

Hearing of Commissioner-designate Wopke Hoekstra



Wopke Hoekstra during the confirmation hearing 2024 © European Union, 2024 - Source: EP

Wopke Hoekstra from the Netherlands, Commissioner-designate for Climate, Net-Zero and Clean Growth, was questioned by three committees on Thursday morning.

At the start of the hearing, Mr. Hoekstra paid tribute to the victims of the recent floods in Valencia, Spain and highlighted the need to improve Europe's ability to prepare for growing climate-related risks.

In his [introductory speech](#), the Commissioner-designate underlined his strong commitment to achieving climate neutrality by 2050 and confirmed he would present a European Climate Adaptation Plan and assess the need for future legislation in this area based on the 2024 European Climate Risk Assessment. He also suggested that EU funds should be distributed

only to projects that are adaptation-proofed.

Replying to questions from MEPs, Mr. Hoekstra underscored the need to implement all current climate related legislation, while also acknowledging the legitimate concerns of firms and citizens about the cost of achieving climate goals, highlighting that the transition must be just. He also committed to enshrining a 90% net greenhouse gas emission-reduction target for 2040 in the European Climate Law for the EU to become climate neutral in 2050. He also committed to work towards phasing out all fossil fuel subsidies financed by the EU budget.

On the global climate negotiations, several MEPs asked Mr. Hoekstra how he would encourage international partners to become more ambitious on climate policy. Mr. Hoekstra said that the EU needs to be more assertive in what we expect from other countries. He highlighted global carbon pricing and the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism as key tools, the latter also having a role in dissuading businesses from transferring production outside the EU.

The EU Clean Industrial Deal

Members questioned Mr Hoekstra on how he would ensure that the EU remains competitive during the green transition. Mr. Hoekstra committed to presenting an EU Clean Industrial Deal within 100 days to support EU companies to reach the climate goals. EU climate mitigation efforts also provide firms with opportunities to become economic frontrunners, he said.

MEPs asked how the Commissioner-designate intends to push Member States to only spend money from the EU Emissions Trading System in favour of decarbonisation objectives. The Commissioner-designate said that this will be covered in the 2026 review.

Many MEPs asked how the Commissioner-designate intends to support the European car industry, and whether the 2035 ban on combustion engines should be revisited. Mr Hoekstra advocated for sticking to the agreed timetable to ensure predictability for industry. At the same time, he pledged to fight "ferociously" to provide a fair economic environment for the EU's car, battery and green industries. Mr Hoekstra pledged to boost the deployment of car recharging infrastructure and investment in the electricity grid. He also urged against revisiting the biofuels framework, instead focusing on electrification.

He also pledged to bring further support to the steel industry and to Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technologies: "we can't CCS our way out of the climate crisis, but the contribution of CCS can be potentially huge", he added.

Taxation

Mr Hoekstra said that in times of growing inequality, the broader shoulders need to carry a greater load, which would be achieved by advancing tax work at the global level. Tax systems must facilitate climate ambitions and not get in their way, he added. Another priority would be closing the tax gaps and advancing the fight against tax fraud.

MEPs asked what Mr Hoekstra would do to advance tax work at the international level and, if this were to fail, to develop a plan B for the EU alone. They inquired about removing laws to avoid duplications (decluttering), tax harmonisation efforts at EU level, climate transition friendly taxation, and particularly a frequent flyers tax.

In his replies, Mr Hoekstra promised a decluttering review effort by 2026, said that tax competition was not the ideal route since it lowered tax revenues while still not preventing companies from leaving the EU, and committed to looking into some form of aviation levy.

You can watch the video recording of the [full hearing here](#).

Press point

At the end of the hearing, [Antonio Decaro](#) (S&D, Italy), Chair of ENVI and [Aurore Lalucq](#) (S&D, France), Chair of ECON held a press point outside the meeting room: [watch it here](#).

Next steps

The chairs and political group coordinators of the committees on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, on Industry, Research and Energy, and on Economic and Monetary Affairs, will meet without delay to assess the performance and qualification of the Commissioner-designate. Based on the committee recommendations, the Conference of Presidents (EP President Metsola and political group chairs) is set to conduct the final evaluation and declare the hearings closed on 21 November. Once the Conference of Presidents declares all hearings closed, the evaluation letters will be published.

The election by MEPs of the full college of Commissioners (by a majority of the votes cast, by roll-call) is currently scheduled to take place during the 25-28 November plenary session in Strasbourg.

Further information

[EP hearing webpage: Commissioner-designate Wopke Hoekstra](#)

[EP research briefing](#)

[Timetable of hearings](#)

[Webstreaming of hearing](#)

[EP multimedia centre: Confirmation hearing of Wopke Hoekstra](#)

[Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety](#)

[Committee on Industry, Research and Energy](#)

[Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs](#)

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