ready to provide Parliament with timely information and documents on an equal footing with the Council?

In light of my past experience as a Member of the European Parliament and a national Minister, I am fully aware of the decisive role the Parliament fulfils as a co-legislator, including on energy and housing. If I am confirmed by the European Parliament, I will be fully committed to the closest cooperation with your institution in all the issues that fall under my portfolio.

Concretely I would ensure the highest level of engagement with the European Parliament in an open and transparent fashion, cooperating in good faith and in full respect of the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making and the Framework Agreement between the European Parliament and the Commission. Also based on my experience as a MEP, I believe that this close cooperation is instrumental to build consensus in view of future initiatives, work efficiently and closely with and for our European citizens.

The European Parliament is the only directly elected institution representing the European citizens whom I want to serve. It is thus only natural that I will and want to be held accountable by you.

I will be regularly present both in plenary and in the relevant committees and you can count on a substantive and constructive dialogue with me. On energy policy, the ITRE Committee would be a key interlocutor, and I would also work closely with Members of the European Parliament in other committees. To build a fully-fledged European housing policy, the EMPL Committee, who already engaged in this important topic, will be a pivotal partner together with the IMCO and the REGI Committees notably. But also other committees can and will be relevant to work with on different issues.

I would take political responsibility for the activities in my field of competence and regularly inform the Parliament of upcoming actions, reinforcing mutual trust, transparency and exchange of information. In the interest of the EU and our citizens, you can count on me to listen closely to your views and serve as an honest broker, building bridges and finding balanced compromises along every step of legislative procedures.

In line with the Framework Agreement, I am also committed to do my utmost to ensure the Commission's response to European Parliament resolutions are delivered within three months. I am ready to contribute to the follow up on the Art. 225 TFEU initiatives by the Parliament. I would accept meeting requests, letters, and questions from Members of Parliament to my utmost capacity and with maximum speed. I would also be committed to contribute to the multiannual programming exercise at the beginning of this new term and to the 'Joint Declaration of EU Priorities'. I also remain committed to exchange information and views on the Commission work programme as agreed in the Framework agreement.

The above concerns the institutional framework for the cooperation with this Parliament. But be assured, should this Parliament endorse me as a Commissioner, my personal and devoted spirit for such cooperation matters just as much - or perhaps even more - for our interactions, as the text of this formal framework does.

Questions from the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

3. Many people suffer from a lack of affordable housing. How will you ensure that the first ever European Affordable Housing Plan, announced by Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen, will provide enough affordable housing to respond to the housing needs of the low and middle income groups? What concrete actions do you foresee, in particular to ensure that the Plan will allow the necessary public and private investment to provide affordable, accessible housing and opportunities for all? How will you guarantee the "housing first" principle as it has proven to be effective on both economic and social terms to end homelessness? What is your

approach with regard to private property in the context of any Union action in the area of housing? How are you going to ensure close cooperation with Executive Vice-President-designate Mînzatu in this context?

To address the housing crisis we need local, national and European solutions. If confirmed as the first-ever Commissioner with a dedicated portfolio on housing, I will work hand in hand with the European Parliament, Member States, local authorities, and all relevant stakeholders to help make a positive difference for people, notably young people and families who struggle to find affordable housing throughout Europe.

In line with my Mission Letter, the Commission will put forward the first-ever European Affordable Housing Plan. The Plan will offer technical assistance to cities and Member States, promote investments and focus on the skills needed in the housing sector. It will also include a strategy for housing construction to boost in particular housing supply (see further details under question 11). To develop the plan, we will draw on existing experiences such as the European Affordable Housing Initiative, which pilots the inclusive renovation of 100 'Lighthouse Districts' across Europe. One of the key lessons I draw from it is the importance of an inclusive approach that involves the European Parliament and all other relevant stakeholders – public and private sector, supply and demand side. I will therefore design the plan in close consultation with all the key stakeholders in the housing sector.

Establishing better collaboration with the stakeholders of the housing ecosystem will be a priority for me. A dedicated Task Force involving relevant Commission services will support the work. This will ensure a coherent approach between all policies and funding that can support the plan and will help to build on the work and analysis done so far. We must also implement fully the new tools introduced in the recent legislation on buildings. Close dialogue with national authorities will be essential in this regard. We will support the work of the Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation by enlarging the community of the New European Bauhaus initiative in this context.

To improve housing affordability, it is crucial to mobilise additional public and private resources. There are already instruments at EU level to attract investments in affordable and social housing like the InvestEU programme. We will capitalise on this experience to set-up a pan-European investment platform for affordable and sustainable housing, working with the European Investment Bank as well as with international financial institutions, national promotional banks, and other relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, in line with the Mission Letter, I will support the Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms to develop a proposal allowing Member States to inject liquidity into the housing market and double the planned cohesion policy investments in affordable housing (see further details under question 12). I will also support the Executive Vice-President for a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition to revise State aid rules to enable housing support measures, notably for energy efficiency and social housing (see further details under questions 5 and 9). Central to this effort will also be a swift and effective roll-out of the Social Climate Fund.

