

**QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE****Jessika ROSWALL****Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy****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?*

When I grew up in Sweden in the 70's and 80's, the EU often felt far away. Perhaps because of our geographic location on the outskirts of the continent, combined with a history of seeing ourselves as non-aligned and independent, it was never a certainty that Sweden would one day join the Union. Yet when I campaigned for Sweden to become a Member State as a young and politically engaged student in the early 90's, it was because I was convinced not only of the economic benefits a membership would bring but also because I knew that Sweden belonged in the European project. Through its foundation of openness, freedom, and human dignity, the EU represented the aspirations of my generation and the future we wanted for our children.

I still remember that time vividly: the discussions at home; the school debates; and the meetings with citizens in town halls and squares across the country. More than anything I remember the immense pride I felt when Sweden finally became a Member State. I could think of no greater honor than being able to continue to help build our common European future as Commissioner.

As a proud mother and grandmother, I am increasingly focused on which Union we will leave in the hands of the next generation. The challenges to our security, prosperity, and the nature we depend on for our wellbeing are many. But I am also convinced that we possess the collective strength to overcome those challenges if we work together.

As Minister for EU Affairs during the Swedish presidency of the Council in 2023, I was tasked to promote a greener, safer, and more prosperous Europe. To help steer the Union's direction during a period of unprecedented uncertainty was as challenging as it was rewarding, and I am proud of my role in maintaining our support for Ukraine, putting competitiveness at the top of the agenda, and helping find an agreement on substantial parts of the Fit for 55 package.

A few weeks ago, President von der Leyen entrusted me, as Commissioner designate, with a portfolio that touches the lives of all Europeans. As noted by the President in my mission letter, "climate and nature protection is vital to prosperity and health." If confirmed as Commissioner, I will contribute to implementing the political guidelines as Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy, as well as by being an active, collaborative, and engaged member of the College. Few policy areas permeate the Union acquis more than these. Close cooperation with other members of the College will therefore be essential — a virtue I hope and believe that I have clearly displayed throughout my political career.

As Commissioner, I would put a strong emphasis on communicating Europe to citizens on the ground, both within and beyond my portfolio. I would therefore look forward to visiting all Member States and many regions, and to actively engaging with our international partners — notably in the context of the Kunming-Montreal Global

Biodiversity Framework and the Global Plastics Treaty. In line with the Commission's goal of strengthening Europe's geopolitical role, I will also strive to ensure that the EU takes a leadership role in global environmental governance, particularly with regard to biodiversity protection, water resilience, and circular economy policies, contributing to both our global competitiveness and environmental sustainability.

As Commissioner, I would also continue our important work on gender equality and youth engagement, issues on which Parliament has shown great leadership. As highlighted by the UN Environment Programme and the OECD Global Forum on Environment, environmental changes have gender-specific impact. I will therefore ensure, as required by the 8th Environment Action Programme, to work towards gender mainstreaming throughout environmental policies, working with the Commissioner for Equality and leveraging resources like the DG Environment Equality Coordinator and the Commission Task Force for Equality. I will ensure that relevant gender specific impact is analyzed in impact assessments and engage with stakeholders on these issues. This will include taking into account the social impact of environmental policies on women, particularly in vulnerable communities, and ensuring that our transition towards sustainability does not deepen existing inequalities.

Lasting loss of environmental quality and biodiversity will affect younger generations. And young people have their own – sometimes diverse – views on the right approach to environmental policies, water resilience, and the circular economy. I am therefore looking forward to my first annual Youth Policy Dialogue which I would carry out in the first 100 days of my mandate. If confirmed as Commissioner, I will take a particular interest in meeting youth representatives across the EU and internationally, including from environmental organizations and young farmers. These consultations will help me understand the perspective of young people when shaping the policies under my responsibility and when representing the EU globally.

As Commissioner-designate asking for your trust, I commit to adhering to the highest ethical standards, to always acting in line with the Treaties, and to respecting the Code of Conduct for Commissioners. During the Swedish Presidency of the Council, I put the greatest emphasis on serving as an honest broker and finding common ground between the Member States. As Commissioner, I would not take instructions from any Government or other entity and would fully devote myself to promoting the European interest. If any situation would arise that could constitute a conflict of interest in the performance of my duties, I would immediately inform the President. I do not take these commitments lightly: as a trained lawyer, a former Member of the Swedish Bar Association, a long serving Member of Parliament and Minister, I have dedicated my life to service based on the principals of integrity, independence and impartiality.

