

COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY, RESEARCH AND ENERGY
COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

INVITED COMMITTEES:

COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD
SAFETY

COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

COMMITTEE ON THE INTERNAL MARKET AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND MONETARY AFFAIRS

HEARING OF DAN JØRGENSEN

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE

(Energy and Housing)

TUESDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2024
BRUSSELS

1-0002-0000

IN THE CHAIR:

BORYS BUDKA

Chair of the ITRE Committee

LI ANDERSSON

Chair of the EMPL Committee

1-0003-0000

(The hearing opened at 14:30)

1-0004-0000

Borys Budka, *Chair of the ITRE Committee*. – Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I would like to welcome Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate for energy and housing, and everyone else in the room, or watching us on the web-stream of this joint hearing organised but the ITRE and EMPL committees. I would also like to welcome the members of the two committees jointly responsible for this hearing, and the members of the four invited committees.

I particularly wish to welcome Li Andersson, Chair of the EMPL Committee, with whom I will co-chair this hearing.

I will now make some procedural remarks. The Committee on Legal Affairs has raised no objection to the holding of this hearing. We acknowledge Mr Jørgensen's readiness to cooperate with the European Parliament. This is important in the context of the revision of the Framework Agreement between Parliament and the Commission, in particular regarding his engagement to be regularly present in committees and plenaries, to follow up on Parliament's legislative initiatives and to timely share information with Parliament as co-legislator and arm of the budgetary authority. We count on the full implementation of this commitment and emphasise the Commission's role as an honest broker, assuring equal treatment of Parliament and the Council. We equally count on his full cooperation to inform our committees in advance of all upcoming proposals, with detailed justifications for those requiring urgent actions.

I will now hand over to the Chair of the EMPL Committee to explain the structure of the confirmation hearing.

1-0005-0000

Li Andersson, *Chair of the EMPL Committee*. – Thank you very much, Mr Budka. I look forward to co-chairing this joint confirmation hearing with you. Let me also welcome, on behalf of the EMPL Committee and my own, the Commissioner-designate.

Today's hearing will be structured as follows. Mr Jørgensen will make an opening statement no longer than 15 minutes. He will also have 5 minutes at the end for a closing statement. We will have four rounds of questions and answers. The first round is political group coordinators with 5-minute slots, each with 1 minute for a question and 2 minutes for the answer, with the possibility of a follow-up question from the same Member, no longer than 1 minute, with 1 minute for the reply.

Then a second round of questions with 3-minute slots each by other Members. The third round of questions is by the chairs of invited committees, with 3-minute slots each, and a final round of

questions by Members, also with 3-minute slots each. All slots of 3 minutes will be divided into 1 minute for a question and 2 minutes for the answer from the Commissioner-designate.

In order to ensure the smooth running of the hearing, both chairs will be very strict with the speaking time, also with only 1 minute for the question. You will see a star 10 seconds before the time is up.

Interpretation is provided in all 23 languages. And without further ado, we will proceed now with the confirmation hearing. I would like to give the floor to Mr Jørgensen for his opening statement.

1-0006-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Honourable Chair, honourable Members of the Parliament, it is truly an honour and a pleasure to be here with you today, back at the European Parliament.

I'm sure you all know the feeling when sometimes a sound, a scent or something you see will spark a memory that will transport you back in time, sometimes decades, and you know exactly how you felt when that happened to you. I have a very vivid memory like that every time I walk up Rue Wiertz towards the European Parliament. It takes me back 22 years to an autumn day when I was walking towards the Parliament, about to start my first day as a trainee. I still remember the butterflies in my stomach – I also have a few of them today, I have to admit! But more importantly, I felt like I was a part of something very, very important.

Now I said this to a friend of mine earlier today and she looked at me with a straight face and said, 'Well, maybe in 20 years you'll think back to this day and this hearing whenever you see a pack of lions.' I assured her that I do not think it will come to that. I know what to expect. As many of you know, I also served as a Member of this Parliament for almost 10 years, so I used to be one of the lions, so to speak. It is your job to scrutinise me. It's your job to hold me responsible. It's your job to ask the difficult questions. I respect that: you are the voices of the citizens. I know you take that very seriously, as do I.

Now, before I start talking about my portfolio, I want to share with you four principles that, if I am approved, I hope can and will guide my work as a Commissioner.

One: we need structural changes. The challenges that we face are so big, so challenging that no easy fixes will do. We need real, long-lasting solutions.

Two: at the same time, we need to deliver tangible results – here and now, fast – that everybody, all citizens of Europe, can feel in their everyday life.

Three: we need to put people first. This means listening to their concerns; taking them seriously. If we don't, it can threaten the EU project itself. We saw it with Brexit and we've seen it with the rise of anti-EU sentiments in some Member States.

Four: we need to be inclusive. Brussels can never become a bubble. This means that we must actively seek the engagement of our citizens, of our NGOs, civic society, companies, industry, labour unions, and include them in our decision-making.

These are four important principles that I hope you will agree with.

Turning to my portfolio, I'll start with energy. Energy policy is at the core of almost all of the important challenges that we face today in Europe. It's about competitiveness, jobs and growth. It's about security – helping Ukraine win the war, becoming independent of Russian fuel. It's about fighting climate change. It's about social justice. These challenges and problems overlap and so do the solutions. So let me first share with you my analysis of these problems before I offer some answers and some prospects for the future.

In my many meetings with many of you, one thing has been brought to my attention by you more frequently than any other: the high energy prices. And I agree with you: we do have a challenge. Our industry is suffering. They are paying two or three times as much for their energy as their competitors in the US and China. Our households are suffering: ordinary people are struggling to pay their bills. This will not stand. So if I am approved as Commissioner, I will make it a top priority to bring down the prices of energy for our industry, for our people.

One of the reasons the prices have gone up is obviously the war in Ukraine, and although we are in a much better place now than we were in the first months of the crisis, we are still not where we need to be. We used to get 45 % of our gas from Russia; now we're down to 18 %, but 18 % is still too much. We need to be 100 % independent from Russian fuel.

The third challenge I will mention is climate change. Seventy-five per cent of the EU's greenhouse gases comes from energy. President von der Leyen has called the European Green Deal our answer to the call of history: I agree, and we need to continue this important work. There is no room for backtracking. On the contrary, we are in the middle of a process of fundamentally transforming the way we produce and consume energy, and if we do it right, we will strengthen our competitiveness and it will make us more prosperous. So this is the vision, and I believe it is possible.

But not all Europeans will automatically feel that a green and clean transition is necessarily good for them. As a matter of fact, I know that some will worry. Some will be concerned. Will I lose my job? Will I need new skills? Am I up for it? Who will help me? These concerns are legitimate. We need to listen to them and we need to have very concrete, very tangible answers to the questions.

Now let me turn to the other part of my portfolio: housing. I want to start by thanking you, the Parliament, for placing this topic so high on the agenda. One of you said to me that at the election campaign this summer in his country, three topics were on the top of the agenda: housing, housing and housing. Now I know this differs from country to country, but there is no doubt that housing is something that concerns our citizens. It's something they worry about and it's something that we need to take seriously. Right now, far too many Europeans are struggling to find an affordable place to live. Prices of both buying and renting have gone up, affecting millions. This is unacceptable. It is the right of all citizens in the European Union to have an affordable, sustainable and decent home. At the same time, many Europeans experience energy poverty. Again, this is totally unacceptable. Obviously, a lot of these challenges need to be addressed in the Member States, but there are things we can do and there are things we will do from a European level.

So what to do about all these problems? It is clear that we live in a time of multiple, interlinked crises. It's a tall order. The challenges may seem daunting, I think, to many, but I'm confident that we can mitigate them. Let me be concrete: if I am approved as Commissioner, I will propose measures that will bring down the energy costs for our industry to strengthen the competitiveness of our companies, and at the same time help bring down the bills for our households. I will do this as a part of a strategy to decarbonise our economy, and I will do it in a way where we will become 100 % independent of Russian energy.

How? Well, the first thing we need to do is deploy more renewable energy and more energy-efficiency efforts. To do that, we need all the tools in the toolbox, including: expanding and strengthening grids and interconnectors; boosting digitalisation; helping overcome supply chain problems; cutting red tape and bureaucracy; facilitating faster and more efficient permitting; boosting new technologies for energy storing; supporting carbon capture, storage and usage technology; and supporting the development of hydrogen and power to X solutions.

Many of you have also asked me about nuclear energy, so let me underline that yes, nuclear is and will continue to be an integrated part of the European energy mix. And yes, it is a part of the solution to decarbonise the European energy system. We will work fast, and already within the first 100 days the Commission will present a clean industrial deal. This will include an action plan for affordable energy. Also within the first 100 days, I will put forward a roadmap towards ending Russian energy imports. Later will follow, among other things, a clean energy investment plan and an electrification action plan.

On housing, the first thing I will do if I am approved as the first ever EU Commissioner for housing is to start a dialogue not only with you and the other EU institutions – that's important – but with all relevant stakeholders in the housing sector. On the basis of this, I will put forward a European affordable housing plan – the first of its kind. This plan will include: a strategy for housing construction; a pan-European investment platform in collaboration with the EIB; efforts to upskill and reskill workers; and efforts to facilitate knowledge-sharing and technical assistance. Apart from that, the Commission will double our funding in the Cohesion Fund for housing and reform state aid rules so as to better enable support measures for social housing and energy efficiency in our Member States.

Now, allow me to summarise. We live in a time of many interlinked crises: a competitiveness crisis, a security crisis, a climate crisis and a housing crisis. To address these challenges, to solve these problems, we need to make decisions guided by the principles I mentioned earlier. We need to make comprehensive, long-lasting structural change – no quick fixes will do. At the same time, we need to move fast and provide tangible results that all Europeans can see and feel, here and now in their own lives. And the solutions need to put people first and they need to be made in an inclusive way via outreach and dialogue. It will not be easy, but it can be done. Let's do it together.

Honourable Members, this concludes my introduction. I can honestly say that I look forward to the next couple of hours. I am being honest, I promise! Mr Ehler said that's the only lie – no, I assure you! And I also assure you that I will promise to do my utmost to answer all of your questions as best I can. Thank you so much.

(Applause)

1-0007-0000

Borys Budka, *Chair of the ITRE Committee*. – Thank you so much. We now start the first round.

Please remember, coordinators and political group representatives, that we've got five minutes for each group.

1-0008-0000

Christian Ehler (PPE). – First of all, welcome to Parliament. The realistic news is that you're going to spend a lot of time in the next 5 years with this Commission. And I think, as we said in the morning to your colleague, yes, we would like to be addressed as lions – and for gender equality as lionesses – but this is a hearing and not a tribunal.

We have a lot of questions and my first one would be: European industry is under great pressure as it loses in these days its competitiveness. And from the EPP perspective, the EU Green Deal has been all about green, but not about the deal. The Fit for 55 package, in particular, has invented a lot of targets and regulation that both the energy sector and industry have to comply with.

However, this term must be all about implementation and a realistic approach towards these goals. Regarding the implementation of the 2030 energy and climate framework, how do you plan to ensure that competitiveness remains central to achieving these targets, particularly through the efficient and realistic application of the literally hundreds of delegated and implementing acts that follows from Fit for 55 alone? How do you foresee the involvement of stakeholders, particularly industry, in the implementation of the 2030 framework, for example in an institutionalised setting, like with the Sevilla process?