In the EU, around 1 million people are homeless, and the numbers have been increasing in many Member States in recent years. The Commission is already supporting all relevant stakeholders under the umbrella of the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness. Housing First strategies that prioritise the provision of permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, accompanied by social support, have proven to be a very effective and cost-efficient approach to address housing exclusion. This approach is being progressively incorporated into national strategies to combat homelessness. EU funding is also supporting housing-first strategies, for example through the European Social Fund Plus. We will look at these experiences to build the first ever European Affordable Housing Plan, to address the needs of all citizens, including the most vulnerable.

Responsibilities to protect private property and counter illegal occupation lie primarily at national level. In this area, it is therefore for the Member States, including their judicial authorities, to ensure that fundamental rights are effectively respected and protected. More generally, the European Affordable Housing Plan will work towards stimulating greater private investment in the supply of affordable housing, which depends inter alia on respect for private property rights.

Under the leadership of the Executive Vice-President for People, Skills and Preparedness, the Commission will launch a first-ever EU Anti-Poverty Strategy to help people access the essential services and protection they need and address the root causes of poverty. I will work very closely with the Executive Vice-President to ensure maximum synergies between the European Affordable Housing Plan and the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy. The same applies to the Union of Skills, including the new European strategy for vocational education and training (VET), which can be particularly relevant to strengthen skills in the construction sector.

4. Your mission letter indicates that your work will help address energy poverty and ensure a social, just and competitive transition. What policies do you intend to implement to protect those most impacted by energy poverty, ensuring affordable renovation and access to green housing? How will the Action Plan for Affordable Energy Prices tackle energy poverty? What specific incentives do you foresee to foster the long-term development of green social and public housing, green buildings and the reduction of energy costs for both owners and tenants?

No one shall be left behind: this is the key principle of a social, just and competitive energy transition. Since the energy crisis, energy poverty has increased and in 2023, 47 million EU citizens (10.6% of the EU population) were unable to keep their homes adequately warm. Addressing energy poverty is a key component of a just transition and will be important in our future housing policy. Protecting the energy-poor, vulnerable groups and regions, and in particular coal regions in transition, in order to ensure that all citizens benefit from the clean energy transition, is pivotal.

Energy efficiency and energy efficient appliances can play a key role in alleviating energy poverty, by lowering energy demand, reducing the energy bill for consumers and making energy more affordable for people and businesses. The European Citizens' Panel on Energy Efficiency earlier this year provided helpful recommendations, such as empowering consumers to become energy efficient, notably with product labels providing information on a product's energy consumption, or through support for the renovation of residential buildings to make them more energy efficient. I will assess how these recommendations can best be implemented during this mandate.

Both existing EU legislation and the Commission Recommendation on energy poverty of 2023, as well as the Social Climate Fund, recognise the urgent need to tackle energy poverty and protect those most impacted by it. The recast Energy Efficiency Directive highlights the need for Member States to prioritise energy poverty in their energy efficiency measures and investments. Additionally, the Electricity Market Design reform that entered into force in July sets out the obligation to protect the energy poor from electricity disconnections. The Coal Regions in Transition Initiative and the Just Transition Fund already support coal and carbon-intensive communities and regions, aiming notably at creating jobs in regions where other jobs may be disappearing.

The Citizens Energy Package will address energy poverty and help ensure energy is accessible to all. At the core of this Package will be an enhanced partnership with Member States to improve access to energy efficiency investments in buildings, micro-enterprises and SMEs as well as to renewable energy. The Citizens Energy Package will also support the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy and contribute to the European Affordable Housing Plan. Beyond the issue of affordability, vulnerable households often lack access to information and finance for energy efficiency improvements. Through the Energy Poverty Advisory Hub – proposed and financed by the European Parliament – we will continue to ensure that local authorities and communities receive technical support to develop and implement effective measures.

The Action Plan for Affordable Energy (see reply to question 8) will support new ways of consuming energy based on local energy communities and energy sharing. We need concrete actions and results on the ground, and I will work with all stakeholders to ensure innovative energy products and services are made available for individual and corporate consumers.

To support these efforts, I will work closely, if I am confirmed, with my fellow Commissioners to ensure that the Social Climate Fund and Cohesion Policy Funds will deliver the necessary financial support to protect the most vulnerable.

Robust planning is instrumental for fostering the development of green housing and buildings. Concretely, the National Building Renovation Plans foreseen in the recast of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive will provide a clear direction for market actors, including the construction industry and financial institutions. It can also mitigate the risk of stop-and-go policies that have unfortunately hurt the building sector in the past.

As set out in the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and Energy Efficiency Directive, national financial incentives will have to target, as a priority, vulnerable households, including people affected by energy poverty and people living in social housing. Citizens in energy poverty are often living in the EU's worst-performing and least insulated buildings, which need to be renovated as a matter of priority. The renovation of residential buildings should include a representative share of rented buildings, so that tenants can benefit from lower energy bills and better homes. I will address the barriers confronting decentralised and local renewables generation to promote the development of this sector. These considerations will be central to the European Affordable Housing Plan.

Finally, I will work with stakeholders across the board to tackle energy poverty and foster long-term development of green, social and public housing.

5. Your mission letter instructs you to support the Executive Vice-President for a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition to work on reforming State Aid rules to enable housing support measures, notably social housing. What changes to the EU state aid rules and the social housing definition in the services of general economic interest (SGI) legislation do you envisage in order to ensure that housing is excluded from market rules and that sufficient social housing is provided? Will you, as Commissioner, endeavour to achieve explicit exemptions from the fiscal rules for state investment in housing?

