**Towards a new College of Commissioners**

Proposal for questions to put to Commissioner-designates during the hearings

smartEn (the European business organization of market players driving digital and decentralized energy solutions) would like to inspire and support MEPs in their right to assess the Commissioner-designates’ suitability for their job.

We have identified a few opportunities to drive the uptake and/or eliminate barriers to smart energy solutions in the new EU legislature 2019-2024. We have also recognized links with President von der Leyen’s Political Agenda and the mission letters to candidates and translated them into questions that MEPs could ask during public hearings to better understand the vision of Commissioners-designate and assess how they would approach some of their tasks.

**To Executive VP-designate F. Timmermans**

* The digitalisation of the energy sector will be critical both to achieve climate neutrality and strengthen the competitiveness of the European industry. For example, innovative digital services using real-time monitoring, predictive analytics and automated response enable demand-side flexibility which is an absolute necessity in an increasingly variable renewable-based energy system.

*Which initiatives are you going to propose in this regard? How are you going to ensure that a “Europe fit for the Digital Age” also contributes to the achievement of the European Green Deal? How are you going to cooperate with DG CNECT and interact with Commissioner-designate Goulard for this objective?*

* In the mission letter, President von der Leyen asks you to install a new climate culture in Europe and shape a European Climate Pact bringing together regions, local communities, civil society, industry and schools to commit to a set of pledges to change behaviours across our society.

*Are you going to focus just on “behavioural changes”? What about the empowerment of consumers of all sizes to engage actively with the energy system and benefit from this interaction?*

* Reaching carbon neutrality will require a concerted effort from all the sectors of the economy. Seizing the low-hanging fruits provided by sectorial integration and overcoming existing silos, especially in the industry, transport and energy sectors will be extremely important.

*What is the Commission planning to do in this domain?*

**To Executive VP-designate M. Vestager**

* In the mission letter addressed to you, President von der Leyen urges the EU to strive for digital leadership and asks you to propose a new Digital Services Act to upgrade our liability and safety rules for digital platforms, services and products. In the past, legislative initiatives in the digital sector, as the e-Privacy Regulation, have failed to take into account the implications on the energy sector, which is digitalising very rapidly. This has resulted in deadlocks and possible harmful impacts on innovation in the energy sector.

*How are you going to avoid the replication of such mistakes? How are you going to cooperate with Commissioner-designate Goulard and DG CNECT? How are you going to work with Executive VP-designate Timmermans to ensure that a “Europe Fit for Digital Age” actually supports climate neutrality and the European Green Deal?*

**To Commissioner-designate K. Simson**

* As underlined in the mission letter, the Commission needs to focus on the enforcement and implementation of EU legislation on climate and energy and all other relevant policies. This is paramount not only for the climate but also for the European internal market and the European industry that need a predictable framework for investments. In this respect, the ambitious implementation of recently finalized Clean Energy Package must be a priority.

*How is the Commission planning to support the Member States deliver on their targets and policy measures in a swift and coherent way?*

* Significant changes are underway in how electricity is produced and consumed in Europe. Digital and decentralised energy solutions allow consumers of all sizes to interact with the energy system by making their demand more flexible and helping to balance the electricity system. The recently agreed Electricity Market Design aimed at putting consumers at the heart of the energy system and Member States is now faced with its implementation.

*How are you planning to ensure end-users have the possibility to become active customers and benefit from their participation in the energy system? In the next 5 years, are you just going to monitor the implementation of the Electricity Directive and Regulation or propose new EU rules in this regard?*

* A successful transition requires the EU industry to play a key role. President von der Leyen included among her political priorities the definition of a New Industrial Strategy. This is an opportunity not only to accelerate clean industrial production, the move to a circular economy and a sustainable bio-economy, but also to drive the active participation of the EU industry to the energy system thanks to innovative services that aggregate and commercialise the demand-side flexibility of industrial assets.

*How are you going to cooperate with your Colleagues to make sure the New Industrial Strategy also stimulates the participation of the EU industry to flexibility schemes that offer them additional revenue streams and ultimately contribute to increasing system efficiency?*

* In the mission letter, President von der Leyen urges to empower citizens and cooperatives to play an increased role in the take-up of renewables through self-consumption.

*How are you going to address this goal?*

* Energy storage provides flexibility by creating a buffer between times of electricity shortage and oversupply. Storage technologies can be applied at end-user sites, in the network or close to renewable generators. Small-scale electric storage solutions, in particular, will have a crucial role in expanding on-site consumption. DG ENER has set up a specific task force and is currently investigating new EU regulatory initiatives on energy storage.

*What legislative initiative are you planning to propose? Is the Commission going to focus just on large-scale seasonal storage or also decentralised small-scale storage facilities? Are EVs going to be affected too?*

* The rules on taxation of energy products and electricity have a great potential to enable the clean energy transition. However, the revision of the Energy Taxation Directive has already failed different attempts in recent years. However, it seems that different DGs are willing to draft a new proposal.

*Strategically, how are you going to overcome the predictable opposition by the Council? Which are the main objectives for this revision? Which sectors are going to be targeted?*

* Buildings have a central role to play to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. However, the EU building stock is highly inefficient: buildings are responsible for 40% of Europe’s energy consumption and 36% of CO2 emissions. The mere reduction of their energy consumption is part of the solution, but it’s not the only one: the active interaction of buildings with the decentralised energy system must be further promoted and new initiative are needed to unlock their flexibility potential.

*Which initiatives are you going to propose in this regard? How are you going to boost the uptake of smart energy solutions in buildings and open up the demand-side flexibility of buildings in the next 5 years?*

* The revised Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) does not include any requirement to deploy smart charging infrastructures for electric vehicles in buildings. This might require costly and unnecessary investments in back-up generation and grid reinforcement. However, the revised EPBD foresees that by 1 January 2023 the Commission shall, if appropriate, propose measures for a Union building policy to the promotion of electromobility.

*Is the Commission contemplating the opportunity of introducing at least minimum requirements for smart charging infrastructure in buildings?*

**To Commissioner-designate R. Plumb**

* In this transition period, different DGs of the European Commission have identified e-mobility as a key focus area to support, notably the development of charging infrastructure across Europe.

*How are you going to coordinate these initiatives in a coherent way? How are EU funds going to be allocated to support such investments? Are EU public funds going to be allocated just for public charging infrastructure or also for semi-public (commercial) and private (home) ones?*

* In the mission letter, President von der Leyen urges you to shape a comprehensive strategy for sustainable and smart mobility. As electric vehicles are inextricably linked to the electricity system, any meaningful strategy must be developed in close cooperation with DG ENER.

*How are you going to work with Commissioner-designate Simson in this regard?*

**To Commissioner-designate S. Goulard**

* As Commissioner responsible for the digital economy and society you will be supported by DG CNECT. In the past, legislative initiatives in the digital sector, as the e-Privacy Regulation, have failed to take into account the implications on the energy sector, which is digitalising very rapidly. This has resulted in deadlocks and possible harmful impacts on innovation in the energy sector.

*How are you going to avoid the replication of such oversight? How are you going to cooperate with Executive VP-designate Vestager to shape a “Europe Fit for Digital Age” which also foster innovation in the energy sector?*

* Reaching carbon neutrality will require a concerted effort from all the sectors of the economy. Seizing the low-hanging fruits provided by sectorial integration and overcoming existing silos, especially in the industry, transport and energy sectors will be extremely important.

*What is the Commission planning to do in this domain?*