



To: Ursula von der Leyen, candidate for President of the European Commission

Brussels, 12 July 2019

Dear candidate for President of the European Commission von der Leyen,

Next week you will be addressing the European Parliament and ask MEPs to approve you as next President of the European Commission. Your statement will be followed with great attention inside the European Parliament but also outside, including by European civil society.

The Health and Environment Alliance ([HEAL](#)) is a leading European not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects human health in the EU and beyond. Our alliance brings together over 75 member organisations working on tackling environmental and climate threats to health, with a focus on clean air, phase out of hazardous chemicals, climate change mitigation, clean energy and healthy mobility. We are part of the [Green 10](#), a coalition of ten of the largest environmental organisations and networks active on the European level.

As a medical doctor and public health professional, we hope you will be interested in our vision of environmental prevention through EU policies and consider talking about the co-benefits to health when outlining your commitments to building Europe's sustainable and healthy future. Some examples which illustrate our [vision](#) of how the EU can protect health through environmental and climate policies include:

- Cutting down environmental pollution can save lives and reduce the toll of diseases.
- Ending environmental health inequalities and protecting the most vulnerable as a polluted environment is most dangerous for children, older people, those already sick and people living in poverty.
- Boosting health by committing to 55% EU emissions reduction by 2030, given that climate change is the biggest health threat of the 21st century, and action to tackle it can provide immediate and significant health benefits.
- Cleaning up the air we breathe in our cities and buildings given air pollution is the number one environmental threat to health in Europe, leading to 400,000 early deaths each year.
- Reducing everyday exposure to hormone disrupting chemicals that contributes to modern health epidemics like breast and prostate cancer, obesity and diabetes as well as infertility and learning disorders by keeping hormone disrupters out of our daily lives, workplaces and consumer products.

1/ Environmental health concrete action

We believe the President of the next European Commission should commit to fully implement the [7th Environment Action Programme](#) by 2020, notably by presenting the long postponed **non-toxic environment strategy** as a matter of priority (see [HEAL contribution](#)), and developing an **8th Environment Action Programme** into a transformative **green new deal for Europe** that offers a just transition. This should respond to the climate, air pollution and biodiversity crises, concerns of chemicals risks to health, help realise several of the SDGs, fully respect the resources and ecological limits of our planet, and integrate equity and social issues.

To achieve a healthy planet for healthy people, below are a list of concrete actions for the next European Commission to commit to in order to protect people's health and prevent ill-health:

- In follow-up to the **air quality** fitness check, propose stronger limit values for pollutants, and propose more stringent real world vehicle emissions standards, aligned with the World Health Organisation recommendations (and forthcoming 2020/21 new guidelines); and step up infringement action against those member states lacking ambitious air quality plans.
- Without further delay, present an update of the current **endocrine disrupting chemicals strategy**, which dates back to 1999 to current realities, in line with the latest resolution from the European Parliament calling for action by June 2020 for a concrete action plan and legislative proposals to remove endocrine disruptors from cosmetics, toys and food packaging (http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-8-2019-0241_EN.pdf) and the latest Council Conclusions on chemicals (<http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10713-2019-INIT/en/pdf>)
- Implement cut-off criteria for endocrine disrupting chemicals now that there are identification criteria for these active substances of **pesticides**. One upcoming opportunity to demonstrate this is to ban chlorpyrifos and chlorpyrifos methyl.
- Declare the **pesticides** Regulation as fit for purpose following its fitness check and Introduce mandatory pesticide reduction targets for the EU and its member states, as called for by the glyphosate-ECI signed by 1.3 million Europeans.
- Act on **chemicals** in a health protective way in the next years and monitor progress, inter alia by speeding up the implementation of the **REACH** review actions- including speeding up the identification of substances of very high concern (**SVHCs**), properly implementing information requirements for registration dossiers to improve their quality, considering more efficient uses of restrictions for groups of chemicals, increasing the quality of the analysis of alternatives when discussing authorisations; and in so doing, allocating sufficient resources to the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) to deliver.
- Eliminate all non-essential uses of **PFAS**; promote an upgrade of how chemicals are being assessed and regulated , e.g. apply precaution and put vulnerable groups first; update test requirements, introduce requirements for regulations to take into account **cocktail effects**
- Promote **coherence** between chemical-related regulations.

2/ A European Commission structure and mandates that are fit for purpose

Vice-Presidents

Next to a Vice-President for Climate Transition, a Vice-President for Nature and Natural Resources, the next College should also include a Vice-President for Health, Social Justice and Well-being who should i.a. steer the work of the Commissioner for health, food safety and chemicals.

Vice Presidents should be given the needed powers and authority to drive a sustainable agenda in which all EU actions and decisions are made consistent with current and future commitments around climate, environment, health and sustainability. These VP posts must be awarded to nominees who have shown a thorough understanding of, and commitment to the environmental challenges and know the decision making processes within the European Commission.

Commissioners

We are expecting from the President of the European Commission to appoint:

A dedicated Commissioner for the environment

The portfolio of the next Commissioner for the environment should not at the same time cover fisheries. The environmental challenges are huge so the focus of the Commissioner is entirely needed to solve them. The Commissioner should be i.a. in charge of providing good status of water and air.

The corresponding DG ENV should be strengthened. There also needs to be more resources for compliance and enforcement, as the new Commission first of all needs to focus on enforcing existing legislation while updating it to the latest science. By now complaint-handling and dealing with infringements often is dealt with too slowly.

A Commissioner for health, food safety and chemicals

This Commissioner should protect health and safety from toxic substances against the intrinsic interest of polluting companies to not be regulated. Environmental prevention of disease should be a strong pillar of this Commissioner's portfolio. This Commissioner should be led by the Vice-President for health, social justice and well-being.

The corresponding DG should stay independent. It would fulfil dedicated tasks to protect citizens from chemicals and other environmental hazards. This duty should be fulfilled by a DG that is specifically in charge of environmental health prevention and ensuring health is a priority in all EU policies.

We encourage you to reflect on points and urge you to consider including them in the vision and commitments you will present next week to the EU Parliament and EU citizens.

We remain at your disposition for any questions you may have.

Kind regards,

Ms. Génon K. Jensen

Executive Director

*The **Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)** is the leading not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects human health in the European Union (EU) and beyond. HEAL works to shape laws and policies that promote planetary and human health and protect those most affected by pollution, and raise awareness on the benefits of environmental action for health. EU transparency register number: 00723343929-96. Website: www.env-health.org*