1-0009-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Mr Ehler, thank you so much for that question. It is extremely relevant. So if any of you don't know this, the industry in Europe is under pressure and I would recommend you to read the Draghi Report. It states very clearly that if we don't move and if we don't move fast, we risk losing on the global stage. Energy prices is not the only factor, but it's a big factor. Companies in Europe pay two to three times more for their energy than the competitors in the US and China. So, a very important part of solving this problem is to make sure that our companies have access to more clean and cheap energy.

But there's also other things that are interrelated, but sometimes they're also separate. To have more access to energy, cheaper energy, doesn't necessarily mean that we also need to make more rules. The opposite, actually, sometimes we need to simplify. And I think that we need to be extremely cautious, that we don't keep rules just because they're there, just because they build on something we already made. On the contrary, I will commit to a burden reduction in line with the Commission's target of reducing by 25 % in general and 35 % for small and medium enterprises specifically. I will also look at whatever we can do in the implementation process to listen to stakeholders. And yes, Mr Ehler, I will also commit to a process – exactly how we will manage and structure this process is probably a little bit too early to say, but it's very important for me to listen to industry and other stakeholders in implementation before 2030, but also, by the way, moving on from 2030 and onwards.

Now, I will be very happy to also go into more detail on what can then actually be done with regards to making our electricity market design work better, follow up on some of the recommendations from Draghi on, for instance, decoupling of the prices, so that the price of electricity doesn't necessarily follow the price of fossils, but I can maybe do that in the follow up if you want.

1-0010-0000

Christian Ehler (PPE). – My follow-up question would go in the same direction. As Commissioner-designate, you're tasked with focusing on significantly reducing administrative burden and simplifying implementation. The Commission so far claims success in implementing the 'one in, one out' principle, which maintains the status quo.

However, in order to effectively reduce administrative burden for businesses, which to a large extent is regulatory burden, would you agree that more regulations and regulatory obligations should go out than new ones come in? Do you agree that the 'one in, one out' methodology needs to be revised to better account for costs, as well as balanced impact on specific industries? Would you commit to ensure a significant reduction of regulatory burden for businesses, both from the energy sector and

the industrial sectors stemming from EU legislation, either by applying this principle or by any alternative measures which would effectively and measurably lead to such reduction?

1-0011-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – As I said initially, I share your ambition that we need to fundamentally reduce the burdens on our industry. I do also adhere to the 'one in, one out' principle. I will, however, say that maybe we need to be careful and mindful not to be too simplistic. I'm not at all implying that you are, Mr Ehler, I'm just saying that it's not only about quantity, it's also about quality.

Now, let me give you a good example of where some things have been done, but more can be done. With regards to permitting, really, when you think about it, it really is a huge problem that in Europe where we need clean energy, cheap energy, we have projects ready to start, but because contractors need to wait, sometimes up to seven years for an onshore wind approval of their permitting, it doesn't go online. This is 100 % unacceptable. We have made new rules for this. They have also been implemented, but to a very different degree from country to country.

Germany, your own country, Mr Ehler, it's a country that's done well, where it's actually, as I understand it, meant that the time for permitting has gone considerably down. We need to do much more of that.

1-0012-0000

Gabriele Bischoff (S&D). – Mr Jørgensen, as you said, if confirmed, you will be the first ever EU Housing Commissioner. That is a key priority for my group, but also many others in this House, because the housing crisis at the moment is really affecting millions of people all over Europe: rampant house prices and explosion of rents often make it impossible to find a decent, affordable house to live in.

One key priority to increase investment, from our point of view, is the question of how you intend to close the investment gap for affordable housing – we know that EUR 57 billion per year, according to Commission data, is necessary as investment – and to boost private and public investment in decent, sustainable, affordable housing.

How will you make sure that public funds really address the housing needs of vulnerable as well as all low and middle-income groups, because they are all affected? Can you commit also to include some conditionality criteria or to earmark certain funds to achieve these goals?

1-0013-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you so much, Ms Bischoff, for those questions. It is indeed an area that this Parliament as a whole, but your group especially, has been working very hard on for a long time. So thank you for that.

You are right: we are in a situation where the lack of affordable housing is eminent. Some 8.9 % of the European population spends 40 % or more of their disposable income on costs for living. This is far too many. That's not including, of course, the millions of people presumably that are looking for somewhere to live but cannot find it. So they are forced to stay at home with their parents. They cannot move to follow their dreams, find the job that they want, and so forth, because they cannot, as young people, afford to invest in a home. Apart from that, of course, is the problem of energy poverty that I hope we'll speak more about today – also a huge problem and totally unacceptable.

So it's about making the cost of living more affordable for people. That is why we will present an affordable housing plan. We will be very inclusive in the process, speaking to all stakeholders in the housing sector ecosystem, working very closely with Parliament, also building on the own-initiative report that you have adopted, which I think has a lot of very good points and recommendations in it.

A very important part of this plan will indeed be – as you pointed to – the lack of investment. So I guess your question to me is: how do we bridge the gap? Well, I need to be quite honest and say the EU will not be able to bridge that gap alone. But there are things we can do, and we will make a pan-European investment platform together with the EIB. We will provide some funding via the Cohesion Fund, and we will reform state aid rules that will also help spark more investments in especially social housing in many Member States.

1-0014-0000

Gabriele Bischoff (S&D). – Yes, I would like to come back to the last point you made. Reforming state aid rules is very important indeed. But for us, it's also important to allow investment in public housing here. What are the positions here? It goes beyond social housing.

And also, if I have one last chance and some seconds left, how do you intend to end harmful speculation in the housing market, in terms also of certain tools or legislation?

1-0015-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – So when looking at the state aid rules, this is exactly one of the areas we need to evaluate – how to make sure that state aid helps social housing. But also what does that then actually mean? Is that then only the most vulnerable groups? Certainly it's them, but is it also a little bit broader than that? And how can we do it without distorting the entire market? These are at the top of my agenda. I will be working, of course, very closely with Executive Vice-President Ribera on this.

On the question of speculation, it's clear that homes have become a commodity, thereby also something that can be speculated in. Now, the coin has two sides: on one hand, we do need investors to put money in the housing sector, but I fear that too often they look at short-term gains – profits – and not necessarily at what is best for societies and long-term investments.

So I will be working with my colleague, Commissioner Albuquerque, on looking at what we can do from a European side in the financial markets to remedy this situation, also, of course, advising as best we can Member States on the things that they can do. Because, of course, primarily this will be a national competence.

1-0016-0000

Paolo Borchia (Pfe). – Good afternoon, Mr Jørgensen, nuclear power is emerging as an increasingly viable option for the stability and decarbonisation of the European energy system, particularly given the growing demand for electricity. President von der Leyen in her mission letter to you mentions the role of small modular reactors, but this technology is still under development with uncertain implementation timelines, and the SMRs cannot immediately compensate for the loss of capacity from traditional reactors set to close in the coming years. Considering that the scientific community estimates the need for at least 100 GW of new large capacity reactors in order to maintain system reliability, I ask you: what measures will you adopt – if you will, of course – to promote the installation of larger, already tested nuclear reactors?

1-0017-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – So, to help develop and deploy small modular reactors in Europe is a part of my mission letter. It's also clear that it's a new technology. It is not on the market yet. The aim, the ambition is to have the first examples of small modular reactors in Europe in the early 30s. Whether or not that is feasible is probably too early to say, but that is the ambition.

The way that we will work from the Commission's side and especially, of course, me as the responsible Commissioner on this, is to listen very closely to the European Industrial Alliance on Small Modular Reactors that are right now working on an analysis of what are the problems, what are the possible challenges, and what can be done from a political level to help overcome those challenges.

One thing that I will already mention now, that I think needs to be in focus, is that we need to avoid making us dependent on fuels, of course, but also spare parts and other things from outside of EU. So having a European supply chain would probably be a smart move, learning from the history and other parts of our energy system.

Now on nuclear, more generally, obviously we have right now a situation when 97 GW are put online every year from nuclear energy, that will in the Commission's projections, go down in the 40s to 88 and then come up again, so that in 2050 we will have approximately the same level as we have now, which will be around 98 GW.

1-0018-0000

Paolo Borchia (Pfe). – Concerning housing, let's talk about the EPBD. It is estimated that its implementation will result in costs up to EUR 1 000 billion for some Member States. For example, in Italy, more than 60 % of the building stock falls into the lowest energy classes.

These are unbelievable costs that are likely to be passed on to consumers. In your responses to the written questions, there seems to be no specific indications regarding the nature of the funding needed for the implementation on this directive. And so, my question is: could you clarify if there will be any specific European funds to support this effort or will the Commission leave it to the Member States to secure the necessary resources?

1-0019-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – You point to a very real problem. So, on one hand, there's no way around renovating our buildings and houses. Buildings are responsible for 40 % of our greenhouse gas emissions, houses for between 25 % and 30 %. So, to fight climate change, that's a necessity. But it's also a necessity to bring down energy costs. And most investments in energy efficiency will pay back very, very fast. For industry, it's between three and five years on average, for houses between five and ten years on average.

Having said that, though, I do agree with you in your statement that for the people that need to renovate their house, if they don't have the money, even though it will pay back, that is a problem. So, we need to do more to help overcome that challenge. A lot has to be done on Member State level, of course, but we can do things on European level, and you asked me specifically about European funding and yes, actually, already now more than EUR 100 billion has been allocated to these specific efforts. And I will of course, not exclude that more can be allocated in that direction.

1-0020-0000

Daniel Obajtek (ECR). – Szanowny Panie Kandydacie na komisarza! Inwestycje w źródła wytwórcze energii równają się tania energia. Wszyscy o tym wiemy. To potrzebne jest jak nigdy do

konkurencyjności naszego przemysłu. I tu mam takie pytanie: bardzo bym prosił, by Pan na nie odpowiedział, bo to jest bardzo ważne, jeżeli chodzi o źródła wytwórcze.

Jeszcze w 2022 roku mówił Pan publicznie, że robi Pan wszystko, żeby energetyka jądrowa nie została uznana za zieloną. Czy zmieni Pan zdanie i teraz będzie walczył, żeby została uznana? To jest jak konkretnie będzie Pan wspierał rozwój konkretnie małych reaktorów jądrowych i konkretnie w Europie?

1-0021-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Yes, in 2022, I was a minister in Denmark. In Denmark, we are, in general, not pro-nuclear. We don't have nuclear. And I would doubt very much that we will get it, but this is indeed an area where we are united in diversity. We have it stated very clearly in the Treaty that the energy mix is up to every country, and I totally respect that.

And we have 12 countries now that have nuclear, around 100 plants. More might come, probably will come, and I respect that. I also think it's good that we will never be in a situation where a country like Denmark or Austria or Luxembourg will be forced to have nuclear, just as your own country will not be forced to abandon nuclear. So this is my position.

I'm sure, as a Member of Parliament, you've had colleagues – and yourself – that have been rapporteurs, where sometimes you have one mandate and then you work for that mandate also even if you may not have supported everything in that mandate, in the negotiation process. You can compare that to being a minister. And you can certainly compare that to being a Commissioner. I will work for the policies that are decided by the European Union. That is my job. And I will work, of course, also, every day, with deep respect of the Treaty, and that is also the case on nuclear.