If confirmed as Commissioner, in line with my Mission Letter, I will support the Executive Vice-President for a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition in her task to put forward revised State aid rules to better enable housing support measures, especially for affordable energy-efficient and social housing.

Under existing State aid rules, there are various ways for Member States to support housing access. Some measures may not count as State aid under EU law, including those that benefit households and EU citizens directly. Other measures fit the Services of General Economic Interest regime or can be found to be directly compatible with the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. The current rules on Services of General Economic Interest allow Member States to implement social housing measures, namely social housing for disadvantaged citizens or socially less advantaged groups. Furthermore, existing State aid rules also enable Member States to support the development of energy-efficient housing.

While the political imperative for further action to enable affordable and energy-efficient housing is urgent and clear, the Commission's exchanges with Member States to-date have shown that revising State aid rules for affordable housing is a multi-faceted issue and further assessment is needed how to best achieve our ambitions. In carrying out this exercise, we need to strike the right balance to avoid crowding out private investment and distort competition in the housing market unduly and ensure adequate support for social housing for the most vulnerable in society, which remains a key responsibility of governments as part of the social contract.

I will work with the Executive Vice-President for a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition to build on the groundwork done to determine which concrete changes to Services of General Economic Interest rules and accompanying guidance could be implemented to encourage investment and ensure housing affordability for all, keeping the European Parliament closely informed. The revision of these rules is part of a broader set of initiatives included in the upcoming European Affordable Housing Plan, which I will put forward together with the relevant Members of the College.

The common fiscal rules have just been reformed. The new provisions entered into force on 30 April 2024 and strike a fine balance between the need to ensure debt sustainability and the need for investments and reforms to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth. The fiscal rules do not envisage explicit exemptions for any kind of expenditure, but the definition of the net expenditure indicator does exclude interest expenditure, expenditure on Union programs fully matched by revenue from EU funds and national co-financing of programs funded by the Union. This was a deliberate choice of the co-legislators. A novelty of the new provisions is that Member States have the possibility to choose a longer fiscal adjustment path provided that this is underpinned by credible commitments to investments and reforms. This approach creates some fiscal space that Member States can use to promote investment.

Questions from the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

6. What is your vision for your portfolio over and above your mission letter and what would you like your legacy to be? What legislative proposals and other initiatives will you suggest to the College of Commissioners for adoption in the next five years and in particular in the first 100 days? How will you ensure that these proposals, as well as the implementation of existing legislation, would strengthen European competitiveness? Do you intend to base those legislative proposals on dedicated impact assessments? How do you plan to ensure the effective implementation of the European Green Deal and all energy-related legislation? How will you ensure effective implementation of the energy efficiency first principle in planning, policy and major investment decisions? What role do you see for energy efficiency in enhancing the competitiveness of EU industry? What are your views on the Energy Union Governance? How do you view the role of technological neutrality in the energy sector? What is your view on nuclear energy and SMRs? How do you plan to advance on energy system integration? How do you intend to strengthen citizen participation in your work?

Energy is central for tackling the challenges Europe is facing: security, including economic security, cost of living and competitiveness, and climate change, which we have seen impacting lives across Europe just this year. My key objective is to secure supplies of clean and affordable energy critical for European competitiveness, security and our decarbonisation efforts, through a robust Energy Union. At the same time the transition needs to be just for our citizens, notably in terms of jobs and costs, including affordable and sustainable housing.

As part of the Clean Industrial Deal, I will, if confirmed, propose an Action Plan for Affordable Energy in the first 100 days (see reply to question 8) setting a work plan to secure access to cheaper energy through investments, infrastructure and cooperation to lower system costs. I will also propose a Roadmap towards ending Russian energy imports. Into the mandate, further initiatives to contribute to competitiveness, security and decarbonisation efforts will include a review of the security of supply framework and a Clean Energy Investment Strategy to boost renewables, energy efficiency and energy infrastructure. An Electrification Action Plan as well as a strategic approach to heating and cooling will contribute to making energy more affordable as well. Working together with the Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth, I will bring forward a framework to scale down and phase out the use of fossil fuel subsidies.

I will pursue with Europe's global leadership in the energy transition, building on Europe's initiatives to increase renewable energy and energy efficiency globally, and helping set our global climate and energy vision for COP30 in Brazil and beyond. Furthermore, our competitiveness is closely related to our open strategic autonomy. We must avoid replacing our dependency on fossil fuels with another dependency on imported clean technologies and critical raw materials.

During my mandate, I will pay attention to the impacts of the legislation that I put forward to the College following the Better Regulation Guidelines, considering the challenges and objectives, the trade-offs, options for action and their potential impacts, fostering simplification and based on well-structured public consultations and feed-back mechanisms.

A stronger European agenda for industry and competitiveness can only succeed if going hand in hand with the implementation of the energy policy already agreed.

Full implementation of the newly adopted energy-related legislation is a political priority, and we need to deliver on our European Green Deal objectives and ensure that citizens and communities reap the benefits on the ground. I will oversee and actively support the implementation and enforcement of the 2030 framework, working in close cooperation with the European Parliament and Member States, but also cities and regions, to ensure that we are on track towards our collective energy and climate targets for 2030 and beyond. This implementation effort will include following up on the assessment of the final Energy and Climate Plans and organising at least two implementation dialogues a year with stakeholders.

