

Is the new European Commission side-lining the environment?

Brussels, 10 September 2014 - The new European Commission announced today by President Jean-Claude Juncker sparks fears in the environmental community.

Ariel Brunner, Head of EU Policy stated: «These choices are worrisome, starting from the general approach: the Environment and Climate action seems to have been marginalised. The Environment Commissioner will be coordinated by the Energy Union Vice President and will lose competence over chemicals. The same goes for the Climate portfolio, merged with the Energy and put under the Energy VP. Sustainable development seems to have disappeared from the agenda. Our main fear is that – added Brunner – the mandate of the Environment Commissioner will be one for inaction and deregulation. The wording in Juncker’s letter to Vella on nature legislation, the air package and the circular economy seem to suggest that a weakening of EU legislation and policy is in the cards ».

According to **Birdlife’s Brunner** fears also relate to policies regarding birds: «The nomination of a Maltese Commissioner to the Environment post, coming from a government with a very poor track record on illegal killing of birds raises serious concerns. He will need to convince that he will not be weakening the EU Birds directive in order to satisfy his domestic constituencies. We should not forget that Malta has been condemned for violation of the directive, and that the illegal shooting of migrants in Malta is a well-known international scandal. Similar questions – adds Birdlife Europe Head of Policy - will be asked on the nomination of Cañete to the Climate and Energy portfolio as his government has rolled back climate action in Spain, authorised and strongly pushed expansion of fossil fuels extraction».

Angelo Caserta, Birdlife Europe Director stated: «Today’s choices raise a number of doubts on the environmental credentials of the new Commission. On paper this Commission looks back to a world based on fossil fuels and nature degradation. We sincerely hope that President Juncker will dispel these fears. We also appeal to the European Parliament to intervene and ensure that the new Commission delivers on the environmental objectives.»

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BirdLife Europe is a Partnership of nature conservation organisations in 49 countries, including all EU Member States, and a leader in bird conservation. Through its unique local to global approach BirdLife Europe delivers high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.

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