Now, on small modular reactors, I did touch upon this. It is, I think, important that I do not hijack the process. If there were 10 recommendations on the table that we could decide on tomorrow, then we would be discussing those 10 recommendations. But because the industry themselves – so the ones that we want to invest in this – are still in the process of analysing in close collaboration with the Commission, it is too early for me to give more detail, but I can say, of course, that I will follow the instruction given by President von der Leyen in my mission letter to work hard on making this happen.

1-0022-0000

Daniel Obajtek (ECR). – Szanowny Panie Kandydacie! Analizy – tak, ale Kanada już buduje pierwszy SMR w tym zakresie i oby Europa nie poszła tylko i wyłącznie w analizy. Moje dodatkowe pytanie dotyczy kapitału.

Dzisiaj europejskim firmom tak naprawdę brakuje kapitału. Dlaczego bardzo pręźnie rozwija się gospodarka amerykańska czy chińska? Bo tam firmy mają kapitał. Czy poprzez Pan rozwiązanie, gdy firmy, które oczywiście są emitentami i płacą prawa do emisji, tzw. ETS-y, czy poprzez Pan rozwiązanie, by inwestycje zeroemisyjne prowadzone przez te firmy były odliczane od kosztów ETS-u? Wtedy będzie to dodatkowy mechanizm napędzania i szybkich inwestycji do produkowania energii. Czy poprzez Pan ten mechanizm?

1-0023-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – So one of the things that we will be presenting – and if I am confirmed as Commissioner, I will be presenting with colleagues – is a clean investment plan because we do need massive investments in our energy sector. We need it in renewables. We need

it in energy efficiency. We need it in nuclear. We need it in physical infrastructure, grid capacity, interconnectors, physical infrastructure for hydrogen, for carbon.

So yes, this is something that is very high on the agenda. We need to do this, in my view, in a collected, analytic way where we don't have specific plans for one sector, forgetting about the other sectors. That's why we will put forward one plan to deal with these issues.

1-0024-0000

Christophe Grudler (Renew). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, j'étais heureux de lire que vous considérez la neutralité technologique comme un nouveau concept central, et je m'en réjouis. Cela veut dire mettre sur un pied d'égalité tout ce qui est décarboné, que ce soit le renouvelable d'un côté, mais aussi le bas carbone, c'est-à-dire le nucléaire ou le CCS. Le nucléaire n'est pas que le SMR, c'est aussi de la forte puissance, c'est aussi 1 50 gigawatts qu'il faut installer en Europe d'ici à 2050.

Dans votre rapport, vous questionnez l'idée d'une énergie propre et abordable, et là vous écrivez que les énergies renouvelables seraient moins coûteuses. N'y a-t-il pas une contradiction entre la neutralité et le fait de considérer que le renouvelable est moins coûteux? Êtes-vous vraiment prêt à étudier sur un pied d'égalité les énergies renouvelables et le bas carbone, en étudiant pour chacun d'eux leurs émissions de CO₂ et leur coût sur l'ensemble de leur cycle de vie?

1-0025-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – Well I think that this is actually a perfect example of us needing to apply two principles that can be in opposition to each other: one, the need for long-haul, structural, long-lasting solutions, whilst at the same time delivering on the short term. We need to be independent of Russian fuel rather tomorrow than the day after. So this is where we are now.

We have an industry that cannot compete because of prices that are too high now. So for me to only recommend the decisions that will lead to investments that are the best for us in 10 or 20 or 30 years will not do. I also need to point to solutions that will help us now.

At the same time, Mr Grudler, I respect very much where you're coming from and the reason behind your question, because we also risk making short-term decisions that in the end will have effects on our energy system that are counterproductive. So these are the balances we need to find. I don't think it's an impossible task. Many of the things, by the way, that we need to do will have effects in both the long term and the short term. One example of that is improving our physical infrastructure – so interconnectors.

I mentioned earlier how in some places we have renewable energy projects that are being brought to a halt because of the lack of permitting. Well, we have other places where, because energy is not flowing freely, we have energy waste – so curtailment, for instance. Germany is a front runner on many, many issues in green energy, but this is a place where they have a problem. I think something like 4 % of the renewable energy in Germany is wasted due to curtailment. So expanding our grid infrastructure will also help in the short term as we plan for the long term.

1-0026-0000

Christophe Grudler (Renew). – Pour arriver à cela, il faut donc des critères, des critères de résilience et des critères de financement, et il faut réduire notre dépendance, comme vous l'avez dit. On importe en Europe 62 % de notre énergie, et pas uniquement de l'énergie russe. Il faut aussi qu'on ait notre destin entre les mains en ayant notre propre énergie. Êtes-vous donc prêt, dans ce cadre-là, à soutenir les technologies propres européennes, sans faire preuve de naïveté par rapport aux

industries de l'autre bout du monde, qui veulent simplement venir profiter de notre marché? Êtes-vous prêt à apporter un soutien financier à toutes les énergies européennes qui décarbonent, sans aucune discrimination?

1-0027-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – OK, so I think I know you a little bit already, Mr Grudler. I know you are a very polite man, so maybe I will try and translate what you're saying in a polite way to me! Are you asking me whether we will get EU money to finance nuclear? Is that what you're asking?

(Laughter)

You're nodding! It is a fair question, but no, I will not be able to promise that as you of course well know. What I will say is – and this will please you, not because it's a pleasant fact, but it's just the way it is – we cannot reach our targets in Europe without nuclear. That is the way it is. If you look at IPCC, there's no scenario where we stay below 1.5 degrees without nuclear. In fact, in most of the scenarios, nuclear will go up at least till 2050. Then, from 2050 to 2100, it's probably a little bit more of a discussion.

On the other hand, I will also say that if this is what we all agree on, then we also need to agree on making sure that we do this in a rational way, that we have safety as the highest priority, that we don't then become dependent on nuclear fuel from Russia, that we have better solutions than today on the waste management, that we have a better way of integrating the energy into our systems so that it actually becomes something that makes our systems more rational instead of the opposite – something we have sometimes seen examples of.

1-0028-0000

Michael Bloss (Verts/ALE). – Dear Commissioner-designate, dear colleagues, I think we are all deeply shocked by the terrible news from Spain. More than 200 people died and this is something that we see all over Europe already this year. It's the result of a more than two degrees warmer Europe. So, we need to accelerate our efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

At the same time, you said it, Europe's energy costs are too high for citizens and for the industry. To cope with both crises, we have to be faster in the rollout of renewable energy.

So, I ask you, Commissioner-designate, will you propose additional measures, like financially supporting energy communities to meet our 2030 renewable targets? Will you use your mandate to set up an EU-wide renewable auction scheme to achieve additional 2.5 % renewables for 2030? And will you make sure that the new 2040 climate and energy package will be translated into binding energy efficiency and renewable targets at the European level, in order to keep the momentum and the investors' certainty?

1-0029-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – There was a lot of questions there, so if I don't mention them all, remind me and I'll do it in the follow-up.

First of all, thank you for mentioning the terrible catastrophe that we see in Spain right now. You see these catastrophes coming every year now. I hope we don't get used to them, because this is not normal. This should not happen. People are dying. People are losing their homes. And by the way, this is in Europe. In my previous job, I was Minister for Development and Global Climate Policy in

Denmark, and I travelled a lot in Africa and vulnerable countries on this planet, where climate change hits even harder. So, fighting climate change is a moral imperative. So, for that reason alone, there's no there's no backtracking feasible.

Having said that, the good news is that many of the things that we need to do – almost all of the things that we need to do – to decarbonise our societies are also good for our competitiveness. They will also raise the standard of living for our citizens. They will help us fight Russia. They will empower citizens.

And you ask about energy communities? I have to admit that when I became Minister of Energy in Denmark, I didn't even know about this concept. And I think probably in this room, most people will know, but maybe not everybody following the debate in their living rooms or their offices will know, but energy communities are actually quite a success. We have around 2 million people engaged in these types of communities right now, I think it's around 10 000 of them we have. So, it's a lot. It makes it possible for people to take matters into their own hands. 'Prosumers', I think it's called, it's a weird concept. It means people that are both producing and consuming. I've been fortunate enough to visit some of these projects myself in Denmark and yes – your question was, will I support it? – yes, I will. Hopefully we will also be able to fund, in the future, projects like this.

1-0030-0000

Michael Bloss (Verts/ALE). – Let me use a little bit of time of my follow-up question. Please be precise on the question about binding energy efficiency and renewable targets for 2040.

But, as the follow up question, you said it yourself: Russia is waging a terrible war against Ukraine. In 2023 alone, the EU bought Russian fossil fuels for USD 18.4 billion. You said just now that it would be better to not have them today rather than tomorrow. And you said that you will propose a roadmap to end Russian energy imports.

So I ask you, from a European to a European that is supporting the Ukraine, can you commit to phasing out all Russian fossil fuels as early as next year to avoid another three years of tens of billions slipping into Russian coffers and financing bombs on Ukraine?

1-0031-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – So, you asked me to be specific on the possibility of new targets for 2040. In my perspective, it's very, very clear that we will not reach the 90 % without a massive expansion of renewable energy. So, even though we're in a situation now where it's going well, two years ago, we would put 56 GW of new energy, renewable energy online every year. This year probably will be 78. We reached the situation, the first six months were the first time ever, that solar and wind, renewables, are a larger contributor to our electricity production than fossils. So, it's going in the right direction, but it's not going fast enough and we need to know what to do beyond 2030. So yes, I am positive towards the idea of having a renewable target.

I cannot commit, unfortunately, to your ask, on whether or not we can be independent of Russian fuels next year. I wish I could – and if it's possible, then yes. What I can commit to is working as fast as possible to make it happen.

1-0032-0000

Leila Chaïbi (The Left). – Monsieur Jørgensen, Commissaire désigné, votre portefeuille intègre la question du logement, vous avez donc une grande responsabilité. Vous l'avez dit, pour le Parlement européen, le logement est une priorité, car l'accès pour tous et toutes à un logement digne et

abordable, c'est une condition pour réaliser les principes du socle européen des droits sociaux. Nous étions ravis de voir que, dans les orientations politiques de M^{me} von der Leyen également, le logement était placé au cœur des priorités, et tout autant ravis de voir qu'un tabou était enfin levé: celui des aides d'État.

Je rappelle que, en 2011, les Pays-Bas ont été sanctionnés par la Commission européenne, sous prétexte qu'ils investissaient trop dans la construction de logements abordables et que cela faisait concurrence au marché immobilier privé. Il y aurait donc un grand changement à partir du moment où la Commission accepte que les États membres investissent dans le logement abordable sans avoir toujours ce dogme de la concurrence qui entrave l'investissement dans le logement abordable.

Vous avez répondu à ma collègue du groupe S&D de façon plus claire, et j'en suis ravie, que vous ne l'aviez fait dans les réponses écrites aux questions qui vous ont été posées. Je vous demande maintenant de me répondre par oui ou par non, clairement: pouvez-vous me dire si, oui ou non, sous votre responsabilité, les États membres pourront investir dans le logement abordable, sans entrave de la Commission?

1-0033-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you, Ms Chaibi, for this very good question. It's in my mission letter for a reason. It is something that we take seriously. State aid rules are also there for a reason. I mean, it's difficult to have a common European market if we don't have state aid rules. So please don't take this as a signal that state aid rules won't matter in the future. Of course they will.