Implementation is central to European competitiveness. The achievement of our objectives, and implementation of our legislation on energy efficiency and renewable energy can bring a cost-efficient decarbonisation path for Europe by making our economies less dependent on imports, integrating cheaper renewables to reap their full benefits, and addressing energy poverty. Furthermore, the recent reform of the Electricity Market Design includes measures that will increase price stability and predictability for investors and provide tools to attract investments towards making the energy system better interconnected for all of Europe and more flexible.

A robust Energy Union requires a better, simpler, more effective and cost-efficient approach and governance. This is crucial to deliver collectively on our climate and energy ambitions, secure energy supplies and provide more affordable energy for business and consumers. We need a partnership with the Member States to ensure better planning and coordinated policy decisions, improving monitoring, transparency and policy ownership. National Energy and Climate Plans need to provide improved certainty to trigger the massive investments needed for the energy transition. To this end, I will update and simplify the existing Governance of the Energy Union, working with the Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth. I will also assess carefully and work with relevant members of the College, in particular with the Commissioner for Economy and Productivity; Implementation and Simplification, to achieve further simplification and make best use of synergies with the Competitiveness Coordination Tool announced in the Political Guidelines.

Technological neutrality is a central concept, integral to the freedom of Member States to choose their energy mix in line with our Treaties. All renewable and low-carbon energy solutions will be necessary. Projections show a decarbonised power sector by 2040. The bulk is projected to come from renewable energy with a considerable

contribution from nuclear energy. Small Modular Reactors have the potential to provide low-carbon electricity and heat and contribute to decarbonising not only power generation, but also sectors with hard-to-abate emissions such as transport, the chemical and steel industry. In line with my mission letter, I will support the acceleration of the development and deployment of Small Modular Reactors in Europe during the 2030s, building on the European Industrial Alliance on Small Modular Reactors. Any future use of nuclear will continue to be conditional on adherence to the strictest nuclear safety standards, as well as safe disposal of all types of nuclear waste and spent fuel.

The “energy efficiency first” principle favours smarter and more efficient operation of the energy system over expansion. The Commission has already developed sector-specific guidance for industry, energy, transport and the financial sector, helping decision-makers assess energy-efficient alternatives alongside other options. Industry needs lower energy and production costs that can be delivered by applying more energy efficient and technologically advanced industrial processes. This lowers costs, contributes to further growth, attracts new customers and investors and increases industrial competitiveness. Electrification will be a key vehicle to further increase energy efficiency.

Over the next five years, Europe will need to integrate various elements of the energy system e.g. electricity and heat supply, hydrogen, flexibility, energy efficiency and end-use sectors. The objective is to accelerate decarbonisation and make the system more efficient and competitive by exploiting all synergies. The overall objective will be to ensure that Europe’s transition towards net zero is powered by an integrated energy system with homegrown, clean electricity. Further digitalisation of the energy system and leveraging the potential of digital technologies is key, and, to this end, I will present a strategic Roadmap for digitalisation and AI in the energy sector.

However, the energy transition cannot succeed unless we ensure citizens truly benefit from and participate in it: no one will be left behind. Strengthening citizen participation will be a key aspect of my work. We need to address citizen concerns on energy affordability, jobs, rising housing and heating costs. This will be the front line for delivering the energy transition. The Commission will present a Citizens Energy Package, to help ensure that Europeans benefit from the energy transition, both individually and within communities.

7. What are your plans for the review of the security of supply framework? What lessons can be learned from the war in Ukraine? What strategy will you propose to further diversify away from dominant or unreliable suppliers and routes of supply? What initiatives do you envisage to protect energy supply from physical and cyber threats? What steps will you follow to reduce reliance on external suppliers while enhancing clean energy and critical infrastructure within the EU, including the development of the hydrogen economy and sufficient hydrogen supply? What role do you see for the European Hydrogen Bank? How would you frame a Union strategy on flexibility, including demand side response and storage? How will you address the challenge of energy supply volatility associated with increasing renewable electricity generation? How do you assess the existing legal framework on European Grids and what measures would you propose for its improvement? What concrete actions will you propose to accelerate the upgrading of electricity grids and removing the existing bottlenecks within and between Member States, including at distribution level, offshore and very long distance transmission and to achieve the 15% interconnection capacity target? What is your view on EU funding for energy infrastructure projects and their role in the European Competitiveness Fund and the forthcoming MFF? What measures do you envisage for the Electrification Action Plan?

The EU has a solid security of supply framework, but it needs to be made simpler, and more forward-looking. It should also be expanded to address emerging risks to critical infrastructure, climate change, cybersecurity, and physical threats. The review provides a timely opportunity to update our framework.

The lessons learnt from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine need to be at the core of our future action. We have learned to our enormous cost the dangers of being dependent on an unreliable energy supplier, Russia, that ultimately has weaponised energy. We are moving towards a more decarbonised, electrified and integrated energy system, and we need to ensure better handling of cross-sectoral risks. To mitigate disruptions, the EU must prioritise preparedness and coordination, while promoting supply diversification, gas demand reduction and efficient storage, alongside cross-border interconnections. The review of the existing framework needs to enable an orderly and affordable phase-out from fossil fuels, accelerating more sustainable and domestically produced alternatives, as well as reaping the potential of demand side measures. When it comes to protecting energy supply from physical and cyber threats, we will work closely with Member States, building on the progress made with

infrastructure stress tests, the EU-NATO Task Force on resilience, and mandatory cybersecurity rules for electricity.