## **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?*

Since its foundation, the strength of our Union has been built through cooperation. Without cooperation across national borders, regions, and political convictions, the success of the European project could never have been realized. This principle of cooperation is also enshrined in the relationship between our institutions. That is a principle which I promise to honor.

As a long-term Member of Parliament, a former Minister for EU Affairs, and as an aspiring Commissioner, I am acutely aware of the importance of engaging with the citizens who I hope to serve. As a member of the College, and respecting the procedures set out in the Treaty, I would consider myself to be accountable to the directly elected Members of the European Parliament. That is how I worked in government and that is how I would work as Commissioner.

This Parliament has repeatedly demonstrated leadership on Europe's sustainable transition. You have demanded clear action and results, while also giving a voice to those citizens that are concerned that our policies are sometimes too complex. I witnessed this firsthand during my tenure as Minister for EU Affairs during the Swedish presidency of the Council, as I participated in nearly fifty plenary debates. This gave me invaluable insights into

the aspirations and concerns of Parliament, which helped me build bridges between the co-legislators. The sustainable and fair transitions must be developed in cooperation with the Parliament to ensure the broadest democratic support and the most effective policy outcomes.

I pledge to continue these exchanges if confirmed as Commissioner, and to work to solidify the special relationship between Parliament and the Commission in line with the commitments affirmed by the President in her political guidelines, the 2010 Framework Agreement, and the 2016 Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making. As Commissioner, I would ensure that all relations between Parliament and me and my cabinet were based on openness, transparency, mutual trust, and regular exchange of information, including through my personal participation in committee hearings, plenary debates, and international negotiations.

If confirmed as Commissioner, I will follow up proactively on the President's pledge to give Parliament a stronger role in initiating and shaping legislation. I would be happy to discuss any resolution from Parliament under Article 225 within the scope of my portfolio with a dedicated structured dialogue with the competent committee and will play an active role in the Commission deliberations following up to such resolutions. To allow Parliament to exercise its democratic oversight effectively, I would commit to providing necessary information concerning planned initiatives and ongoing legislative procedures in a clear and timely manner and in equal footing with the Council. These commitments also extend to swift and clear follow-up to Parliament's positions and requests for legislative initiatives. And of course, in line with the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making, I will ensure that Parliament is fully informed of the potential social, environmental, and economic impact of proposed legislation.

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

*3. What concrete steps are you going to take in the context of the European Water Resilience Strategy to address water efficiency, scarcity, pollution and water related risk? How will you take into account individual Member States' specificities, including agricultural, and the critical relationship between water and healthy ecosystems, considering also available technologies? What measures do you intend to take to achieve and maintain high quality water standards, including through the enforcement of the existing legal framework?*

Water is a global matter on which the EU must continue to show leadership. Sustainable water management, water resilience, and water scarcity are key challenges for the future of the EU and its Member States. Water supports people, businesses, agriculture, infrastructure, energy, inland navigation, and entire ecosystems and the ecosystem services they provide. Yet, water is already under pressure in many parts of Europe and globally due to climate change, structural mismanagement, unsustainable land use, hydro-morphological changes, and pollution.

Europe's regions and cities are increasingly experiencing lethal heatwaves, water scarcity and flash floods. Ensuring a clean, efficient, and circular water management system is crucial for citizens and for the EU's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness across all economic sectors (see also question 8). Ensuring access to clean water for all must be a key part of the 'just transition' agenda.

The overall objective of the European Water Resilience Strategy will therefore be to preserve water quality and quantity in the EU and beyond, enhance the competitive innovative edge of our water industry, and address the root causes of water challenges, including pollution, scarcity, and the impacts of climate change. The Strategy will be complementary to the new European Climate Adaptation Plan, the European Civil Defense Mechanism, and the European Ocean Pact. I will work in close cooperation with the Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth, the Commissioner for Preparedness and Crisis Management, and the Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans, to ensure a consistent approach in all our water-related initiatives. Partnership and solidarity will be key concepts in this context.

A comprehensive 'source to sea' approach is essential for integrating freshwater management throughout the water cycle. In partnership with the Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans, I am committed to ensuring sustainable stewardship of our marine and coastal ecosystems, thereby establishing a robust foundation for a thriving Blue Economy.