But we've identified a problem here. I'm sure you can appreciate that when me and my colleagues speak to the lawyers, there are many good reasons why it's difficult to do something. On the other hand, I'm convinced that it is not impossible to find a balance. Because really for us to be in a situation now where countries that actually want to do something – that actually even have the funds to be able to do something to help the most vulnerable parts of their population have an affordable home in a time where 8.9 % of our population live in unaffordable homes – that will not stand. So we need to do something, and I will work very closely with Executive Vice-President-designate Ribera on these issues.

Let me also just touch briefly on an area that I think is also close to your heart, which is energy poverty, because there I was surprised myself when I looked into the numbers. It's now at a stage where we have 10.6 % of our population that were not able to heat their homes adequately last year, last winter; 47 million people were freezing, basically. In Europe. We are a wealthy part of the planet. This is totally unacceptable. And we need to do something about this.

1-0034-0000

Leila Chaibi (The Left). – (*début de l'intervention hors micro*) ... si vos services ont besoin d'un coup de main pour trouver une solution pour permettre les aides d'État dans le domaine du logement abordable, j'ai une suggestion: il suffirait, dans la définition du logement social, de changer le groupe cible pour permettre un investissement dans le logement, pas uniquement pour les plus vulnérables, car la crise du logement touche une partie de la population plus importante.

Il y a une seconde question dans ma question de relance. Elle concerne les plateformes de location de courte durée, de type Airbnb, qui, partout en Europe, retirent des logements de la location de longue durée pour les mettre dans la location de courte durée. Cela réduit l'offre de logements et fait augmenter les prix des loyers. Nous avons eu un règlement sur les locations de courte durée. Là encore, dans la lettre de mission que vous avez reçue de la présidente de la Commission, M^{me} von

der Leyen vous demande de vous attaquer à ce problème-là. Nous vous avons envoyé des questions écrites, qui sont restées sans réponse.

Je vous pose une question précise, qui appelle une réponse précise: vous engagez-vous à trouver une solution législative face aux plateformes de location de courte durée, oui ou non, Monsieur le Commissaire désigné?

1-0035-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – I will definitely commit to us doing more than we're doing now. So short-term rentals: okay, on the one hand, obviously there are also positive things to say. So in some regions, it's good for tourism. It gives flexibility. Actually, even in some places it probably is the reason why some people can afford to buy a home, because they can then rent it out sometimes and that will help pay the expenses. There are also regions that want more short-term rentals. So we need to be mindful not to hurt those possibilities.

On the other hand, I'm sure you all know of examples of cities where short-term rentals have led to over-tourism and, even worse, it's led to crowding out the people that would normally be living in these cities. So we have cities where people with a normal income – a nurse, a police officer, a teacher or whatever – are not able to afford to live in those houses any longer, because they're being bought up and used only for short-term rentals. That is not a very rational, and certainly not a very moral, way of conducting business.

So we need to do something about this. The first step has been done: there is legislation that has been approved and it will be implemented. And in 2026, we will have the obligation to transmit the data needed to the public authorities by the different platforms, in order, for instance, to use tax instruments and other instruments.

Personally, I have to say I'm not convinced that that is enough. On the contrary, I think I'm closer to where you are – that we need more action. And I'll be very happy to work with you if I'm confirmed in Parliament and, of course, with mayors and regions and national parliaments and regional parliaments on how to do it.

1-0036-0000

Andrea Wechsler (PPE). – Commissioner-designate, Mr Jørgensen, welcome back to the European Parliament.

Now, Europe requires a strong hydrogen economy to sustain its energy-intensive industries and to meet its climate targets. Now, the Delegated Act on Renewable Hydrogen was introduced without an impact assessment. However, it requires the Commission to carry out an assessment by mid-2028. Now, given the urgency of the hydrogen market ramp-up, what measures will the Commission take to perform a reality check on the act's practical implications?

Second, the draft delegated act on low-carbon hydrogen has faced substantial criticism for its perceived complexity and investment uncertainty. What measures do you plan to address these main criticisms?

And last, what is your strategic plan for the administration of low-carbon hydrogen with regard to the European Hydrogen Bank?

1-0037-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Very relevant questions. There was also a lot of them, so I will try and get through them. If I don't, maybe one of your colleagues can ask a follow-up.

So, hydrogen is extremely important for our green transition as you said. Why? Well, for one, it will work as storage for energy and thereby making our energy systems more flexible. Second, it will work to help us decarbonise the more hard-to-abate sectors. So, you mentioned industry. Yes. So very highly intensive, high-temperature intensive parts of our industry will use hydrogen, steel, probably fertiliser, others.

But there's also the necessity for hydrogen to be a part of our transport sector. So, aviation, maritime transport will in the future also depend on fuels made with hydrogen as the source. Of course, you will have to add some biogenic carbon, but that is definitely part of our plan. What should I do about it to make it happen? We are far from where we need to be. When we asked the actors in the market, it's a little bit of a 'hen and egg' problem. So you ask the companies that were supposed to demand, they say, 'Well, we cannot change our production because the supply is not there.' When you ask the supplier, they say, 'Well, but there's no demand.'

So, this is an area where we need to make sure that all the legislative frameworks are there. Probably they are not yet. So we need to work on that. The physical infrastructure also, so this is about storage facilities, this is about ways of transporting hydrogen and so forth. And then finally also the funding. This is one of the areas where probably – even though we would very much like and in the future it will be primarily private investments and we would like that to also start the process – State aid is also very likely to be a part of this answer and also EU funding to some extent to de-risk the investments.

1-0038-0000

Dan Nica (S&D). – Domnule comisar desemnat, vreau să vă vorbesc în numele milioanei de cetățeni români, zecilor de milioane de cetățeni europeni care se tem mai mult de sfârșitul lunii decât se tem de sfârșitul lumii. Și asta pentru că, în ultimii ani de zile, prețurile la energie au luat-o complet razna și am avut cu toții, și am văzut practici înșelătoare. Au fost practici prin care s-au furat practic banii din buzunarele oamenilor, ale firmelor și acest lucru a dus astăzi, când vorbim, la 371 de cazuri, care sunt instrumentate de către Eiser.

Întrebarea mea, domnule comisar desemnat, vă veți implica ca acești bani luați ilegal să fie luați de la cei care au profitat de această situație dificilă prin care am trecut cu toții în ultimii doi ani de zile? Iar acești bani care au fost luați ilegal din buzunarul oamenilor sau al firmelor - veți lua măsurile necesare ca acești bani, într-o formă sau alta, să se întoarcă înapoi de la cei cărora li s-au furat într-un mod injust, nedrept și mai ales ilegal?

1-0039-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Mr Nica, Dan – my name brother, Dan – thank you for raising this question. I mentioned a few times the problem of energy poverty. Your own country, I know, is also struggling with this, as are many European countries. And I understand the reasoning behind your question: in a situation where we have energy poverty – people not able to warm up their own homes, people that are freezing – at the same time, you see actors on the market making a lot of money.

Now, on the one hand, we're dependent on having a market that is flexible, and that only happens if there's also a possibility of actually making money. So I'm not talking about fundamentally setting

the markets out of its place, but I do think we need to have a much better implementation of the REMIT legislation that we have.

Remember, that legislation should actually secure that there is always a competitive price that more or less reflects the demand and supply. Is that then the case now? Unfortunately not. ACER has been given a lot more competency, and right now, actually, we have 345 pending cases. Not all of them are about market manipulation, but a substantial part of them are. So ACER and the national authorities have been given more muscles to deal with this problem. But I can assure you that – if I'm appointed – I will keep monitoring this, and I'm also quite willing to do more if we can agree on it and if it's necessary.

Also, I want to just mention – maybe one of you will ask about it later – that there are also other parts of the Draghi report's recommendations that will help consumers get lower prices. PPAs, contracts for difference, consumer empowerment: all of these things will lead to a decoupling of the prices at the retail level, not at the wholesale level, but at the retail level.

1-0040-0000

Niels Flemming Hansen (PPE). – Nu sidder vi over for hinanden igen, Dan, en fornøjelse. Sidst var det i Folketingets Europaudvalg. Nu er du blevet kommissærkandidat. Kan du forsøge at præcisere dine holdninger til behovet for yderligere markedsreformer, inden 2024-reformen af elektricitetsmarkedet implementeres – især i betragtning af vores holdning om, at der ikke bør finde yderligere reformer sted, før den nuværende er fuldt gennemført? Derudover, med den forventede vækst i vedvarende energikilder, hvad er din holdning til udviklingen af grænseoverskridende kapacitetsmarkeder i fremtiden og finansieringen af disse? Og hvordan planlægger du at adressere bekymringerne rejst af energikrævende industrier vedrørende marginalprissætningen i kortsigtede markeder? Tak skal du have.

1-0041-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Indstillet Kommissionsmedlem. – Tak - ja, det er så første gang, jeg skal kalde dig hr. Hansen. Men tak, hr. Hansen. Det er et rigtig godt spørgsmål, Jeg tænker, du sikkert spørger på den måde, fordi det er vigtigt at få en form for løfte om ikke at begynde at lave ny lovgivning i forhold til elektricitetsmarkedet, før vi har implementeret det, vi rent faktisk har vedtaget, og den commitment vil jeg gerne give, det løfte vil jeg gerne give. Om der skal mere til, kan vi jo ikke vide, og det kan sagtens være, der skal. Primært jo også fordi, at det – som din egen gruppe også er meget optaget af – at vi får bureaukratiet ned og forsimplet reglerne, jo også er højt på dagsordenen.

Men det er klart, det faktum, at vi faktisk har lavet lovgivning, der, hvis det bliver implementeret, kan føre til meget lavere priser, bør jo betyde, at vi virkelig sætter tempo på at få implementeret denne reform. Et eksempel, jeg er stødt på fra Sverige, viser, at der er eksempler på kunder, som har fået deres energiregninger sænket med 42 procent ved at vælge alternativer på et frit marked. Når vi så samtidig ser, at det – tror jeg – er under ti procent af EU's elkunder, som har været i stand til rent faktisk at gøre brug af det faktum, at man selv kan vælge sin leverandør, så er der jo et stort problem i forhold til implementering. Så tror jeg, du også spørger til den fysiske del af det her. Det er jo klart, at når man taler om sådan et marked, så er der jo både det, som er regler og systemer, som skal være på plads, men der er jo også noget fysik. Der er jo nogle kabler i jorden, der er nogle interconnectors, og – nu er min tid gået – men det er helt sikkert også noget, andre vil spørge til, for det er enormt vigtigt, at vi får udbygget det.

1-0042-0000

Nikola Bartušek (PFE). – There is no doubt that the access to affordable housing is becoming a luxury in many cities. And you have also mentioned that in your in your speech. But I must add something to this. And it's not only rising property prices, high energy costs, but it's also the Green Deal Regulations that are putting housing out of reach for a growing number of people. And we are here to care for people.

So I will ask a very simple question. What would you say to those people in many European cities, and also here in Brussels, who are forced to sell their homes because they cannot afford to pay for the mandatory green renovation that they are obliged to implement?

1-0043-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – OK, let me start by saying that I acknowledge the problem that investment in renovating a home can be a big investment if you want a new heat pump instead of your gas or oil boiler, if you want better insulation. The good news is that it will pay back fast. Good news is that in most places, if you go to your bank, you will get a loan because the bank can also see it's a good thing to do, but not for all. So this is why your question is so relevant.