Diversification of supplies and routes, renewables and clean energy, energy efficiency, as well as deepening the energy internal market are crucial for Europe's resilient energy sector and economy. Accelerating the clean energy transition reduces dependence on fossil fuels. We will need to continue to strengthen interconnectors, where needed, and improve energy storage. We will also continue to boost domestic biogas and biomethane production.

The Commission put forward the first ever demand aggregation mechanism for gas, AggregateEU. It has improved market transparency and provided alternative supply options to replace Russian gas. Based on these first steps, demand aggregation will be extended to other products such as hydrogen and other commodities like critical raw materials.

We will also need to focus on security of supply in the EU's nuclear industry, where diversification of the nuclear fuel cycle at all stages is paramount. Dependence on Russia covers supply of spare parts and maintenance services, as well as conversion and enrichment services. I will assess whether the roadmap towards ending Russian energy imports can include the full nuclear supply chain to ensure EU open strategic autonomy. To that end, Commission services will engage with utilities and Member States for diversification of supply and on sourcing products in the European civil nuclear industry.

Renewable and low-carbon hydrogen will be key for decarbonising sectors where electrification is more difficult. In this regard, our focus will be on implementing recently agreed measures such as the targets for renewable hydrogen use in industry and transport. The legislative framework, coupled with financial support, can stimulate production and offtake, while our infrastructure planning process can facilitate the development of a well-coordinated European hydrogen network. To stay competitive, the EU industry will need both robust production of hydrogen in the EU, as well as imports from international partners. Therefore, and in line with the revised Renewable Energy Directive, we will take forward action for imported and domestic hydrogen.

The European Hydrogen Bank will kick-start market scale-up for cleaner fuels by bridging the gap between – still too high – clean hydrogen production costs and industry's ability to pay. Building on the experience so far, I will work with the Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth on future auctions to support domestic clean hydrogen production. In addition, in cooperation with Member States, we will speed up work on developing the international leg of the Hydrogen Bank to facilitate imports and creating economic opportunities in partner countries.

Furthermore, there is also a role for carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS) to decarbonise the hard to abate sectors, I will work together with the Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth on the right framework conditions to make it happen, also focusing on CO₂ infrastructure.

Flexibility solutions, both storage and demand response, are necessary to increase the efficiency of our energy system and better integrate renewables, thereby lowering energy costs. Their wider deployment will benefit both household and industrial consumers by reducing price volatility and costly renewables curtailment as well as optimising grid investments. We need to address obstacles to much broader deployment of flexibility to accelerate investments in these solutions and guide the Member States.

To drive electrification, an Electrification Action Plan can guide work to remove barriers and accelerate access to electricity for both industry and households that are still using fossil fuels for heating, transport and other energy.

As Commissioner for Energy and Housing, I will focus strongly on extending and upgrading our grids to ensure an efficient transition from fossil fuels to clean energy. Together with the Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth, I will work to scale down and phase out the use of fossil fuel subsidies. We need rapid and robust implementation of the key cross-border infrastructure projects as well as the EU Grids Action Plan with concrete actions to accelerate the upgrade and build-out of electricity grids, including at distribution level. This is of paramount importance also in view of delivering on the 15% interconnection target.

This will build on an assessment of the existing legal framework on grids to identify measures to optimise network planning across Member States, speed up permitting, ensure the efficient use of existing infrastructure, make the grids smarter as well as streamlining and simplifying planning procedures. In order to efficiently deploy the grids necessary for our energy transition, we need a collaborative framework, both offshore and onshore, based on enhanced regional cooperation, the right allocation of costs and benefits as well as innovative financing models. I

will also work with the Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism to ensure that we align transport and energy infrastructure development needed to accommodate the future increase in transport electricity demand.

Investments in clean energy infrastructure are a key priority for the coming years, as reflected in both the Draghi and Letta reports. To support this work, I will propose a dedicated clean energy investment strategy for Europe, including a de-risking initiative to unlock private capital. This will be central to efforts to prioritise investment in clean energy, including in infrastructure.

I will also ensure the use of the resources available via NextGenerationEU and the current budget. We will ensure that we use the power of our budget to leverage and de-risk private investment.

8. What will be the main elements of the Action Plan for Affordable Energy Prices? What specific measures will you put in place to reduce energy prices for households, companies and industries, especially energy-intensive industries? How do you intend to further address energy poverty? How do you plan to extend the use of Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) and Contracts for Difference (CfDs) to ensure competitive prices? What is your position on the current energy market bidding zones? What are your concrete plans for the first-ever European Affordable Housing Plan and the European Strategy for Housing Construction, considering the EU and Member States competences in that area? What do you see as the main synergies between the European Affordable Housing Plan, the EED and the EPBD? What space do you see for increasing financing for energy efficiency and renovations under the next MFF? How do you intend to pursue the goal of delivering decarbonised and affordable heating and cooling? What role do you see for solar heating, geothermal and district heating? How will you ensure that EU measures tackle the issue of insulation of vast housing estates and rural areas? How will you contribute to further developing the New European Bauhaus?

