



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen

1000 Brussels

02.09.2020

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OPEN LETTER

Subject: for Europe's Green Deal to be delivered, DG Environment must be properly resourced and empowered

Dear Commission President von der Leyen,
cc. Commission Executive Vice-President Timmermans, Commissioner Sinkevičius, Commissioner Hahn

We are writing to you to highlight the discrepancy between the ambition of your flagship European Green Deal and the lack of resources within key Directorates-General (DGs) of the Commission—in particular, DG Environment—to deliver it, and to request the situation to be rectified.

Under the previous Commission, which spanned the implementation of Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, the ability of the Commission services to deliver on the Strategy, and other environmental policy areas, was significantly undermined by lack of adequate staffing and resources within DG Environment, which even underwent disproportionate cuts in previous years. We believe that lessons must be learned, and that the allocation of staff, resources, and competencies must be commensurate with the priority this Commission gives to addressing the environmental crisis.

Therefore we would like to call on the Commission to review the current allocation of resources across the Commission DGs from the perspective of implementing the flagship European Green Deal. Historical under-funding and under-staffing of DG Environment must be rectified as a priority. DG Environment must have the capacity to implement its own areas of competence and to provide oversight in other policy areas to support policy coherence with the European Green Deal, especially:

-) Proper staffing and resources to implement the European Green Deal's associated policy initiatives that fall under DG Environment's competence;
-) Proper staffing and resources to provide adequate oversight of sectoral funds or policies, such as the CAP¹, EMFF or the Cohesion Funds. This capacity should remain throughout the planning period in order to provide oversight of Member States' changes to their plans;

¹ As an example of the imbalance in capacities between DG Environment and other DGs: regarding the Commission's assessment of Member States' CAP Strategic Plans, at present, DG Agriculture and Rural Development has two directorates, with 8 geographical units of between 10 and 20 staff (total of 113 staff



-)] The right level and expertise of staff – appropriate level of experience and knowledge;
-)] To have the appropriate powers to prevent harmful subsidies in other sectoral policies, as promised by the EU’s Biodiversity Strategy and Farm to Fork Strategy;
-)] Proper staffing in DG Environment and the Commission’s Legal Service to ensure existing law is enforced, to deliver on your “zero tolerance” promise.

So far, we observe that DG Environment has not seen significant changes to this end, despite the announcements of the European Green Deal making this a necessity; instead, also in 2020 the absolute and relative number of staff members for DG Environment within the European Commission further decreased, when compared to the previous years (source: HR Key Figures).

We would like to hear from you how you intend to take this forward in concrete terms, and provide the resources to DG ENV that are commensurate with your European Green Deal.

Yours sincerely,

Ariel Brunner

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On behalf of:

BirdLife Europe and Central Asia

ClientEarth

COMPASSION in world farming

European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

Environmental Justice Foundation

Friends of the Earth Europe

Greenpeace

HEAL

exclusively dedicated to national plans oversight), whereas DG Environment has just 1 unit with 15 staff, the majority of whom are primarily responsible for other topics.



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