I have to underline that the way the legislation is made doesn't mean that it actually needs to be implemented on the level of a family or an individual or a house. It's up to the Member States to decide how it's implemented. But I also have to say that, well, it's our intention that it actually happens in the houses that need it. And it's very closely connected to energy poverty also and the lack of decent housing, because 15 % of all Europeans live in dwellings where it's not well insulated or they have other problems – this is not acceptable either.

So we have European funding that cannot solve all of the problems, but it can solve some. We will double the money in the Cohesion Fund. Together with Commissioner Fitto, I will work on this. This will add up to around EUR 14 billion. We will work on a pan-European investment platform with the EIB that will also provide funding. The state aid rules that we've also talked about quite a bit will help. Already more than EUR 100 billion has also been directed directly to energy-efficiency measures in buildings and houses. So, although most of these investments need to be private, there is no doubt that there are also things we can do and have done on European level.

1-0044-0000

Elena Donazzan (ECR). – Grazie, signor commissario candidato, anche per l'affabilità di questa conversazione.

Lei ha trattato di due argomenti: da una parte, la politica della povertà energetica per famiglie e imprese e, dall'altra, un mix energetico da mettere insieme. E noi trattiamo di un tema che in Europa è molto presente: si chiamano "rifiuti".

Le domande sono abbastanza precise: noi crediamo che i rifiuti possano rappresentare una forma di trasformazione in energia, riducendo al contempo l'impatto ambientale dei rifiuti stessi. Allora, qual è la sua visione sulla promozione della creazione di energia da rifiuti nell'ambito della strategia europea per la sostenibilità? Quali misure specifiche intende adottare per incentivare l'innovazione e l'adozione di queste tecnologie, garantendo che siano integrate in modo sicuro ed efficace, contribuendo così a un'economia circolare e a una riduzione delle emissioni?

1-0045-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you so much for that very relevant question. There are many aspects to this, Ms Donazzan, and I very much appreciate you raising it, because it

is important and we do have a lot of potential. So there's the most obvious and also the part of our energy system that is now functioning in this way. In my own country, for instance, we have waste incineration facilities that also produce both district heating and electricity, and if that's done with the right environmental standards, then that can be sustainable. On the other hand, what we want to do with our waste is create less of it, reuse it and recycle as much as possible. So that's the balance that we need to find there, obviously.

Then there's the waste from our food sector and our agriculture sector: that can be made into biogas. And actually, in many countries – my own included – the ramping-up of biogas production from exactly these waste sources has been a major reason why we've been able to cut down on our natural gas. And in the future, we will need these sources of what will then be green biogenic carbon. Why? Because it's one of the only ways where we can have negative emissions. If you take the carbon from the burning of methane, from waste incineration, and put it into the ground, that's negative emissions. Or you can add it to hydrogen and then make some of the fuels that we will need to decarbonise our aviation sector and our maritime sector.

So that, I think, is something that we need to do much more to develop and support us as best we can, both making sure that the legislative framework is there, but also that the investments are there.

1-0046-0000

Brigitte van den Berg (Renew). – Beste mijnheer Jørgensen, dank u wel voor uw sterke inleiding vol ambities. Ik ben blij dat u erkent wat de grote impact is van het woningtekort op het leven van de Europeanen. Maar toch mis ik op dat onderwerp bij u de urgentie en de ambities waar ik op hoop.

U kondigt een dialoog over wonen aan, maar ik vraag van u een concrete toezegging inzake het snel herzien van de staatssteunregels. Want al in 2021 heeft het Parlement de Commissie gevraagd om die regels te herzien, in 2022 heeft het Parlement dit herhaald en het is nu bijna 2025.

De Europeanen kunnen niet langer wachten. Moeten zij nu nog op een uitgebreide dialoog wachten voordat de Commissie hier daadwerkelijk maatregelen gaat nemen? Kunt u toezeggen dat de Commissie al in 2025 een herziening van de staatssteunregels gaat voorstellen, zodat de nationale overheden geld kunnen gaan steken in het bestrijden van het woningtekort?

1-0047-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – Well, I'll definitely commit to us doing this as fast as possible. State aid rules are an important part of the solution, but I will also remind you that it's not the only thing we can do. And I also need us to be very clear in agreeing that, even though, of course, naturally in this room we're discussing what can be done on a European level, most of the solutions needed for the sector will be national.

And this is why, yes, let's do whatever we can. I will lead that work; I look forward to it. I think we can probably even do more things than what I've suggested here today, because when we start working, when we have the dialogue, when we use each other's abilities, we will also come up with new and better ideas. But we need to also help each other put pressure on the Member States.

To your specific question: when will we reform the state aid rules? I can tell you that we've already had discussions about this – Commissioner-designate Teresa Ribera and myself – so we are ready to start working on day one. How many days will it take us to find a conclusion? I'm not able to promise you, but I can promise you we will work as fast as possible.

1-0048-0000

Niels Fuglsang (S&D). – Dear Commissioner-designate, dear Dan, welcome back. Good to have you in these rooms where you spent so many hours as a Member of the European Parliament.

I would like to ask you, with regards to your ambitious targets and goals that you mentioned in your introductory speech, in order to decarbonise, in order to become independent of Russian gas, in order to decrease energy costs, we need to look at the heating and cooling sector. That's 50 % of our energy consumption, and 70 % of that today comes from fossil-based fuels. So, we need to speed up the decarbonisation of the heating and cooling sector. And I'd like to ask you how you look at that, what you will do, which solutions you will look at.

1-0049-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – I have to be honest with you. This is a little bit of a strange situation – I voted for that guy (*referring to Mr Fuglsang*). So, I'm happy to say I also agree with the sentiments behind your question.

Yes, you're right. We need to do much more in our buildings in order to decarbonise our economy. An important part of this will be the electrification action plan that I will put forward, because electrification will not be everything – in some places it'll be more district heating that will be the key – but in many places it will be heat pumps driven by electricity. That, of course, needs to be seen in combination with also other sources like geothermal power, for instance. That can be, in some places, accessed directly for a building or via district heating for a whole area.

Electrification has actually stagnated as a part of our energy system. If you look at the end consumption of energy, it's about 22 % to 23 % that's electricity. That's stagnated in the last decade. I only found that out recently. I was surprised, I would have thought intuitively that it had gone up. It hasn't. So this is something we need to remedy. It needs to probably more or less double in size. How to do it? Well, it's many of the areas that we've already touched upon. It's strengthening the physical infrastructure. It's getting the investments in place. The investments, by the way, for the physical infrastructure is more than 500 billion from now to 2030 that's needed.

So, all of these things, it's a tall order, but it can be done and it will be a part of our affordable energy strategy. It'll be a part of the electrification roadmap or action plan that I will put forward. And of course, it will also be a part of implementation of the many directives that we've already passed in the European Union. The one on energy efficiency that you were rapporteur of is certainly one of them.

1-0050-0000

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Mr Jørgensen, you strike me as being an experienced, practical guy, which is what we need.

So, while the 2040 target is still to be confirmed, it is expected that it will require significant emission reductions in the energy sector with an electricity system that is either at or very close to net zero by the end of the next decade. Such an electricity system will likely operate and deliver prices differently to today's system. And with this in mind, we must prioritise certainty. Investors quickly need clarity on policy frameworks in order to make investment decisions and projects that have a 10 plus year delivery timeline and 30 plus year lifespan.

So please outline the process and timeline for delivering the post-2030 climate and energy framework. And also, will you commit to undertaking a comprehensive impact assessment

including detailed modelling, stakeholder engagement and competitiveness checks to inform the most cost-effective pathways to 2040?

1-0051-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, Mr Kelly. I think you seem like a very practical guy yourself, so I'm sure we will work very well together.

I also like the way you phrase your question because that reflects that you are practical guy. It's about implementation. How do we actually do it? We need to have a plan, yes, but that plan needs to be also one that's made in collaboration with who it is that we need to deliver, who it is that we are regulating.

So yes, I will commit to engaging and having a stakeholder dialogue all the way through the implementation, but also in developing the policy going post-2030 – that also refers to Mr Ehler's question earlier.

Now, there are many things we can do to make sure that the investment enabling environment, as I think the investors call it, is better than it is today. You talk about security for investors and I agree with you. It is a little bit of a paradox that quite often we see that there is a lot of institutional investors out there, pension funds and other private money actually, that wants to be invested in the clean green transition, but it doesn't happen. Why? Well, quite often, in my view at least, and I think this is supported by data, it's because of the lack of security for your investment. Now, since we know that there will be a demand for clean energy in the future, there shouldn't be this uncertainty.

Now, what can we do? Well, I think that also taking into account that we will never, as a Union or with public money as such, pay for the whole transition, maybe the public money that we have from Member States, from the European Union, should be used in different ways, so that they best multiply the investments. That can be done, for instance, with de-risking. And this is one of the issues that I will also be speaking with the European Investment Bank about implementing.

1-0052-0000

Gordan Bosanac (Verts/ALE). – Mr Jørgensen, if you will be appointed as a Commissioner, it will not be an easy task in front of you because you will be a kind of price-cutter Commissioner. You have to cut the prices in energy sector, but then also in the housing sector.

And you already recognised that the problem of short-term accommodation rental is a problem, which was alerted years ago by many European cities and then the cities tried to do something and the response from the Commission was to launch Pilot infringements against the states and actually working against the cities.

So, my question for you: are you ready to reconsider those infringement procedures and maybe even end them? And are you ready also to do the structural change which you mentioned to support the cities, not to perceive the cities as an enemy in solving the housing crisis? Also, in a way, maybe to invest and invent new financial mechanisms, such as maybe direct access of the cities to the EU funding? So, are you also considering in that direction to deal with the cohesion funds?

1-0053-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – What did you call me? Price-cutter Commissioner? I like that already. So, if I'm confirmed, maybe we'll print some business cards.

Seriously speaking, you touch on some very important issues and the short-term rentals: I did speak about earlier that there are also positive things, so I'll not repeat that, just be mindful that I also am very much aware of those positive elements.

But it is a problem. And you are probably right. I think most people also in the Commission will agree that probably we haven't acted fast enough on this. Now, what I will do and what I will commit to is speaking exactly with the people who are affected. So, if it is true what you say, and I don't doubt that you're right, that sometimes probably even citizens will see the EU as an enemy in this, that needs to change. We need to be on the same side of the citizens in this.

What makes it complicated and difficult is, of course, that what some citizens and regions want is exactly what other citizens and regions want to avoid. This is also why there needs to be quite a bit of flexibility in how rules can be applied and how to tackle this problem. First step, I think is very wise, that has been taken, which is to make sure that we have the data that we need, that there is an obligation from the platforms to deliver the data to the countries. Also, I'm aware of the handbook that's been developed by the EU to support different actors, communities, cities in what they can do within the rules, also with regards to the services directive. So, it's not that nothing has been done, it's just that we need to step up and do more. I will depend on you and your guidance on also what that then exactly is, since, as I hope is clear now, it's not straight cut exactly what to do and how.

1-0054-0000

Maravillas Abadía Jover (PPE). – Señor comisario propuesto, en una audiencia como la de hoy me acuerdo especialmente de las víctimas y de aquellas personas que se han quedado sin hogar en Valencia por el paso de la DANA. En esta catástrofe, y en las anteriores que hemos vivido recientemente en Europa, le pido, señor comisario propuesto, que en su labor no se olvide de quienes se han quedado sin lo más básico, sus hogares: tenemos que darles respuesta.