The fossil fuel supply shocks and price spikes that caused the recent energy crisis are a reminder of the importance of affordability of energy for both business and households. Energy costs are hampering EU competitiveness and eroding support for the energy transition. Bringing down energy costs for households and business will be one of the main priorities of my mandate. The Action Plan for Affordable Energy is a central part of the Clean Industrial Deal to be presented in the first 100 days of the next Commission mandate.

Driving down energy costs requires accelerating the roll-out of competitive clean electricity through removing infrastructure bottlenecks and regulatory barriers, including permitting for renewables and grids, and energy efficiency in a robust Energy Union. The Action Plan will strengthen energy security and boost investments while supporting industries, including energy-intensive industries and households, to ensure access to affordable energy. It will also look at lowering system costs, strengthening the role of Europe's energy diplomacy, fostering citizens participation and ensuring a just transition for everyone.

The implementation of the recent reform of the European Electricity Market Design is particularly important to boost access to affordable and secure clean energy and citizen participation in the energy transition. To accelerate the decoupling of electricity bills from volatile fossil fuel prices, we will work closely with Member States to ensure that public support in the form of contracts for difference is competitive and market-friendly, and improves the availability of power purchase agreements, which are crucial especially for energy intensive industries, through guarantees and standardisation.

Access to renewable energy together with improved energy efficiency in buildings will be essential also to tackle energy poverty, which is of great concern, also for affordable housing (see reply to question 4).

In addition, we need to address increasing system costs such as network charges, taxes and levies, which make up one third of consumers' electricity bills today. Together with the Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth I will reflect how to ensure that taxes do not have a negative effect of energy prices and on the competitiveness of EU industry, while supporting clean transition objectives. To fully reap the benefits of the energy transition, and mitigate these costs, the Action Plan on Affordable Energy will outline measures to mobilise private investment, improve network planning, increase digitalisation, and optimise the use of the existing grid. It will also incentivise flexibility, provide the right locational signals to investments where they are most needed, and set out an enhanced governance framework of the internal energy market fit for a truly integrated European system in a robust Energy Union.

We have to speed up projects that bring the benefits of clean energy to consumers. We need to work to accelerate permitting for renewables, energy infrastructure and storage. While the electricity sector remains a priority,

decarbonising heating and cooling will require diverse solutions to meet different circumstances such as heat pumps, solar thermal, geothermal and district heating. I am fully committed to accelerating these solutions, working alongside Member States, industry and financing institutions.

The President entrusted me with preparing the first-ever European Affordable Housing Plan. Although primary responsibility for policies on and investments in housing remains with Member States, EU legal, policy and funding instruments can play a strategic role (see further details under question 3). The implementation of the revised Energy Efficiency Directive, Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and Renewable Energy Directive has started. Member States are preparing Heating and Cooling Plans for concerned municipalities, identifying vulnerable consumers for dedicated actions, and National Building Renovation Plans, including national measures addressing the worst buildings first, and providing long-term planning which investors need. These efforts will need to play an integral part of the European Affordable Housing Plan. Furthermore, accelerating the implementation of the new Construction Products Regulation will enable manufacturers to supply the products needed for the implementation of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive.

It is crucial to attract more private financing and improve its effectiveness to ensure that energy poor households and micro-enterprises can benefit from energy efficient homes, business and technologies to lower their bills. We will evaluate energy efficiency financing together with the European Energy Efficiency Financing Coalition and make investments into energy efficiency an integral part of the EU Clean Energy Investment Strategy.

While buildings are crucial for a socially fair and sustainable transition, they also present an opportunity to enhance competitiveness of the construction sector. A dynamic and strong construction sector is a prerequisite for ensuring the availability of affordable and safe buildings, and for a sustainable built environment. As part of the European Affordable Housing Plan, we will develop a strategy for housing construction to support housing supply. This would include measures to reduce building costs, raise construction sector productivity, increase the uptake of innovative solutions, such as serial renovations supporting start-ups and social innovations, and enhance the environmental performance of the industry. In support to Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy, I intend to build synergies between the New European Bauhaus (NEB) and EU needs for affordable and sustainable housing, promoting its three core values – sustainability, inclusion, and aesthetics.

Question from the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

9. How do you envisage the revision of State aid rules, together with the Executive Vice President for a Clean Just and Competitive Transition to enable housing support measures for social housing? Would you consider the creation of an exempted category, which would include affordable housing for mid-market rental households as a Service of General Economic Interest (SGEI) and under which conditions?

If confirmed as Commissioner, in line with my Mission Letter, I will support the Executive Vice-President for a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition in her task to put forward revised State aid rules to enable housing support measures especially for affordable energy-efficient and social housing. Looking into these rules is part of a broader set of initiatives that will be included in the upcoming European Affordable Housing Plan. In carrying out this exercise, we will pay close attention to striking the right balance and ensuring that any exemption from State aid rules for affordable housing does not crowd out private investment or distort competition in the housing market unduly. For more details, please see my reply to Q5 above.

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

10. What is your vision for a decarbonised Energy Union? How do you plan to strengthen the synergies between and reconcile energy security with the emission reduction targets? How will you accelerate the deployment pace of renewable energies to meet the EU' renewable 2030 targets, including through the full implementation of REPowerEU and tackling the permitting delays in this regard? What role do you envisage for renewables in the Action Plan for Affordable Energy Prices? In the context of the just transition, how will you simplify the implementation of current EU legislation in the area of buildings and construction to reduce administrative burdens for both businesses and consumers and how can, especially low-income households, be supported in the renovation and decarbonisation of their houses, inter alia, via Social Climate Fund?

