

Jessika Roswall

Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy

Confirmation hearing due to be held on Tuesday 5 November, at 14.30.

European Parliament committee responsible: Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI)

Jessika Roswall is a politician from the Moderate Party in Sweden, affiliated to the European People's Party (EPP).

Prior to her nomination for the post of Commissioner, Roswall was Sweden's minister for European affairs, from October 2022 to September 2024.

Between 2010 and 2022, she served as a member of the Swedish Parliament, holding the position of second vice-president of its EU affairs committee from 2019 to 2022.

Roswall was also a member of the 'transparency councils' of the Swedish Consumer Agency (2015-2018), the County Administrative Board of Uppsala (2016-2022), and the Authority for Work Environment Expertise (2018-2019).

Born in 1972 in the county of Uppsala, Jessika Roswall holds a law degree from Uppsala University. After graduating in 2002, she worked as a lawyer for the law firm Wigert & Placht, from 2002 to 2010.



Jessika Roswall, Sweden.

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This is one of a set of briefings designed to give an overview of issues of interest relating to the portfolios of the Commissioners-designate. All these briefings can be found at: https://epthinktank.eu/commissioner_hearings_2024.



Fundamentals of the portfolio

Based on the precaution, prevention, rectifying pollution at the source, and 'polluter pays' [principles](#), EU [environmental policy](#) is guided by multiannual environment action programmes (EAPs) that set out priority objectives to be attained. The [current programme](#) (eighth EAP) runs until 2030. EU environmental protection legislation includes instruments to tackle [air](#), [water](#) and [soil](#) pollution, to prevent and control [industrial emissions](#), to regulate [chemicals](#), to ensure proper [waste](#) management and move towards a more [circular economy](#), as well as to preserve [nature and biodiversity](#). The EU is a party to many international environmental [agreements](#). Funding for environment-related projects is provided through the [LIFE programme](#), which has a budget of €5.4 billion for 2021-2027.

The European Union and the wider world are in the midst of a triple environmental crisis involving climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The [European Green Deal](#) was designed as a holistic strategy to address these interconnected challenges.

Priorities and challenges

Expectations/public opinion

In a May 2024 Eurobarometer [survey](#), over 75 % of the EU citizens polled thought environmental issues had a direct impact on their daily lives, while 84 % agreed that EU environmental legislation was necessary to protect the environment in their country. Most respondents (84 %) were worried about the impact of harmful chemicals found in everyday products on both human health and the environment. Over half (52 %) considered that the current level of protection from hazardous chemicals was too low. Around 6 in 10 respondents identified plastic waste (61 %) and chemical waste (60 %) as the most problematic waste types in their country. Respondents strongly agreed (92 %) that companies should pay the costs of their pollution. Lastly, 78 % of respondents wanted the EU to introduce additional measures to address water-related problems in the EU.

EU environment policy seeks to ensure that by 2050 at the latest, [people can live well within the limits of the planet](#). Research shows that six out of nine [planetary boundaries](#) have already been crossed, particularly in the [areas](#) of chemicals, biosphere integrity and freshwater. A recent [global foresight report](#) identified a number of global shifts, including humanity's relationship with the environment, increased competition for critical resources and rapid technological development such as digitalisation and artificial intelligence, which are accelerating the environmental triple crisis. The first [monitoring report](#) of the European Environment Agency (EEA) on progress towards the eighth EAP objectives concludes that meeting EU environment policy targets by 2030 will be challenging. Twenty out of the 28 headline indicators in the monitoring framework are not on track to reach their 2030 objectives. In its July 2024 report on [Europe's sustainability transitions outlook](#), the EEA stresses the importance of anchoring environmental goals in the [EU's strategic priorities](#) for the next political cycle, focusing in particular on competitiveness, security and fairness, in order for the EU to stay on track towards its long-term vision of living well within the planetary boundaries.

In her [mission letter](#) to Jessika Roswall, Ursula von der Leyen – Commission President-elect – asks her to develop new initiatives, including a circular economy act, with measures to create market demand for secondary materials and a single market for waste, also focusing on critical raw materials. Roswall is also tasked with developing a chemicals industry package, to simplify REACH and provide clarity on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances ([PFAS](#)); as well as a European water resilience strategy. Roswall will be in charge of updating the [bioeconomy strategy](#) and coordinating the [new European Bauhaus](#), while also contributing to the new climate adaptation plan and vision for agriculture and food. A key priority for Roswall will be to ensure proper implementation and enforcement of environment, nature and zero-pollution legislation. A 2019 [study](#) for the Commission estimated the costs of not implementing EU environmental law at around €55 billion per year.

The mission letter specifically mandates Roswall to take the EU's [zero pollution ambition](#) forward. Some key steps were taken on chemicals in the last term, such as the revision of the [CLP Regulation](#), the ['universal' PFAS restriction proposal](#) under REACH, currently being evaluated by the European

Chemicals Agency, and the presentation of the '[one substance, one assessment](#)' legislative package. However, the revision of the [REACH Regulation](#) itself, originally announced for the end of 2022, then delayed to the end of 2023, is overdue. The first [synthesis report](#) on the EU indicator framework for chemicals highlights the need to accelerate the shift to safe and sustainable chemicals, and to further reduce the impact of harmful substances on human health and the environment. On pollution more generally, there is a [strong signal](#) that the application of the 'polluter pays' principle needs to be improved ([widespread PFAS pollution, European Court of Auditors' report](#)). Yet the Commission still has to deliver its evaluation of the 2004 [Environmental Liability Directive](#), which should have been released by 2023. [Parliament](#) called for a swift revision and transformation of the directive into a fully harmonised regulation applying to all companies operating in the EU.