My approach will include three main concrete elements, focussing on rigorous implementation of existing legislation, significant investments in water infrastructure and relevant clean industry technologies, as well as simplification of legislation, where useful. If I am confirmed as Commissioner, I will prioritise the implementation of key legislation, in dialogue with relevant stakeholders, and provide tailored support to Member States,

addressing specific needs, including in the regions. I am committed to this dialogue, but I will not hesitate to take enforcement action in case of structural non-compliance. With regard to the financing needs, I intend to cooperate with the European Investment Bank and other financial institutions and stakeholders, to develop new financing solutions and bolster investment in both traditional and nature-based infrastructure solutions.

Being aware of our regional differences and challenges, I would develop a European Water Resilience Strategy which should advocate for a cohesive approach to water management, tailored to the specific conditions of each Member State. Across the EU, we face many different water-related issues, including the scarcity of water resources due to extended periods of drought, catastrophic flooding events, and the degradation of water ecosystems in both freshwater and marine environments. All this comes at a great cost to citizens and to our companies. While these challenges are common throughout the Union, their occurrence and severity vary. In cooperation with the Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms, I will endeavour to mobilise investment and support reforms that tackle these water-related challenges. Our goal must be to preserve social and territorial cohesion and to increase the resilience of rural and urban communities throughout the EU.

I am mindful of the specific challenges for the agricultural sector, which is strongly impacted by water scarcity and surplus, as well as by deteriorating water quality. I believe that it is imperative to take specific measures to support water-resilient agricultural practices and address the negative impact of nutrients (including nitrates) and pesticides runoff on water quality. In partnership with the Commissioner for Agriculture and Food, I will strive to embed water resilience within the new Vision for Agriculture and Food.

In the Water Resilience Strategy, I also want to promote the development and utilisation of new technologies by facilitating access to finance and by promoting water efficiency, including through reuse. This will build on the EU water sector's existing innovative edge and expertise in water infrastructure, water efficiency, digitalisation, and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

I am committed to promoting global water resilience, and if confirmed as Commissioner, I will engage in dialogue and partnerships with third countries, especially with the UN Special Envoy on Water, in preparation for the 2026 UN Water Conference. A key priority will be ensuring access to safe water and sanitation and fostering cross-border water cooperation. Supporting multilateral action on water through platforms like the UNECE Convention or the UN Convention to Combat Desertification will contribute to global peace and stability.

*4. What concrete measures do you intend to present as part of the Circular Economy Act to create market demand for secondary raw materials and establish a single market for waste? Besides the necessary implementation of existing legislation, will this Act go beyond the revision of the current framework on waste and sustainable products? What is the expected effect on the environmental footprint of the Union, the use of resources and the competitiveness of the EU? Which specific sectoral actions -- such as for example on critical raw materials and textile -- are you going to take, also in view of third-country imports?*

The objective of the circular transition is to move away from a linear to a lifecycle approach for products and materials. This is crucial for enhancing competitiveness and economic performance, while reducing our environmental footprint and primary resource dependency. Circular approaches will optimise resource productivity and use of secondary materials and should be integral to the Clean Industrial Deal.

Resource extraction and processing account for over half of global greenhouse gas emissions, a significant portion of health-related impacts, and the majority of biodiversity loss when considering land-use change. Resources represent the largest input cost for the European manufacturing industry, making the prudent and rational use of resources critical for competitiveness. EU industries depend on critical and strategic raw materials, and circular systems are designed to keep resources in use for as long as possible, thereby limiting waste and reducing external dependencies that threaten our open strategic autonomy.

Substantial work has been done in the last mandate to introduce new initiatives and review key pieces of legislation.

At the same time, the Single Market for the circular economy is not yet a reality.

The main challenges for the EU's transition to a circular economy are the relatively low demand for secondary raw materials, circular products, and services, coupled with an ineffective single market for waste. This was highlighted

in the Letta and Draghi reports. If confirmed as Commissioner, these are some of the areas that I would like to address.

To realise a competitive circular economy and maximise the benefits of the Single Market, it is crucial to rectify market inefficiencies (see also question 9). Secondary raw materials are frequently more expensive than virgin materials, whose prices typically do not account for the environmental impact of their extraction and processing. Prior to presenting the Circular Economy Act, I will thoroughly assess these challenges and explore potential solutions through extensive dialogue with stakeholders, national authorities, and the business community, always with an eye on enhancing competitiveness and streamlining processes. This will include strategies to increase the utilisation of secondary raw materials, thereby reducing the environmental footprint—particularly in terms of consumer and material footprints—supporting the competitive edge of our industry.

