

Ms Ursula von der Leyen
President
European Commission
200 rue de la Loi
1049 Brussels

By email to: [REDACTED]@ec.europa.eu [REDACTED]@ec.europa.eu
Copied to: the Executive Vice-Presidents, the Vice-Presidents and the Commissioners

EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL - GETTING THE EU'S GREEN POLICY PROGRAMME RIGHT

Dear President von der Leyen,

I am very pleased that you are starting the new Commission's term with a vast policy programme aimed at protecting our environment and climate, and at putting Europe on a pathway to a sustainable future.

This - you say - has been inspired by the "[passion, conviction and energy](#)" of the young people who are standing up for their future, and "it is our generational duty to deliver for them". Young people are calling for big, meaningful changes that get us out of the existential crises we are facing. They want nothing less than system change.

Last week, the European Environment Agency (EEA) confirmed the need to rethink the "[core systems that shape the European economy and modern social life](#)". It said that the EU cannot achieve a sustainable future "[simply by promoting economic growth and seeking to manage harmful side-effects with environmental and social policy](#)".

The systems that shape the EU's economy and support our lifestyles are causing both environmental and social destruction. For example, the massive use of crude oil is not only linked to environmental destruction and climate breakdown, it also fuels human rights abuse, disease, conflict and war.

Human exploitation and ecological degradation are part of the same fabric and neither will change without the other changing too.

The EU can and should be a global leader in re-inventing the economy. Many of the suggested actions can help achieve that. However, based on leaked information, we are concerned that the Commission's green policy programme will fall short if it does not:

Follow science. Defining leadership as doing a bit more than the others will not suffice. The Commission's action needs to be guided by science. Nature does not negotiate. When it comes to greenhouse gases, this means global emissions need to [halve by 2030, and reach net-zero by 2050](#). The EU has the obligation and ability to do a lot more than that. An EU GHG reduction of [50-55 percent by 2030 is insufficient](#), even to meet the 2°C target. To limit global warming to 1.5°C, the Commission should [propose at least -65% by 2030](#).

Respect Paris. Under the [Paris Agreement](#) governments must submit new or updated 2030 climate plans before the climate summit in 2020. The EU cannot be a climate leader if the Commission only proposes such a target in **October 2020**. This would be too late for member states to agree on time, and for others to follow the EU. To ensure the EU leads on climate, the Commission should propose the EU 2030 target **within the first 100 days**.

Avoid end-of-pipe fixes. Companies that benefit from destroying the environment are promoting new technologies and action they promise will mitigate adverse outcomes. Their wish list is not only an unwelcome distraction from the necessary system change, it can actually exacerbate environmental destruction.

- The Commission should not promote “**new genomic techniques**” as part of its European Green Deal. It should **uphold and apply EU laws** designed to protect public health and the environment, such as the EU’s GMO laws.
- The Commission should equally not pursue any **afforestation objectives** that could lead to massive industrial tree plantations that destroy nature. The Commission should explicitly **focus on the restoration of ecosystems** such as old-growth forests, peatlands, wetlands and biodiverse grasslands, and promote agroforestry.

Reject the polluters’ so-called “Innovation Principle”. The Commission should not promote a [construct by the oil and chemical industry](#) designed to weaken the EU’s health and environmental protections. A green deal that has the fingerprints of the polluting industry will not stand up to scrutiny.

Tackle consumption. The changes necessary to keep within the planet’s boundaries cannot be achieved with current lifestyles and consumption patterns. Many Europeans understand that. They are buying organic, eating less or no meat, avoiding packaging and ‘fast fashion’, flying less and taking the train more often. They cannot comprehend why unsustainable choices remain cheaper and more accessible in most places.

As the EEA said, the EU needs to rethink “not just technologies and production processes but also consumption patterns and ways of living”. The Commission should tackle the policies that promote and enable our unhealthy and climate-damaging production and overconsumption of meat and dairy products, among others.

The Commission’s policies should be guided by a **true paradigm shift in the energy, mobility, housing and food systems, supported by a rethink of the financial system.**

President von der Leyen, your Commission is a “last chance Commission”. It is a Commission that must restructure the economic system that for decades has rewarded pollution, environmental destruction and human exploitation, to safeguard our future.

Of course, you and your fellow Commissioners cannot do it alone. However, you must show real leadership and leave it to others to oppose and obstruct.

I wish you courage and strength to devise policies that will truly transform the system.

Given the high public interest in this matter, we will post this letter to you on our website.

Yours sincerely,



Greenpeace European Unit