



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Camera Deputaților for its Opinion on the Reflection Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030' {COM(2019) 22 final} .

As the Camera Deputaților rightly recalls, sustainable development is firmly anchored in the Treaties and the European Union (EU) made an important contribution to the development and adoption by the United Nations of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. The Commission has been mainstreaming actively the Sustainable Development Goals in the European policy framework. The priorities suggested in the Reflection Paper are well reflected in the Political Guidelines of the President-elect.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires effective cooperation at global, EU, national, regional and local levels, respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. National Parliaments are in a key position as progress on Sustainable Development Goals depends largely on action taken by Member States authorities at all levels. This collaborative agenda needs to be taken forward in cooperation with all countries and stakeholders, including the private sector, social partners, civil society, academia and citizens at large.

With regard to the specific issues raised in the Opinion, the Commission would like to refer the Camera Deputaților to the Annex. It hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Camera Deputaților and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Jyrki Katainen
Vice-President*

*Mr Ion-Marcel CIOLACU
President of the Camera Deputaților
Palace of the Parliament
Str. Izvor nr. 2-4, sector 5
RO – 050563 BUCHAREST*

Annex

The Commission has carefully considered each of the issues raised by the Camera Deputaţilor and is pleased to offer the following clarifications.

The Commission strongly supports the effective use of the Union's financial instruments to halt the decline of biodiversity. For instance, EU investment operations under the future InvestEU programme in 2021-2027 will be subject to sustainability proofing. Specific guidance on sustainability proofing is currently under development. Another component of the EU budget that applies the slogan 'thinking global and acting locally' is the LIFE programme, which is an effective means of supporting local innovative projects that directly contribute to EU climate and biodiversity objectives. For the 2021-2027 period, the Commission has proposed to increase the LIFE programme by almost 60%, with an increased focus on nature and biodiversity.

The Commission acknowledges the importance of soil biodiversity and is committed to progressing towards a land-degradation neutral world, as part of the Agenda 2030. The decline of soil biodiversity and soil sealing are both addressed by the EU Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection {COM(2006) 231}. The Commission will assess the need to enhance the EU legal framework for soil and give further detail on how the EU will achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030, in response to recommendations made by the European Court of Auditors in its special report on desertification and land degradation in the EU.

On small farms and genetic erosion, the Commission would like to point out that EU's common agricultural policy provides support for the conservation and for the sustainable use and development of genetic resources in agriculture. This policy tool does not take into account the size or the type of the farm: the focus is on properly targeting the support towards local breeds that are in danger of being lost to farming and for preserving plant genetic resources that are under threat of genetic erosion.

Regarding new energy supply and consumption patterns, the Commission would like to emphasise that the Energy Union strategy aims at ensuring the clean energy transition across all regions and territories. The comprehensive legislative framework now in place puts consumers at the centre of a renewed EU energy system: improved rules will give consumers more flexibility and better protect them, but also allow them to take their own decisions on how to produce, store, sell or share their own energy. The new rules promote this actively with provisions on self-consumption of energy, and local and renewable energy communities.

On the gender component of scientific research and innovation, the Commission recalls that Horizon2020 is one of the most successful multiannual financial programmes in integrating gender aspects. Gender is a crosscutting issue across the programme, there are dedicated gender objectives, targets and evaluation criteria. Horizon2020 includes a specific article on gender equality. So far, 104 universities and research organisations have been supported in implementing gender equality action plans through 14 projects with a total EU contribution of EUR 33 million.

The Commission welcomes the support of the Camera Deputaţilor for the opportunities offered by the single market in the area of education. In this regard, the Commission would like to recall the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights, i.e that everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education and training and lifelong learning. This is the context in which the Commission presented its vision to establish a European Education Area. The aims are to bring down barriers to learning, to enable learners to move more easily between education systems in different countries and to change the culture of education towards lifelong learning.

The Commission also wishes to underline its support to Member States in their reform efforts to modernise education and training systems. In its proposal for a new Erasmus programme for education, training, youth, and sports, the Commission suggested to double the budget from EUR 14.8 billion that is the budget for the current Erasmus+ programme, to EUR 30 billion for the next programming period of 2021-2027. In addition to the actions in favour of national education in the Member States, the Commission intends to continue the support to education outside Europe. The education and training systems in different countries in Latin America and in Africa are thus directly targeted by the European support and involved in collaboration mechanisms.

The Commission welcomes the importance attached by the Camera Deputaţilor to the EU actions in favour of promoting physical activities. In particular, the Erasmus+ programme has been a prominent and strong tool that with its actions has ensured concrete support to inclusive sport activities at the local level across the Union. Thereby, particular importance has been granted to the beneficial effect of sport for the health of young people and this aspect is likely to be further strengthened in the future.

The Commission agrees that strong linkages between the two dimensions of trade and development have to be fostered. This is a key objective of the recently updated EU strategy on Aid for Trade, adopted in 2017. For example, investment support instruments like the EU's External Investment Plan help our partners to benefit from free trade agreements (like Economic Partnership Agreements) and more generally of preferential trade regimes (like Everything But Arms). The Commission's work on improving the investment climate of our partner countries combines trade and investment. It addresses barriers to investment and supports regulatory reforms. It also tackles bottlenecks along value chains, for example, through trade facilitation, thus attracting investment and improving trading conditions.

The Commission is deeply convinced that regulatory tools to promote sustainable development should be based on the principle of technological neutrality to ensure that new technologies are properly taken into account and not hindered by regulation.

On the involvement of European citizens in the preparation of Union policies, the Commission would like to recall its commitment to consulting widely before issuing legislative proposals, including those in areas such as scientific research and innovation. For each new major policy initiative or evaluation, a 12-week public consultation is carried out. There is a widespread recognition that the consultation process has improved. However, the Commission is mindful that it can further improve its outreach

and make citizens and stakeholders more aware of its consultation activities and of the use of their contributions, as was recently highlighted in the stocktaking of the Better Regulation system {COM(2019) 178}. The Commission strongly encourages citizens and stakeholders to participate voluntarily in public consultations and other feedback opportunities through the 'Have your say' portal. Respondents can contribute throughout the entire legislative process: from the initial ideas to technical rules and updates. Respondents to a public consultation can include the public, non-governmental organizations, local and regional governments, trade unions, and businesses. In addition, the Commission will further step up its collaboration with the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Commission's representations in Member States, national authorities and other representative associations to raise general awareness about the opportunities to contribute to the Commission's policymaking.