I see potential in three building blocks:

- Practical implementation of the comprehensive legislation which Parliament and the Council approved in the last mandate. This includes monitoring, early warning, and technical assistance, as well as exploring financing solutions.
- Leveraging the Single Market, which involves bringing greater harmonisation and more effective approaches to issues such as Extended Producer Responsibility and End of Waste criteria, as well as streamlining and simplification;
- Strengthening the economics of the circular transition, and promoting circular products and business models, including in the fast-growing e-waste stream which is rich in critical and other valuable materials.

We must also remember that the EU acts on global markets, and that our policies have effects beyond our borders. Therefore, if confirmed, I will work together with my fellow Commissioners on the external dimension of circularity. I want to cooperate to ensure a level playing field, including through market surveillance. We also need to diversify imports of critical raw materials and promote circularity through the Clean Trade and Investment Partnerships, in order to foster long-term, mutually beneficial relations.

To determine the most effective and suitable instruments for the Circular Economy Act, I want to engage in extensive consultations and conduct comprehensive impact assessments, carefully considering the articulation of the current acquis, the potential financial implications, and administrative burden. While any potential actions need to be targeted, I envisage going beyond the revision of the current framework where this is appropriate. Examples of instruments that could play an important role include further harmonisation, measures specifically targeted at the increasing stream of e-waste, measures to foster new markets through recycled content targets, economic incentives, and a revision of the public procurement policies. Recognising the diverse nature of materials and their unique supply and demand challenges, I will not take a one-size fits all approach. Instead, I will continue the implementation of the strategies and legislation for plastic, batteries, packaging and textiles, tailoring our efforts to address the specificities of each sector.

Furthermore, as mentioned in my mission letter, if confirmed as a Commissioner, I intend to present a new Bioeconomy Strategy to encourage innovation, scale production of biomaterials sustainably, and exploit synergies with the circular economy (see also question 7).

I will also leverage the potential of the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation for the circular economy, in consultation with stakeholders, ensuring that ecodesign requirements are streamlined, operational and effective (see also question 9).

Overall, my objective is to prepare a Circular Economy Act which puts the environmental footprint of the Union on a sustained downward path while strengthening the EU's competitiveness and fostering our open strategic autonomy.

*5. How will you implement the zero-pollution action plan to ensure that all sectors are properly addressed where needed, and do you envisage any additional measures? When will you present a proposal for a revision of REACH that ensures simplification while guaranteeing enhanced protection of health and the environment and a*

*competitive industry? What is your plan on PFAS to minimise human and environmental exposure to them while ensuring a clear and feasible framework for industry by taking into account essential uses?*

Clean water and air are basic rights that benefit all. The measures under the 2021 Zero Pollution Action Plan have now been completed or are well advanced, including revised, strengthened, and updated legislation contributing to the European Green Deal on air quality, water pollutants, urban wastewater treatment, industrial emissions, mercury and the classification labelling and packaging of harmful chemicals. In line with the President-elect's political guidelines, the priority for the coming years will be implementation and supporting Member States – including regions and cities – in delivering on these new measures, for the benefit of people, in particular the most vulnerable, and companies alike.

If confirmed as Commissioner, I will provide a comprehensive overview of progress toward our 2030 zero pollution targets. Key remaining steps include finalising the ongoing evaluations of legislation on nitrates, the marine strategy framework, and bathing water, as well as the fitness check on the Polluter Pays Principle. The planned Water Resilience Strategy will also be important in this context.

In addition, the President-elect's political guidelines call for a chemicals industry package as part of the Clean Industrial Deal. This package should strengthen enforcement of the chemicals legislation in order to level the playing field, including for online sales, with a view to maintaining and supporting the competitive position of sustainable EU companies globally. Moreover, it should provide greater support to the chemicals industry, and SMEs in particular, in their transition to safer alternatives. I commit to prepare, together with the Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy, a chemicals industry package including a legislative proposal for the REACH revision in 2025 (see also question 8). I want the REACH revision to simplify and modernise the regulatory framework to increase sustainable competitiveness and security in the EU, and ensure the protection of human health and the environment. I want to review the dual system of authorisations and restrictions, in order to substantially reduce the need for individual authorisations of uses of hazardous substances, as well as to improve information requirements in key areas such as endocrine disruptors. This will close information gaps and improve risk control.

