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News | 30.09.2014

Juncker's persisting environmental blind spot

Sustainable development and environmental protection completely relegated in new proposed Commission

The complete relegation of sustainable development and environmental protection in the proposals by president-elect Juncker for the coming EU Commission term has been under fire for some time. Last week, our group [wrote to Juncker](#) to express our concerns on his environmental blind spot, as the EP's president and environment committee did and the environmental community has done.

[Juncker's response to EP president Schulz](#) indicates that he is not willing to seriously acknowledge these concerns. Or, worse, that he wants to rewrite the priority given to sustainable development in the EU treaty.

Echoing calls for other MEPs, our group called for a vice-president to be given explicit competence for sustainable development, both as regards their title and their remit (in the mission statement). It is logical that this should be part of the portfolio and mission of first vice-president Katainen.

In his answer, President-elect Juncker essentially dismisses this by claiming that because the EU Treaty includes a commitment to sustainable development, this is implicit to all the work of the Commission. However, his response also makes clear the direction he truly wants to take: "growth can only make a meaningful difference if it is able to last or continue for a long time" and acting in a sustainable manner means "acting in a new collaborative way".

In case president-elect Juncker has forgotten, the Treaty commits the EU to work "for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment". Sustainable development is composed of the environmental, social and economic pillars.

If Mr Juncker finds sustainable development too important to "box-in" under the responsibility of a single commissioner – how come for economic growth this is not the case? Not only is 'growth' the explicit competence of vice-president Katainen, it is also repeated across many of the mission letters given to commissioners.

The story is not over. The EP committees responsible for the hearing of Commissioner Vella yesterday repeated the request for a higher profile to environmental sustainability in the work of the future

Commission by including this in the title and the portfolio of vice-president Katainen. They also called for full implementation of the 7th Environmental Action Programme to be an explicit task in the mission of commissioner-designate Vella, asking for clear commitment be made on both issues prior to the plenary vote. Let's see if President-elect can improve his vision.

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