No obstante, me gustaría preguntarle por una situación que afecta a millones de propietarios y ahorradores en Europa. En muchos Estados miembros se está produciendo un aumento de los impagos en el alquiler y de ocupaciones ilegales: ¿cómo piensa limitar, si no eliminar, el impacto de los impagos en el alquiler en los Estados miembros y hacer frente al aumento de la ocupación ilegal en Europa, y qué medidas específicas de la Unión Europea piensa introducir para abordar las causas profundas de dicha ocupación?

1-0055-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much for bringing that up. Occupation of homes: on the one hand obviously this is a breach of the right of the people who own the building. There are legal remedies to do something about this. But on the other hand, it's also very clear that sometimes it's a very unfortunate situation where it's people that don't have a home, and where the alternative is maybe being put out on the streets and becoming homeless. So although I do obviously respect the integrity of ownership, there are also, in all European countries, quite strict rules on how to protect renters. We need to make sure that if they are not implemented well or if the rules can be better – maybe learning from other countries that have better practices, then maybe the EU can help facilitate that.

What I do keep coming back to, though, is that if we look at what we can actually do from a European level, it is providing the funding that we have been speaking about, making a housing construction strategy that will hopefully make sure that we have more and thereby also cheaper houses. It's also about providing technical assistance and sharing knowledge, sharing best practices. So, for instance, in some countries we also have rules that regulate whether or not – or by how

much, by the way – rent can increase in order to protect the renters. I hope I understood your question correctly.

1-0056-0000

Marina Mesure (The Left). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, vous avez souligné à plusieurs reprises que l'électricité coûte beaucoup plus cher en Europe qu'aux États-Unis ou en Chine. Vous avez indiqué, à juste titre, que le prix de l'électricité plonge des millions d'Européens dans la précarité énergétique. Un ménage européen sur dix peine à se chauffer, ce qui est inacceptable. Il faut donc des prix stables et qui soient les plus proches des coûts réels de production. Pour cela, découpler le prix de l'électricité de celui du gaz, ce serait bien, mais acter l'échec de la libéralisation du secteur de l'énergie, ce serait mieux.

Je vous pose donc la question suivante: allez-vous proposer une nouvelle réforme du marché de l'électricité pour aller vers davantage de régulation publique de ce secteur stratégique? La seconde question que je vous poserai, parce que vous avez abordé la géothermie et parce que le Parlement européen s'est prononcé en faveur de cette ressource, est la suivante: proposerez-vous une initiative législative sur la géothermie?

1-0057-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – On the electricity market, I think actually the electricity market design does provide us with the tools that we need. So today the prices of electricity follow the prices of gas. This is sensible in the sense that it's necessary to have the marginal pricing at the wholesale level. That's what makes it feasible to have new investments in renewable and cheap energy. But it's also what makes our market stable. That's what got us through the crisis. On the other hand, it does need to be like that at the retail level, and if you use power-purchase agreements, contract for difference, consumer empowerment, all of these tools that we have in the market design – by the way, also recommended by Draghi, then we will be able to remedy most of those problems as I see it.

On geothermal, yes, I will commit to putting forward a strategy. Today, unfortunately, that is an untapped resource. Mr Fuglsang also asked about the heating of houses. This is an area where geothermal can definitely play a bigger role in the future. As I understand it, also from the own-initiative report that you wrote in this House, there's a concern that maybe there's not enough access to the subsurface data. I agree with that. We need to do something about that. There are planning issues. There are financing issues. This is also one of the areas where the upfront investments are huge, but the long-term costs are potentially at least quite low. So new financing models are necessary to make sure that we can accommodate the companies that want to do it and the communities that want to be at the receiving end of this.

1-0058-0000

Aodhán Ó Ríordáin (S&D). – Thank you for remembering our conversation when I said that the three most important issues in Dublin were housing, housing and housing.

I want to ask about homelessness and about social and affordable housing, if I might. There is an EU commitment to ending homelessness by 2030, but it's on the rise across many Member States, and I'm disappointed that the issue of homelessness is not mentioned in your mission letter. So what are your proposals to ensure we can end homelessness and, in particular, how you scale up Housing First programmes?

And on social and affordable housing, what concrete measures will you present to improve rental affordability and access to social housing in the short term, in particular for vulnerable groups and students? What kind of measures will you propose to protect borrowers from predatory lending?

Finally, what measures, from a tenants' rights perspective, can you propose to enhance protections against no-fault evictions, which often lead to homelessness?

1-0059-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Yes, you also said that you spoke more about me than your own wife. I didn't quote you for that in the speech, but it's true. You were, in fact, the first person I met in this Parliament that really brought to my attention just how high on the agenda it is in your own country, but also in others.

So homelessness: we have about 1 million homeless people in Europe. This is totally unacceptable, obviously. People living without a roof over their head, without the most basic of needs: obviously, there are very complex reasons why people end up in the street, but we need to do more. We do have a target of totally getting rid of homelessness before 2030. Unfortunately, we're not on track.

We do have a common European platform to deal with this, building on the Housing First principle that's been implemented in some Member States – but not all. It's a principle that was developed in Finland, and they have very good experiences with that. It's not just about providing the actual roof over the head of the people. That's the first thing. It is also about coupling it with social measures, with job opportunities, with creating a life for people.

Many will probably argue, well, at face value, this is not necessarily a European competence. I will say, well, actually, it's a European fundamental right, the social pillar, to have an affordable home. So I would say it is. I do acknowledge then that many of the solutions will probably be national, but why not also exploit the fact that we have a common understanding and a common will and determination to do something about this on the European level, share best practices, and provide funding when and where necessary for social housing?

1-0060-0000

Marie Dauchy (Pfe). – Monsieur Jørgensen, au nom des Patriotes de la commission de l'emploi et des affaires sociales, je vous interpelle pour comprendre. Comprendre pourquoi, face à la crise du logement qui frappe nos pays, vous persistez dans cette même direction, pourquoi vous vous obstinez, alors que votre calendrier est intenable.

Entre 2010 et 2023, les loyers moyens dans l'Union européenne ont bondi de 23 %. Et votre croisade contre les passoires thermiques précipite l'effondrement du marché locatif. Les propriétaires, étranglés par des normes coûteuses, renoncent à louer, privant des millions de concitoyens d'un logement et de la possibilité de vivre dignement.

Alors je vous pose la question suivante: M^{me} von der Leyen a récemment annoncé un plan pour le logement, mais où est la substance? Pouvez-vous, ici et maintenant, nous en dévoiler les grandes lignes? Allez-vous enfin ralentir ce calendrier vert qui appauvrit nos citoyens et nos économies? Ou consentirez-vous au moins à accorder des dérogations aux pays, comme la France, pour qui la crise du logement est devenue une urgence nationale? Les peuples européens attendent des réponses concrètes.

1-0061-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you for that question. Maybe it's actually a good time for me to recapitulate and summarise all of the different things that we've talked about in housing, because you asked me – and I understand why you ask – what does it concretely mean? So, there's plans, and what does it mean?

Well, I would say that it's about values, investments, rules and knowledge.

Values: all Europeans have the right to affordable housing. This is something we should all stand for in this House.

Rules: well, the construction of new housing, and there will be a strategy for more construction, also needs for us to implement better rules for standards, things that are today given too much red tape for new construction.

Investments: I've already mentioned a few times the pan-European investment platform, the need for more investments also in energy efficiency, the more than 100 billion already applied, the 14 billion in the Cohesion Fund, the State aid rules that we need to change. So, we are definitely ready to do concrete things also on that.

And the last part, knowledge: I really do think that knowledge sharing, technical assistance, both directly aimed at the citizens in order to empower them, for instance, as energy consumers, but also for cities, municipalities, this will work. Many countries have good examples of what can actually be done to make it lucrative for investors to invest in social housing. Why not use those examples, combine them with some of our investment efforts, so there's money behind the words, so to speak, and make that into reality also?

1-0062-0000

Ondřej Krutílek (ECR). – Commissioner-designate, let's come back to nuclear. As you are aware, for the ECR Group and for me personally, nuclear energy plays a vital role in achieving the climate neutrality. However, nuclear must not only be seen as important, as you said, but also must be treated equally as all other energy sources. In particular, it needs equal access to financing. Regrettably, in the EU taxonomy, the nuclear energy is perceived merely as a transitional solution, and even your clean energy investment strategy is limited only to renewables, energy efficiency and infrastructure.

I noted well what you replied to Christophe Grudler, so I will focus my question on another element. Would you support revision of the EU taxonomy in order to confirm that nuclear is relevant also in the long term, and is treated equally?

1-0063-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you for that question. I do support the principle of technology neutrality with regard to decarbonising our economy. This does not change that. I don't see it as the role of the European Union – and I think probably most people would agree with me – to fund, for instance, the building of a new nuclear power plant. The EU does fund nuclear activity, but that is primarily research and training, and I think that that is a sensible way of doing it.

Having said that, I do acknowledge that since we are cognisant that nuclear is a part of the energy mix and will continue to be so, then it also needs to be fully integrated into the energy mix. It also needs to be a part of our investment plan. So the clean investment plan that I will be putting forward

will also deal with nuclear. I will also today commit to making an illustrative nuclear programme, a so-called PINC report. You will know what it means, it's basically assessing the need for investments in the sector. I will also commit to engaging in a structural dialogue with the industry on these issues. I hope that answers your questions.

1-0064-0000

Sigrid Friis (Renew). – Lige nu får fossile brændsler temperaturerne til at stige, samtidig med at Putins krigsmaskine buldrer derudad – finansieret af EU. 75 milliarder danske kroner har vi sendt af sted til Gazprom alene i 2024, og jo, jo, jeg ved, at Kommissionen har lagt en plan for udfasning af russisk gas, men i 2027. Dan Jørgensen, det bliver så din opgave, og helst nu. Vi skal have fuld fart på, når vi skal erstatte fortidens fossile brændsler med grøn energi. Elektrificering bliver helt afgørende for at nå målene. Vi skal bruge store mængder grøn strøm til gode priser både til borgerne, til alle de grønne elbiler, til boligerne og ikke mindst til den industri, der er i gang med at elektrificere produktionen. Så vi skal altså accelerere elektrificeringen både for at frigøre os fra Ruslands kulsorte energi og samtidig for at nå vores klimamål. Så konkret hvilke specifikke tiltag kan vi forvente? Og hvornår? Vil du være med til at forpligte EU til at sætte et elektrificeringsmål for 2030?

1-0065-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Indstillet Kommissionsmedlem. – Ja, det er rigtigt godt spørgsmål. Det er klart, at hvis vi kunne blive fri af russisk gas i morgen, så gjorde vi selvfølgelig det. Det skal gå stærkere, end det gør nu. Det er rigtigt, at '27 er den målsætning, der sidder lige nu. Jeg har en klar ambition om at levere hurtigere, og inden for de første 100 dage vil jeg også præsentere en plan for, hvordan det kommer til at ske. Det er også rigtigt, at elektrificering er en vigtig del af det. Men det er selvfølgelig også en vigtig del af den lidt længere transition, som Europa skal igennem. Hvis ikke vi får elektrificeret vores samfund fundamentalt, så har vi ikke nogen chance for at nå de mål, vi gerne vil nå. I 2040 skal vi gerne mere eller mindre have en 100 % carbonfri elektricitetssektor. Lige nu – hvis man ser på end-users, altså på selve forbruget af energi – jamen så er det 22-23 % der er elektricitet, og det er stagneret i de sidste 10 år.