The Commission Communication of April 2024 on 'essential use' recognises that there are significant industrial applications of harmful substances, including PFAS, that are crucial for the green and digital transitions, as well as for our strategic autonomy. The current proposal to restrict PFAS in a wide range of consumer and industrial applications should provide further clarity and predictability as soon as possible. I can already indicate that I will seek to ban the use of PFAS in consumer uses, such as cosmetics, food contact materials and outdoor clothing. Where adequate alternatives in terms of performance and safety are not available, I would support the continued use of PFAS in industrial applications, in particular critical ones, under strictly controlled conditions until acceptable substitutes are found, accompanied by strict emission and disposal rules to limit their release into the environment, and clear incentives to innovate and develop sustainable substitutes.

*6. Do you commit to full and timely implementation and enforcement of the existing nature-related legislations, and to reach EU's international commitments? How will you ensure an adequate level of financing is available to implement those policies, including a possible dedicated Nature Restoration Fund in the next MFF? How do you foresee the development of a framework for the nature credits?*

I am committed to the full and timely implementation and enforcement of all nature-related legislation and to meeting the EU's **international biodiversity commitments**, notably under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Healthy ecosystems provide multiple benefits to people and our societies, including climate change mitigation, adaptation, disaster risk prevention, food security, water security, and various other ecosystem services. This is crucial for the well-being of our society and the resilience of our economies, as well as for our long-term competitiveness.

While the target of legally protecting 30% of our land area appears within reach, the same target for our seas requires increased efforts. Moreover, we must ensure that all protected areas are effectively managed and preserved to provide full benefits to society, our economy and of course to nature itself.

The nature acquis, including the so-called Nature Directives and the new Nature Restoration Regulation are important yet flexible tools to help protect and restore ecosystems, safeguard key ecosystem services, and increase

Europe's resilience. By doing so, they also contribute to our competitiveness. Their full implementation and enforcement is also necessary for delivering on the EU's international commitments, which will be among my key priorities if confirmed as Commissioner.

If confirmed as Commissioner, I will focus on implementation, working closely with all stakeholders, while using the full toolbox available, including technical assistance, capacity building, compliance assurance, and enforcement. I also want to engage with the regions to discuss their specific challenges. I am committed to simplification, I will aim to minimise unnecessary administrative burdens and improve consistency and synergies between different policies wherever possible without undermining the objectives of our policies.

I believe that we need to rapidly roll out and exploit the full potential of digital tools. In particular, Earth observation technologies will contribute to implementation and enforcement action while minimising the burden on stakeholders.

Boosting nature-positive investments is key to building a resilient and competitive economy. By investing in nature, we not only address environmental challenges but also create new opportunities for people, businesses and job creation in emerging sectors. Adequate public and private financing for nature will be needed.

The current Multiannual Financial Framework already provides several financing opportunities for nature, and these need to be used to their full potential. As set out in the President-elect's Political Guidelines, we need a new approach for a modern and reinforced budget for the next multiannual financial framework. We must aim for a new long-term budget that will be more focused, more streamlined and more impactful while reflecting European strategic priorities and our ambition to be an investment Commission. I am committed to assessing how we can best contribute to nature restoration from a variety of sources, and how to create incentives to reward farmers and other land managers who are working with nature in a respectful manner. I will work on this together with Commissioner for Agriculture and Food and the Commissioner for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration. Our reflection needs to start with "what we want to finance" to then see "how" best we can deliver on our objectives and maximise results on the ground. This will allow us to make our funding more impactful.

Given the urgent need for additional funding and the significant economic opportunities it presents, my intention, if confirmed as Commissioner, is to explore the establishment and rolling out of market-based incentives, as a complement to public funding. These would include nature certificates and credits, designed to financially reward those who engage in sustainable practices. Such incentives could also encourage insurance companies to invest more in robust ecosystems, assist businesses in leveraging ecosystem services, and promote the development of eco-friendly products. If confirmed, I intend to engage in dialogue with relevant stakeholders and further develop the work on pilot schemes for biodiversity certification and nature credits, enhancing current national efforts. These schemes should adhere to stringent quality criteria, consistent with European and international biodiversity objectives.

