



Brussels, 10.7.2017  
C(2017) 4839 final

*Dear President*

*The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion on the Commission's Communication "Next steps for a sustainable European future – European action for sustainability" {COM(2016) 739 final}. The Commission is grateful for the input provided by the Bundesrat and would like to take this opportunity to provide a number of clarifications.*

*In its Opinion, the Bundesrat welcomes the Commission's commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. In this context, the Commission would like to stress that the European Union has a strong starting position. Sustainable development is not a new concept; it has been a guiding principle of European Union policy since its inclusion in the Treaty of Amsterdam. Moreover, the Commission launched the first European Union Sustainable Development Strategy already as far back as 2001. Currently, sustainable development is mainstreamed in the European Union's major policies and strategies, including the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.*

*The Communication lays out the Commission's strategic approach towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at European Union level. This approach builds on the European Union's existing work on sustainable development and broadly consists of several instruments which the Commission intends to utilise to implement the 2030 Agenda.*

*Firstly, the new structure of this Commission is geared towards breaking down silos and static structures within the Commission. Given the holistic and cross-sectoral nature of the 2030 Agenda, this approach contributes substantially to its implementation. This also emphasises the Commission's commitment to policy coherence and policy consistency.*

*Secondly, the Commission intends to use its better regulation tools to mainstream sustainable development in all European Union policies. This will ensure horizontal attention to all matters related to sustainable development throughout the policy cycle and will ensure consistency of all European Union policies with the goals presented in the 2030 Agenda. In addition to that, the better regulation tools ensure appropriate stakeholder involvement in sustainable development related policy-making which is at the core of the 2030 Agenda.*

*Ms Malu DREYER  
President of the Bundesrat  
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*Concerning stakeholder engagement, as presented in the Communication, the Commission will also launch a multi-stakeholder platform that will advise the European institutions on their approach regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The work of the platform will be inclusive and contribute to ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are heard in matters relating to sustainable development. The call for applications to the platform ended recently. The Commission will provide more details on the composition and modalities of this platform shortly.*

*As regards a new strategic vision for the European Union 2030 as referred to in the Bundesrat's Opinion, the Commission announced in the Communication that the new Multiannual Financial Framework beyond 2020 will reorient the European Union budget's contributions towards the achievement of the European Union's long-term objectives and that the second work track will be introduced for reflecting on further developing the longer term vision and the focus of sectoral policies after 2020, preparing for the long term implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The multi-stakeholder platform as well as institutions and Member States will be actively consulted in the process of delivering on the second work track commitment.*

*This process will be strongly linked to the reflection work on the Future of Europe initiated by President Juncker and referred to in the Bundesrat's Opinion. President Juncker announced in his State of the Union address in September 2016 that national Parliaments would be closely involved in the debate on the White Paper on the Future of Europe. Now that the White Paper as well as the five reflection papers that had been announced have been published, the Commission encourages the Bundesrat to participate actively in this debate and to mobilise all relevant stakeholders to contribute.*

*Naturally, any efforts at European Union level would have to be complemented by national, regional and local actors to ensure the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by the year 2030, in full respect of the subsidiarity principle as also noted by the Bundesrat in its Opinion.*

*The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Bundesrat and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*Frans Timmermans  
First Vice-President*