A robust Energy Union should enable the supply of affordable clean energy for European households and businesses, enhance energy security, and ensure that we have a just transition towards climate neutrality by 2050, with all actors on board. Accelerated deployment of renewables and their integration into the energy system contribute to energy security and is key to achieving our climate targets affordably, by making our economies less dependent on imports and reaping the full benefits of cheaper renewables.

Electrification, with a fully decarbonised power system by 2040 based on renewables and low-carbon solutions, will be the main driver of the energy transition. Implementing and enforcing the 2030 legislative framework will be our focus, as a solid foundation for the 2040 framework, with lessons learned guiding future decisions. I will work hand in hand with Executive Vice-President for a clean, just and competitive transition in this process.

We need to make better use of all cheap clean energy in the system, in particular renewable energy, and improve the efficiency of the energy system as a whole. Our work will aim to ensure that our ambition is delivered on the ground and that we reach our renewables target of at least 42.5%, with the aspiration to reach 45%. To pass the benefits of this additional renewable energy capacity onto consumers, both industry and households, we will need to incentivise more power purchase agreements, have a more efficient use and a faster build-out of a modernised grid infrastructure; ensure faster permitting; and better availability of flexibility solutions, such as batteries and demand side response to lower overall system cost.

Accelerating permitting procedures will enable the early completion of renewable energy projects and will be a pre-condition to achieve our renewable energy targets and decarbonisation efforts. Strategic planning of renewables deployment, including in the renewables acceleration areas set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive, ensures that the actual deployment goes hand in hand with environmental protection. Win-win solutions will be based on the multiple use of spaces, combining environmental protection with renewables' deployment. I will closely work in partnership with Member States to ensure that our new rules to improve planning and accelerate permitting for renewables are rapidly implemented. We are starting to see positive developments on the ground, especially in Member States making use of the new permitting rules, but I will also look into further ideas for speeding up permitting, in particular for infrastructure needed for cost-effective renewables integration into the energy system.

In the context of the just transition, buildings renovation is a key opportunity for lowering energy bills. For example, Member States will have to ensure that applications and procedures for public financing are streamlined. Going forward, guidance on the implementation of the Energy Performance of Buildings recast can help further dialogue with national authorities.

As of 2026, investments into energy efficient housing, including through renovations and repurposing of non-residential or affordable social housing, will become available from the Social Climate Fund. This fund will be highly relevant for vulnerable households, vulnerable transport users and vulnerable micro-enterprises. Therefore, through their Social Climate Plans, Member States will set up structural measures and investments, and possible temporary direct income support, for the benefit of vulnerable households and help improve energy efficiency in their dwellings or decarbonize them. Better mapping of the challenges, further addressing the barriers to renovation and construction and identifying simplification measures under the European Affordable Housing Plan will contribute to the evidence and actions.

Question from the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection

11. As underlined in your mission letter, the quality and affordability of housing is a key issue for millions of people in Europe. How do you plan to develop the Strategy for Housing Construction, in particular with regard to the implementation of the internal market for constructions products and better digitalisation in the construction sector to support housing and improve the quality and sustainability of housing supply? Besides the enhancement of the housing supply, how would you tackle the systemic issues of short-term rentals while taking into account the recently agreed Short-Term Rental Regulation, the Services Directive and the subsidiarity of Member States, and ensure an efficient and accessible use of the current housing stock?

The strategy for housing construction will be a key pillar of the European Affordable Housing Plan. Indeed, any measure to improve access to affordable and sustainable housing will require boosting the supply of housing. Without a comprehensive approach, we would risk further increasing housing prices, and leaving the acute productivity and competitiveness deficit in the construction sector unaddressed.

The supply of housing is insufficient to meet demand, resulting in high and rising prices and unaffordability for citizens. New construction and renovation of housing fell by 3% in 2023 and is expected to fall by another 6% in 2024. Building costs for new residential buildings increased by 34% between 2018 and 2023, as higher material and labour costs are not offset by efficiency gains and the construction industry generally builds in labour-intensive ways. As a result, it is characterised by low and even shrinking productivity (30% lower than the manufacturing sector), low uptake of innovation and a high environmental impact. Innovation, digitalisation, and automation could lead to significant efficiency gains and increase productivity, help reduce building costs and enhance the environmental performance of construction.

Against this background, the new strategy for housing construction could explore a number of elements, including: (1) Developing new construction product standards to support innovation and industrial technologies and techniques to enable manufacturers to reap the full benefits of the Single Market; (2) Digitalising all stages of planning, design, permitting and construction to improve and speed up housing construction and renovation; (3) Disseminating best regulatory and industry practices to support Member States, national authorities, and other actors in the construction ecosystem; (4) Improving access to construction services across the EU, so that the construction ecosystem can realise its considerable potential of economic integration in the Single Market; (5) Upskilling and reskilling our workforce, including with digital and green skills, to increase productivity and meet the high demand for new homes and renovations.