*7. How will the updated Bioeconomy Strategy unleash the potential of the European bioeconomy in a sustainable manner and in coherence with the objectives set in the Green Deal? What tangible actions will you take to deploy a science-based strategy that significantly contributes to the EU economic competitiveness, while respecting environmental and natural resources?*

The EU's growing bioeconomy sector offers alternative and innovative solutions that span a wide array of sectors, including agriculture, food, construction, materials such as plastics and textiles, chemicals, and transportation, and provides many interesting opportunities for EU citizens and companies. If confirmed as Commissioner, I intend to explore the full potential of the growing bioeconomy sectors. I believe that the bioeconomy can contribute significantly to competitiveness and prosperity, as an important complement to circularity and an important part of the EU's Clean Industrial Deal. I will present a new Bioeconomy Strategy in line with the President's commitment to stay on course with the European Green Deal. I see the Bioeconomy Strategy as a key element of the EU's sustainable competitiveness agenda and industrial policies, with links to the Biotech Act, the Life Sciences Strategy and the Circular Economy Act.

As part of an enhanced Bioeconomy Strategy, we need to support and enable key investments in technologies, sectors, products and materials that can help scaling up the bioeconomy. Circularity will be a central theme,

ensuring that the bioeconomy reduces pressure on the environment, protects biodiversity, and enhances the full range of ecosystem services. This entails fostering the strategic use of biomass and retaining biomass in the economy for as long as possible before its use for energy production, maximising the use of secondary feedstock (such as food and farming waste, by-products, and side-streams).

I believe that our approach needs to recognise that biomass is renewable, but not infinite. At a time of intensifying competition for biomass, it is crucial that we manage pressure on land and biomass in accordance with the EU's international commitments, including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. This hinges on the sustainable sourcing of feedstock and the implementation of the cascading use principle, ensuring biomass is utilized for its maximum economic and environmental value. By focusing on undervalued feedstocks that adhere to sustainability and circularity principles, we can unlock the potential of sustainable bioenergy, particularly in sectors like aviation that will likely depend on liquid fuels for the foreseeable future.

In order to achieve these objectives, the Strategy should identify a set of bioeconomy sectors and products on which the EU should focus as a priority, and set out pathways to support their scale up and strengthen the businesses that are engaging in these sectors. We need to take into account that, in many cases, bio-based products are currently not cost-competitive compared to fossil alternatives. Possible instruments to strengthen sustainable businesses and improve their conditions for moving from “lab to fab” may include eco-labelling, simplification of regulatory procedures, incentivising bio-based solutions through public procurement, setting relevant industry standards, and potentially introducing bio-based content requirements for select product categories after careful consideration and dialogue with all relevant stakeholders.

If confirmed as Commissioner, I intend to develop the Strategy in an inclusive and open dialogue with EU institutions and stakeholders. I am committed to underpinning the strategy with the latest scientific developments, building on the results, insights and research made available since the last update of the strategy in 2018, including the EUR 2 billion Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking under Horizon Europe. Looking forward, we also need to identify where key investments are needed in technologies, sectors, products or materials which will drive the scaling up of bioeconomy, while closing the biomass gap, in particular by supporting sustainable sourcing, maximising use of secondary feedstocks such as food and farming waste, and keeping biomaterials in material applications as long as possible.

#### Question from the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

*8.. How do you plan to contribute to the Clean Industrial Deal? In that regard, what measures do you envisage for the Circular Economy Act, notably in relation to critical raw materials? How do you plan to take forward the zero-pollution ambition and what measures do you think should be included in the new chemicals industry package? In this context, do you have any specific plans for PFAS? What measures do you intend to put forward under the European Water Resilience Strategy in relation to the energy, industry and digital sectors? How do you aim to further develop the New European Bauhaus?*

The Clean Industrial Deal will set out how we will support our competitiveness, resilience and strategic autonomy while attaining climate neutrality. The aim is to strengthen industrial competitiveness while making full use of a clean and circular economy to help reduce pollution, resource depletion and biodiversity loss. I will work closely with the Executive Vice-President for Clean, Just and Competitive Transition, the Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy and the Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth on the Clean Industrial Deal with the aim of providing a path for decarbonisation of the industry and towards a resource efficient, circular and clean economy. Circular approaches will optimise resource productivity and use of secondary materials and should be integral to the Clean Industrial Deal.