Under two successive action plans ([2015](#) and [2020](#)), the EU has put measures in place to enable a transition towards a more circular economy and thereby alleviate pressures on climate and natural resources. Though [progress](#) has been made, for instance on recycling and on developing the sharing economy, there is still a long way to go to achieve the [ambition](#) of doubling the EU's [circularity rate](#) by 2030. Elements to consider for moving forward could include setting possible binding targets on resource use or material footprint, improving the functioning of the single market for secondary raw materials, increasing the [uptake of EU funding for circular product design](#), extending the circular approach to new sectors, and putting a stronger focus on [demand-side measures](#). More effort is also needed to eliminate substances of concern from waste and secondary materials.

With water resources increasingly [under stress](#) across Europe, support for action on water resilience is also growing. Advocates of an 'EU Blue Deal', including the [European Economic and Social Committee](#) and the [European Committee of the Regions](#), want water to be a [strategic priority](#) for the next Commission. The [strategic agenda 2024-2029](#) adopted by the [European Council](#) includes a commitment to strengthen water resilience across the EU.

Stakeholders from the entire agri-food chain involved in the [strategic dialogue on the future of EU agriculture](#) have also made recommendations for water-resilient agriculture. Moreover, they collectively called on the EU to act on land take, notably by establishing a legally binding objective of '[no net land take](#)' by 2050 and integrating it into an [EU Soil Monitoring Law](#); and to support farmers and other land managers in habitat restoration with a well-resourced nature restoration fund.

Securing adequate [funding](#) for implementing commitments made under the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) and the [EU biodiversity strategy for 2030](#) will be a key challenge for the coming years. The mission letter specifically mandates Roswall to design incentives for nature-positive actions and private investment, with a particular focus on [nature credits](#). Actions expected from the Commissioner at international level further include strengthening the EU's global water leadership and striving for an ambitious global treaty on plastic pollution, as the [fifth session of negotiations](#) approaches. The discussions on the [revision](#) of the Gothenburg Protocol under the [UNECE Air Convention](#) are another important upcoming milestone.

The EU cannot curb the global unsustainable exploitation of the planet on its own. Ways to rise to this challenge include enhancing [EU green diplomacy](#), while also developing reciprocity provisions regarding environmental obligations, building on the rules adopted for the importation of [food containing neonicotinoid residues](#) or [carbon-intensive goods](#).

European Parliament

Treaty basis and European Parliament competence

EU environmental policy is based on Articles 191-193 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU). Article 11 TFEU also requires environmental protection to be 'mainstreamed' in other EU policies. The EU and Member States share competence on environmental policy, which is subject to the ordinary legislative procedure (co-decision by the Parliament and Council), with some exceptions requiring unanimity in Council ([Article 192 TFEU](#)). Parliament must give its consent for the EU to become a party to international agreements.

In the last term, Parliament helped shape a range of laws under the European Green Deal, securing, for instance, the adoption of the first-ever EU legal framework to tackle [EU-driven deforestation](#), the prohibition of [exports of non-hazardous plastic waste](#) to non-OECD countries, and the introduction of a ban on the use of PFAS in [food-contact packaging](#). Parliament also adopted first-reading positions on [microplastic pollution from plastic pellets loss](#); [soil monitoring and resilience](#); and [chemical pollutants](#) listed for control in EU freshwater bodies.

Recent developments

In response to the climate and environment [emergency](#), the von der Leyen I Commission established the European Green Deal as the first of its [six priorities](#) for 2019–2024. The European Green Deal set a roadmap to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, enhance the circular economy, cut pollution and halt biodiversity loss, while [mobilising finance](#) for the green transition. Specific strategies translate these overarching goals into action, including the [new circular economy action plan](#), the [chemicals strategy for sustainability](#), the [EU biodiversity strategy for 2030](#), the [‘farm-to-fork’ strategy](#) for sustainable food and the [zero pollution action plan for air, water and soil](#).

To tackle biodiversity loss and environmental degradation, the EU adopted a new [Nature Restoration Law](#) and [Regulation on Deforestation-free Products](#). On the bid for zero pollution, several core laws were revised, including the [Industrial Emissions Directive](#), the [Ambient Air Quality Directives](#) and the [Directive on urban wastewater treatment](#). The Commission withdrew its legislative proposal on sustainable pesticide use after Parliament rejected it, noting the need for [‘a different approach’](#).

Action for more circularity has focused both on improving product design and end-of-life management. The EU adopted new legislation to make [batteries](#) more sustainable and durable, developed general [eco-design requirements for sustainable products](#) and revised existing rules on [packaging and packaging waste](#). It also adopted common rules promoting the [repair of goods](#).

The EU revised its [Environmental Crime Directive](#), with an updated list of offences and penalties.

FURTHER READING

Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, [Activity Report 2019–2024](#), European Parliament.
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