Det er selvfølgelig ikke godt nok, det skal mindst fordobles, og det skal ske ganske hurtigt. De forskellige barrierer, der er, skal vi jo adressere. Det er den fysiske infrastruktur, altså vores "grids", transmissionsnettene, det er enorme investeringer på over 500 milliarder euro frem mod 2030, som skal investeres i "grids", det er interconnectors mellem de forskellige lande, det er digitalisering, det er bedre mulighed for lagring i enten batterier eller lagring i brint. Alle disse ting, som bliver en del af det arbejde, vi kommer til at skulle lave i årene, der kommer.

1-0066-0000

Radan Kanev (PPE). – Commissioner-designate, thank you specifically for already underlining the importance of modernisation and interconnection of Europe's electricity grids. We know that poor connectivity is causing ongoing price disparities and high electricity prices, especially in south-east Europe, and undermining competitiveness and consumer affordability in countries like Greece, Bulgaria or Romania.

However, the progress of interconnectivity is hindered by significant financial needs. Estimates suggest up to EUR-63-billion needed in investments annually, and meanwhile we see that only a third of the available funds from the Recovery and Resilience Facility have been deployed so far.

In light of these challenges, could you outline how you envision the future Multiannual Financial Framework supporting investment in grid interconnectivity, especially for eastern Europe, while protecting consumers from potentially high costs?

1-0067-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – It's clear that the south-east of Europe experienced some big problems this summer. Unfortunately, this is what happens when a heat wave hits in the combination of different factors: not enough interconnectors, not enough storage facilities, not enough planning of maintenance. So there's no free flow, rational flow between countries of energy. What the Commission did was try to help facilitate and advise the countries with immediate effects for the citizens, but already on the short term and on the long term, we need more structural change.

Interconnectors are a part of the solution, and the interconnector that will be finalised, if I'm not mistaken, in April 2025 between Portugal and Spain will lead to a capacity increase of 3.2GW. Later, there's one coming between France and Spain – the Biscay Bay project – with an even higher gigawatt. So this will be part of the problem that is specifically directed towards that part of Europe.

Then you ask about the new MFF. Difficult for me to answer, obviously, since this is to be negotiated. What I can say is that I hope everybody reads the Draghi report because there it's pretty clear where we need more investments. And I think probably also – my personal view – EU funding is very well spent when we spend it where it also has a European purpose, and exactly the flow of energy across borders and making sure that the energy union that we have that is not functioning well now will function better in the future, will be, I think, paramount.

1-0068-0000

Jens Geier (S&D). – Dear Commissioner-designate, dear Dan, welcome back to the European Parliament. You already mentioned earlier parts of the necessary framework for the ramp-up of hydrogen, so I will focus on one of the important tools for this ramp-up: the Hydrogen Bank.

How will you ensure substantially more financial resources for the Hydrogen Bank with regard to supporting domestic production and imports of hydrogen? And what measures will you take to ensure the adequate functionality of the external dimension of the Hydrogen Bank, and an active climate and energy diplomacy in order to diversify and secure supply?

1-0069-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you, one of my old friends – not old friends, but friends for a long time! You raise a very important question. The Hydrogen Bank is obviously under the responsibility of my colleague, Commissioner Hoekstra. There is no doubt that we need to keep monitoring the auctioning criteria and, as I see it, the way that it is working now is going in the right direction. We have progress. It is, in fact, living up to what we wanted, but maybe not fast enough.

Now, whether or not that is because of the way that we have set the rules or if it refers to the problems that I mentioned earlier – which is that we also need the market to start working, and both the suppliers and the demand side need to be mobilised – I think probably it's a little bit early to say. What I will say is that hydrogen is such an important part of the puzzle for us to have a functioning, integrated, clean energy system in Europe that we cannot afford to not have 100 % focus on speeding this up. We need to ramp up the production – so up in scale, down in price, better transport, create an actual market. And the Hydrogen Bank is indeed an important part of that.

1-0070-0000

Letizia Moratti (PPE). – What do you plan to do to address the shortage of skilled construction workers? And how would you ensure that the administrative burden on companies in the construction industry, in particular SMEs, is kept to a minimum in order to create more favourable conditions for a rapid provision of new energy efficient and affordable housing? And what concrete measures at the EU level would you apply to promote public private partnership? And do you plan to reduce the unnecessary energy efficiency burden to reduce the cost impact on households?

1-0071-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – You pose, Ms Moratti, a lot of very important questions. Probably I will not be able to answer all of them in the time that I have, but the burden reduction with regards to energy efficiency measures is not one that we've touched on. We've spoken a lot about burden reduction as such, mostly for industry, but it's also important with regards to energy efficiency. And actually it's an integrated part of the Energy Efficiency Directive, it's a cornerstone in this directive, that it needs to reduce the burdens.

With regard to energy efficiency measures and how they help bring down bills and costs of homes: obviously, we've spoken a lot about the fact that you can bring down the bills of heating a home, bring down the electricity bills. That's important. But one thing that hasn't been mentioned now as a success story is the Ecolabel system that we've introduced in Europe. This has led to billions in savings for consumers, hundreds of euros per household on average every year. So that is one example of many of the things that we do that actually, bottom line, make the economy of our citizens better.

But as I've said a few times now, and something that I really stand by, we need to acknowledge that there is a risk that some people will struggle finding the finance to do what is necessary for them to do. I will argue, though, that – I mean, yes, it's European Union law that will make sure it will actually happen because countries need to implement – but these investments are also good for the normal family in Europe because it will bring down their bills and it will make their houses more affordable to live in and so forth. They just need to help to actually make the investment. And I'll also be talking, of course, to actors on the financial market on how to make sure we have the right products to facilitate that.

1-0072-0000

Monika Beňová (NI). – Pán komisár, máte pred sebou ťažkých päť rokov. Vidieť to aj z otázok, ktoré dostávate, a ja vám veľmi držím palce. Bude to totiž ťažkých päť rokov nielen pre vás. Bude to ťažkých päť rokov pre nás, pretože my sme v prvom rade zodpovední svojim voličom. Preto budeme od vás očakávať, že to, čo naši voliči očakávajú od nás, budete vy v spolupráci s nami naplňať. Dovoľte mi teda aspoň k jednej téme, ktorú považujem za určite rovnako dôležitú ako ostatné, ale myslím si, že práve pri dnešnom hearingu jej chcem dať väčší priestor. Podľa signálov trhu a odhadov samotnej Európskej komisie budú ceny energií v najbližších rokoch rásť, vrátane nákladov na bývanie a prenájom. Zaujímalo by ma, ako zabezpečíte alebo ako zabezpečíme, že dostupné energeticky efektívne bývanie bude realitou pre všetkých, že nebude len luxusom pre skupinu našich majetnejších spoluobčanov.

1-0073-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – I think probably the reason why there's been a lot of focus on the vulnerable is that I assume that the people that asked the question, and certainly myself, we feel a special responsibility for the most vulnerable, as I'm sure you also do. But I also want to make it perfectly clear that bringing down the costs is for all of our societies. It's for the industry, our competitiveness, our companies. If our companies do not compete, create jobs and growth, all

of us lose. It's the prosperity of our societies, and it's about the energy bills of all homes and all houses.

When I say what I think we should do, it's not just words in a speech or on a piece of paper. It's building on things that are already being done. So, for instance, the deployment of renewables: well, we are doing that very fast now. For the first time ever, the first six months of this year, there's more electricity generated from renewables than from fossil fuels. And this saves people money: from 2021 to 2023, European citizens saved more than EUR 100 billion because of renewables. These are direct savings for European citizens, because of renewables. So this is why this is not only something we do to fight climate change – it's certainly also something we do to fight climate change, but it's also something we do because it's the most rational thing to do if we want competitive societies with social justice, with equality, and where people with average pay and average salaries can live an affordable life in an affordable home.

1-0074-0000

Ondřej Knotek (PřE). – Welcome, Mr Jørgensen here. One of your entrusted tasks is to bring down the energy prices. And the recently reviewed electricity market design promotes the contracts for difference. That's fine – however, only for non-fossil sources. Let's be clear: the EU is phasing out fossil fuels, but it must be controlled and a just process. And a few EU regions still need to operate, just for a couple of years, their coal and lignite plants and mines, because it's absolutely crucial for their successful energy and economic transition. They need, and deserve, a stable environment for the next few years.

Therefore, Commissioner-designate, could you commit to amend without delay the electricity market design and corresponding state aid guidelines to enable contracts for difference also for some fossil-based electricity sources, of course, under, let's say, very specific and time-limited conditions?

1-0075-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, Mr Knotek. I'm not sure I would agree that that would be a good idea. But I will say something different, which is that you mentioned regions in Europe that are dependent on coal and lignite. I want to thank you for mentioning those regions, because in our speeches – when we talk about all the advantages of a transition towards a more clean energy system – we sometimes probably forget the people that will be potentially hurt by this transition, because there are regions for which it will be difficult. And I think we need to be very, very clear and also provide answers for those people.

How can we do it? Well, the European Union is helping via the coal regions in transition initiative and the Just Transition Fund, funding, I think, around 69 plans, quite detailed plans of what can be done to help reskill, to help create jobs, to help make sure that the people affected directly by this transition will also, in the future, be prosperous.

It's also worth mentioning that there are also jobs in the green transition, and re-schooling and training and reskilling, upskilling – it's a real thing, it's not just words on paper. It's something that can be done. We will have probably around a million jobs in solar in 2050; half a million jobs in wind in 2030. And many of those jobs will be able to be occupied by people who are today working in the fossil industry. It's important that we make sure that the jobs that we create are also for the same people who actually lose their jobs. So it's not enough to just say we will create more jobs than we will lose. If it's not for the same people, then of course they will feel that we are letting them down.

1-0076-0000

Bruno Gonçalves (S&D). – Hoje, o mundo tem os olhos na eleição histórica dos Estados Unidos, mas, Caro Comissário indigitado, precisamos de construir já a autonomia estratégica da nossa Europa.

Nos próximos cinco anos, o seu trabalho enquanto comissário será fundamental para baixar os preços da energia, cumprir metas climáticas e promover a resiliência energética da União Europeia – provavelmente um dos mais fundamentais para pessoas e para empresas. E só o conseguiremos alcançar com produção de energia limpa e barata, com soluções inovadoras de armazenamento e com infraestruturas eficientes. Precisamos de criar uma União Europeia energética que garanta economias de escala e desbloqueie o investimento.

Assim, pergunto-lhe: que medidas se compromete a adotar para criar as interligações energéticas em falta e reforçar as infraestruturas energéticas?

E, uma vez que a habitação é uma das grandes prioridades para ajudar tantos jovens europeus, numa altura em que o inverno está à porta, quero perguntar-lhe sobre as prioridades para melhorar a eficiência energética, já que hoje mais de 40 milhões de europeus vivem em pobreza energética.

1-0077-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – So the question about physical infrastructure of our transmission has been probably one of the ones that's been raised the most. And I totally understand. And thank you for also mentioning it, because if we don't have transmission, there can be no transition. And the needs are huge. So maybe in order for me to not repeat what I've already said, I'll try and offer a new perspective.