I want the Circular Economy Act to focus on the remaining bottlenecks to the circular transition. The Letta and Draghi reports identified these as the lack of an effective circular single market for waste, secondary materials and sustainable products, low demand for secondary raw materials and prices for virgin materials that do not reflect their externalities. The impact assessment for the Circular Economy Act will therefore examine the challenges linked to demand and supply of secondary raw materials. I also intend to engage with stakeholders on this matter. The specific measures will depend on this assessment and stakeholder inputs. In any event, implementation of existing rules will also be key to a successful circular economy. In my response to question 4, I outline the possible building blocks to consider. In designing these building blocks, I want to simplify the life of companies engaging in the circular economy wherever possible. One issues to consider in this respect is that producers of secondary



raw materials should be able to sell their products across the Single Market without facing different rules in each Member State.

Circular approaches will be essential to achieving the Critical Raw Materials Act benchmark of 25% recycled strategic raw materials by 2030. Ecodesign requirements should also ensure that products containing critical raw materials are designed to be durable, repairable and recyclable. Non “critical” raw materials too pose challenges for manufacturers. Many (steel, cement, plastic, biomaterials etc.) have a significant carbon footprint and many EU businesses are reliant on imports from third countries, making them vulnerable to price volatility and supply shortages, and the EU more vulnerable from a strategic autonomy point of view.

As already explained in my answer to question 5, the measures of the 2021 Zero Pollution Action Plan have now been completed or are well advanced. In line with the President-elect’s political guidelines, the priority for the coming years will be on implementation and supporting Member States – including regions, rural and urban communities – in making sure that the measures are effective and delivering their foreseen results.

The President-elect’s political guidelines call for a chemicals industry package as part of the Clean Industrial Deal. I commit to prepare together with the Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy a legislative proposal revising REACH in 2025, as already mentioned in my answer to question 5, with the aim to simplify and modernise the regulatory framework to increase sustainable competitiveness and security in the EU and ensure the protection of human health and the environment.

The PFAS contamination of soil and water poses a threat to human health and the environment and implies significant societal and economic costs. In my response to question 5, I explain how I intend to approach PFAS restrictions and conditions under which their use would be allowed.

I have set out in question 3 my detailed plans for the European Water Resilience Strategy. One important part of that Strategy will be to promote circularity and water efficiency. I am committed to seeking to foster new market opportunities for the already highly competitive EU water industry. 40% of the global patents pertaining to water management are European and I am convinced of our companies’ potential in this sector.

If confirmed, I will promote the New European Bauhaus (NEB) as a continued catalyst of the European Green Deal. I believe that the NEB can make circularity tangible for citizens, researchers and businesses through specific projects on the ground across Member States and their regions. I intend to build on the success achieved so far and use the financing facilities to foster research, testing and demonstration of projects in line with the Bauhaus spirit and its three core values – sustainability, inclusion, and aesthetics. The aim is to increase the visibility and social buy-in of the clean and just transition, drawing on the involvement of the Bauhaus Community and the people-centred perspective. I will work closely with the Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms, with the Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation and with the Commissioner for Energy and Housing.

#### Question from the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection

*9. The President of the European Commission asked you in the mission letter to lead, with the Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy, on a Circular Economy Act in order to establish a single market for waste and enhance your efforts to develop a single market for sustainable products. What is your vision and what are the specific actions, including legislative measures, that you will follow in the coming years to achieve these objectives?*

I want to focus the Circular Economy Act on the remaining bottlenecks to circular transition. These bottlenecks, include the lack of an effective circular Single Market for waste, secondary materials and sustainable products; low demand for secondary raw materials; and the fact that prices for virgin materials do not reflect their externalities.

As part of the Circular Economy Act I would therefore want to propose demand and supply-side measures while simplifying the regulatory framework, as also mentioned in the Letta and Draghi reports. All specific measures will build on comprehensive impact assessments and stakeholder views. In my answers to questions 4 and 8 I have already explained my vision and outlined the actions I intend to take.

I will not take a one-size fits all approach, as different materials are subject to different challenges on the supply and demand sides. Any action to improve the market of secondary resources will reflect the fact that markets for different products (for instance plastics, textiles, metals, bio-materials and non-metallic minerals) have their own

characteristics. I envision a Single Market for sustainable products that bolsters competitiveness and offers consumers durable, repairable, and high-performing products. This market would ensure a fair and consistent playing field for producers throughout Europe. By fostering opportunities for recyclers, remanufacturers, repairers, and refurbishers, we would aim to generate new jobs across a range of skill levels and in every Member State, thereby driving economic growth and sustainability.