As regards short-term accommodation rentals, I recognise the impacts recent market trends may have on affordable housing and local populations, both in terms of imbalances and opportunities. It is evident that different regions or neighbourhoods may experience different pressures from local and touristic demand and have different needs. We will work together with Member States and platforms to ensure a swift and effective implementation of the Regulation, so that authorities in the EU can have access to accurate and up-to-date data on short-term rental activity. This should enable public authorities to manage short-term rental markets in a targeted, evidence-based, and proportionate manner in light of local conditions. Furthermore, in line with my Mission Letter and together with other relevant members of the College, I will continue to explore what could be done to tackle systemic issues with short-term accommodation rentals. I will further engage with authorities and stakeholders to explore the best way forward on this important question.

Question from the Committee on Regional Development

12. One of your responsibilities will be the development of a “European Strategy for Housing Construction”. How do you intend to balance reducing construction costs with enhancing the environmental performance of buildings? What kind of initiatives would you suggest to increase the productivity of the construction sector? The scope of funding by the cohesion policy is severely limited to energy efficiency improvements in housing, promotion of inclusion of marginalised communities, housing infrastructure for persons under or applying for “international protection”. Within the framework of the new “European Affordable Housing Plan” and besides doubling the cohesion policy funding, what additional measures would you propose to promote the construction of “affordable housing for all”? What are your views on the revision of the EU State aid rules for services of general economic interest (SGEI) applicable to social housing? Finally, what synergies do you plan to develop between the cohesion policy funds, EIB support, and other EU programs such as InvestEU or the Social Climate Fund to ensure long-term housing solutions that are not only affordable but also environmentally and energy sustainable?

Buildings are responsible for 40% of Europe’s energy consumption and generate greenhouse gases not only in their lifetime, but also during construction and demolition. The introduction of energy standards for new constructions in the 1980s had an impressive effect. Thanks to those energy performance requirements, the energy consumption in new buildings of today has halved. But they must improve further if we want to achieve net zero emissions at Union level by 2050, which I am committed to. As well as new high-performance buildings, an increased renovation rate – currently still far from the 3% per year target to meet Europe’s climate and energy goals – will not only reduce energy consumption, but also improve the living conditions of many Europeans, lower the EU’s energy dependency, and make energy bills more affordable. Moreover, construction and demolition represent the biggest source of Europe’s waste, generating 37% of the total.

We therefore need to accelerate renovations, in a way that is cost-effective and has low environmental impact. I will support Member States in investing in the energy renovation of buildings, prioritising worst performing ones. “Worst buildings first” is a key principle in the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, and it is the way to maximise the benefits and impacts of renovations and the most efficient way to spend public money. In the new strategy for housing construction, we could for instance aim to support innovation and digitalisation in the construction sector, including innovative industrial approaches like offsite construction which will increase

productivity of the sector and help reduce building cost (see also reply to question 11). I will also explore, together with the relevant Members of the College and Member States, how to improve the design and digitalise the use of pre-demolition audits (also referred to as “waste audits”) to be carried out before renovation or demolition works, to identify materials that can be reused and recycled, and to deal with hazardous substances.

Furthermore, shortages of materials can be mitigated by improving circular re-use and recycling, diversifying supplies, and using the most advanced materials, thereby reducing our dependencies on raw materials, and fostering innovation. The new Construction Products Regulation will facilitate this by updating over 400 European standards for construction products. Products placed on the market with the updated harmonised European standards will contain reliable, digital information. This includes environmental data like the carbon footprint as well as information on recycled content, remanufacturing, and repair. There will be specific standards for used products to create a single market for the re-use of construction products.

Cohesion Policy is already contributing significantly to improving the EU’s housing sector, including by making it more affordable and energy efficient. The European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund are already financing the construction and renovation of affordable homes, improving energy efficiency, and supporting urban development. Additionally, the Just Transition Fund is helping regions transition to a green economy by providing housing for displaced workers, among other things. We are accelerating these investments with innovative financial instruments, including loans and grants from the European Investment Bank, supported by initiatives like the New European Bauhaus. I will also support the Executive Vice-President for a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition in her task to put forward revised State aid rules to enable housing support measures, especially for affordable energy-efficient and social housing (see also reply to question 9). As suggested in the Mission Letter, I will support the Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms in working on a proposal that will allow Member States to double their cohesion investment in affordable housing.

Furthermore, in order to promote “affordable housing for all”, I will cooperate closely with the Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms, the Executive Vice-President for Clean, Just and Competitive Transition, and the Commissioner for Economy and Productivity to ensure we deliver long-term housing solutions that are both affordable and sustainable. Our joint efforts will include work with the European Investment Bank to develop a Pan-European Investment Platform to unlock private and public investment into affordable and sustainable housing (see also reply to question 3).

We will also work with banks and financial investors within the European Energy Efficiency Financing Coalition to identify measures to improve the effectiveness of our investments and scale up private investments. My position on changes to Services of General Economic Interest rules has been detailed in my response to question 5.

Finally, under the steer of the Executive Vice-President for Clean, Just and Competitive Transition, my colleagues in the College – notably the Executive Vice-President for People, Skills and Preparedness together with the Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth – will deliver investment and financing through the Social Climate Fund. It will address the issues faced by vulnerable households affected by energy and transport poverty.

This approach will ensure that our housing policies meet EU-wide goals and provide concrete, positive impacts on the ground.