If I am confirmed as Commissioner, I will coordinate the work towards adopting the first Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation Working Plan in the first year of the mandate. This plan will identify key product categories for the application of new eco-design criteria, concentrating on high-impact consumer and industrial products. I pledge to base these new standards on a process of transparent consultation and active stakeholder participation via the Ecodesign Forum. My goal is to establish requirements that extend the lifecycle of materials and products within the EU economy, while also reducing costs and administrative efforts for consumers and businesses alike.

Finally, as regards the Single Market for Waste, we have already taken steps to address the fragmentation of the EU market by getting rid of differences in transposition, interpretation and application of waste legislation. However, the Single Market for waste and secondary resources still functions imperfectly. We need to dismantle the remaining barriers. For example, harmonised approaches to End-of-Waste criteria and to Extended Producer Responsibility can further reinforce the single market for waste and the resulting secondary raw materials.

#### Question from the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

*10. Agriculture and forestry are the largest users of land in the EU and thus contribute significantly to achieving the EU's climate and biodiversity targets. Commissioner-designate, how do you intend to balance the objectives of protecting biodiversity and preserving nature on the one hand and maintaining agricultural production and ensuring food security and sustainable use of biomass on the other? How do you plan to strengthen agricultural water resilience so as to enhance agricultural production? What are your ideas for contributing to the Vision on Food and Agriculture? How will you ensure that the agriculture and forestry sectors are integrated in the bioeconomy strategy?*

The Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU Agriculture has served as an important orientation for action to create socially responsible, economically profitable, and environmentally sustainable agrifood systems. If confirmed, I intend to work closely with the Commissioner for Agriculture and Food and build on the work of the Strategic Dialogue to ensure that the EU agriculture sector remains competitive, resilient and sustainable.

Farmers and foresters are important land managers with a deep connection to the natural environment. They rely on, and play a vital role in caring for, healthy soils, clean water and air, as well as rich biodiversity, which allow for the production of essential, safe and high-quality food for us all. Farming land also acts as a carbon sink, and offers renewable resources for bioeconomy sectors, such as biomass for industry and energy. Farmers and foresters are deeply aware of the impact that droughts, floods, wildfires, water scarcity and biodiversity loss can have on their livelihoods. This includes reduced food protection and increased risks of plant pest and animal diseases. Intensified competition for resources and land can also lead to higher social and economic costs in the long run. By acting together, I am convinced that we can reverse the decline in biodiversity and the deterioration of water quality through the implementation of sustainable agricultural practices.

We need to ensure that farmers and foresters have attractive and stable incomes which reflects their crucial role in delivering for nature, regenerating soils, preserving clean water and air. Improved management of nutrients and pesticides is part of the solution to reduce pollution and preserve the quality of soils, while ensuring that farming remains competitive and operates within planetary boundaries. I am aware of the challenges, but I am committed to work for a balanced outcome, to the benefit of all.

We also need to better integrate primary producers into the bioeconomy value chain and exploit its full potential. In my work on presenting a new EU Bioeconomy Strategy, I intend to consult and engage with all relevant stakeholders, including farmers and foresters, to ensure that their perspectives and needs are taken into account (see question 7).

Farmers make their living out of what they produce. It is a challenging sector that depends on weather conditions and on changing market prices. If we want farmers to shift further towards more environmentally sustainable practices, we need to continue to draw lessons from what the farmers have expressed in recent months in order to design and deploy a new approach to deliver on sustainability, to support decarbonisation and preserve biodiversity. I strongly believe in working with positive incentives and rewards such as payment for ecosystem services to promote the conservation and sustainable use of ecosystem services. If confirmed, I will prioritise the design for nature positive actions and private investments, as a complement to public funding, including accelerating work on nature credits in close cooperation with stakeholders, including Member States, international partners and organisations.

The two pending legislative proposals on forest and soil monitoring should ensure enhanced monitoring and sustainable forest management. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with the European Parliament on these matters. I am convinced that we need to work with incentives to set the right framework for foresters to promote resilient forests which contribute to biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation and the bioeconomy, and that we need to acknowledge existing sustainability efforts. I will aim to facilitate and stimulate the engagement of private financing in this context.