It's not only about strengthening and expanding – that is certainly necessary – but it's also about making a system that's smarter than the one we have now. So combining this with digitalisation, so smart metres and smart grids, will be extremely important.

It's also about exploiting the fact that we have millions of people in Europe that have their own batteries, that could be a part of the collective battery for our societies, in their cars. And if you combine that again with consumer empowerment and the right to choose when to use your energy so that it's cheaper – I gave you an example from Sweden, where some people experienced a 42 % lower bill than the alternative – if you combine all of these things, we really can make a much more competitive, a much more flexible energy system, with, by the way, a lot of also energy security in the sense that we don't have blackouts, because when we talk about energy security, we often talk about it with regards to not being dependent on imports, but energy security in the other meaning of the word deals with the fact that people need to be sure that they have reliant energy sources. This is at least as important as the price.

1-0078-0000

Mirosława Nykiel (PPE). – Szanowny Panie Komisarzu! (Mam nadzieję, że komisarzu...) Patrząc na Pana bogate dossier polityczne, jestem przekonana, że jest Pan doskonałym kandydatem na te bardzo trudne sprawy. I zapewne Pan wie, jak zróżnicowana sytuacja energetyczna panuje w poszczególnych państwach unijnych i jaka jest historia transformacji energetycznej w tych państwach.

Dam tylko przykład dwóch krajów: Pańskiego i mojego. Kiedy Dania w latach 70. odchodziła już od paliw kopalnych, mój kraj był na długiej ścieżce walki o niepodległość i wolność. Cała energetyka była oparta na paliwach kopalnych. Bardzo dużo w tej kwestii już zrobiliśmy, ale

wymagamy specjalnego wsparcia na rzecz transformacji energetycznej w naszych krajach, tak żeby ceny energii nie zabiły zwłaszcza przemysłu energochłonnego, małych i średnich firm, a z drugiej strony, żeby nie zwiększały ubóstwa energetycznego.

1-0079-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – In my years as Minister for Energy from Denmark, in the Council I would always sit next to my Polish colleagues. So for that reason alone I know a little bit about the Polish energy system because we would often discuss – and I know I've also studied it in a little bit more detail, because it's so interesting, the transition that you're going through. You're probably one of the countries in Europe with the biggest challenge. It's a challenge for all, but the way you are moving away, at the speed you're moving away from coal to alternatives is quite impressive.

So this raises issues, of course, of just transition – that's the one we talked about earlier. But it also raises questions of which technology then to deploy and how to do it. And there's no doubt that a part of the industries that you have that are very energy intensive, you need to look at them probably with a little bit of a different and more focused eye than the system as a whole. Excuse me if I'm becoming a little bit detailed, but I've spoken about these things in more general terms so much today that maybe it's OK if we move in a little bit on some of the practical solutions.

One solution is that instead of having only a collective net, you can also have direct lines from production of energy to the consumer of energy. I don't know if this would be a good idea in Poland, but I can definitely say – you're nodding – it is in my own country. You would normally say never move away from the collective transmission net with energy producers, but now, because of the electrolyser factories and the huge needs that they know, probably we need to allow for direct lines as well. Also tariffs with price signals that are rational in the sense that we can then create incentives to place the production closer to where the actual consumption is: that is also something that I think we should be better at implementing.

1-0080-0000

Benedetta Scuderi (Verts/ALE). – Mr Jørgensen, we are in a deep housing crisis, while more than 10 % of the population is in energy poverty and a lot more are still struggling to pay their bills. Therefore, it is crucial to intervene on building efficiency and integrated renewable energies. On these, the EU must prioritise investing to support the most vulnerable and all those households that cannot afford the investments.

So we have two specific questions. First, will you prioritise the implementation of energy efficiency and building legislation to support vulnerable and energy-poor citizens to access affordable, good quality and sustainable housing? And will you finance that?

Second, would you consider setting up an EU renovation loan to assist in providing the capital funding needed to achieve a net-zero building stock by 2050?

1-0081-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – So on the funding of the energy efficiency, specifically targeting the most vulnerable. There's no doubt that this is something that needs to be a part also of the affordable energy package and the investment part of that package. Working with the EIB, which has experience in this, on making the pan-European platform, I will make that definitely a priority.

Already, the EU has allocated more than EUR 100 billion for renovation, so investments basically in energy efficiency in buildings and homes. This is a lot of money, but it's clear that if we look at the combined needs, it is far from solving the problem. Also, this is, broadly speaking, so this is not fundamentally only directed towards the most vulnerable, but it's also, of course, directed to the most vulnerable. What exactly we will end up proposing in terms of models and tools for investments in the investment plan is probably too early for me to say, but I'll be happy to work with you on your idea. I'm not sure I understood 100 % what you meant, but maybe we can have a dialogue on that, if I'm confirmed, later, because I do think we need to listen to all good ideas.

It's about de-risking. It's about making sure that the public money that we have is actually making a difference. Since the public money, whether it's EU or national money, will never be enough, it's only a fragment, we need to make sure that it then actually leads to multiplying investments and serve not only in its own right.

1-0082-0000

Kris Van Dijck (ECR). – Mijnheer de commissaris, ik ben het samen met u eens dat de energieonafhankelijkheid moet worden vergroot, dat de energieprijzen moeten dalen en dat de klimaatdoelstellingen eveneens moeten worden gehaald. U hebt collega Grudler een vriendelijk man genoemd. U kent mij nog niet, maar ik ben dat ook.

Wanneer ik op dit moment kijk naar mijn app "Electricity Maps", dan stel ik vast dat er heel veel regio's in Europa momenteel geen wind of zon hebben en zie ik elektriciteit stromen van nucleair producerende landen naar andere.

Het is hier al uitvoerig aangehaald, maar ik wil ook een vraag stellen: hoe wilt u er mee zorg voor dragen dat bestaande installaties overeind blijven? In Amerika bijvoorbeeld sluit men kerncentrales op basis van technische aspecten en in Europa vaak op basis van politieke. Hoe kunnen we dat stoppen?

1-0083-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – I don't have an app like that but when I served as energy minister in Denmark, by my desk I had a real time screen showing how much wind was produced and when we would export and import. So, there we would see – and this will probably make you happy – so I would of course be looking at all the offshore wind turbines and how much we're producing. In a good day, we will produce 137 % of what we need. So, the green energy will go to other countries. But on a bad day, we would be importing nuclear energy from Sweden. So, it shows you, basically, that all countries in Europe need to be a part of a well-functioning European system, an integrated energy system.

And I will say: this started as a coal and steel union. This started as a union basically about energy, right? So, it's a bit of a paradox that one of the parts of our internal market that is not functioning really, at least not as well as we want it to, is the energy part. So, setting aside the energy mix, even though that's important, I think we can all agree that we do need to break down the barriers. So, there's some legislation, there's some rules, there's some decisions that need to be made, but there's also some physical infrastructure that's simply not there. And this is why we have curtailment. This is why we have use of our energy that's not flexible enough and thereby also increases the prices. Because flexibility is not only about security of supply, flexibility is also about bringing down the prices by using the energy when it's cheapest.

1-0084-0000

Valérie Devaux (Renew). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, pour que les initiatives en matière de logement puissent bénéficier à tous, il est indispensable de tenir compte de l'accessibilité financière, mais aussi de l'accessibilité physique pour des personnes ayant des besoins spécifiques.

Quelles mesures concrètes envisagez-vous pour promouvoir le développement de logements bien adaptés aux personnes à mobilité réduite, par exemple les personnes âgées, dans un contexte de vieillissement de la population européenne, mais aussi les personnes en situation de handicap?

1-0085-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you so much for mentioning that. We've talked about vulnerable groups today. I think it's fair to say that most of the time when people have talked about vulnerable groups it's been related to income, but there are also other groups that are vulnerable for different reasons. One of them is, for instance, people living with a handicap that need different physical structures for access, for instance – not only access, but also liveability in a home.

We have rules, we have fundamental rights in Europe that need to be implemented in all Member States. But I would personally think that we need to do more to share best practices on this, make sure that we also monitor that the rights of these individuals are taken seriously. I think that when we as a Union have a specific eye for the most vulnerable parts of our populations, we need to also be quite deliberate in the way that we then define this and make sure that everybody understands that this is actually also different groups. You can't just talk about vulnerable parts of our population: they are different groups. So an elderly part of our population might have other needs than, for instance, some people living with handicaps. And I do think that needs to be an integrated part of our work on these issues, and I can certainly commit to it also being something that I will take seriously in the dialogue that I will be taking with the whole of the ecosystem of stakeholders in the housing sector. I will also be meeting with the organisations representing these different groups that you alluded to.

1-0086-0000

Rudi Kennes (The Left). – Voorzitter, commissaris, de noodzaak van publieke controle over de energiesector is urgenter dan ooit. De grootste staalproducent van Europa, ArcelorMittal, dreigt zijn productie uit de Europese Unie te verplaatsen, deels vanwege de torenhoge energieprijzen. Dit brengt duizenden banen in gevaar.

De problemen in de staalindustrie weerspiegelen echter een breder probleem: de liberalisering van de energiemarkt heeft geleid tot instabiliteit en hoge prijzen, waarbij winst boven duurzame oplossingen gaat. Daarom twee vragen: gezien het falen van de vrije markt om een stabiele en betaalbare energievoorziening voor onze industrie te garanderen, welke specifieke maatregelen is u van plan te nemen om de energieprijzen in Europa te beheersen en ervoor te zorgen dat de industriële sector concurrerend blijft?

Overweegt u het ontwikkelen van publieke energiebedrijven om overvloedige, maar vooral betaalbare en groene energie te leveren ter ondersteuning van de industriële transitie?

1-0087-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – You state that the market has failed. On one side I agree with you, on the other, I don't know. Maybe this is just linguistics. I don't know.

But it's clear that when we have a market where the supply and demand does not always lead to the prices that that should reflect, then there's a market failure. Now, that can be due to speculation. I suspect that it probably is. And this is why the reform of the regulation is so important, and this is why it's good that we've given ACER better competences to deal with this. And we have 345 pending cases now.

But the market is also sometimes challenged because we make decisions that are political and even moral that leads to us needing the markets to help us solve the problems. So, when we decide to fight climate change, it's not something the market tells us to do – it's something we decide to do. We then need to make our decisions and make the rules in a way that the market serves us in doing that.

Does that always work? Clearly not. This is why State aid is sometimes necessary. This is why EU funding is sometimes necessary. When we in Denmark built the first offshore wind farm in the world back in 1991, I can assure you the markets were not eager. Everybody said that's way too expensive a way of making energy. But because we supported it and others followed, today we have a market where offshore wind can compete in price even with coal. So that's an example of the market not working, but because we then took political action, now we're in a situation where the market is actually working for renewable energy, especially offshore wind.

Actually, I don't think we disagree, I'm just being a little bit polemic here because it serves my point.

1-0088-0000

Borys Budka, *Chair of the ITRE Committee*. – Thank you very much. We've just finished the second round, so let's start the third one. We've got four invited committees.

1-0089-0000

Antonio Decaro, *Presidente della commissione ENVI*. – Signor commissario designato, nella risposta alla domanda scritta della commissione ENVI, Lei afferma che l'accelerazione delle procedure di autorizzazione è una condizione preliminare per conseguire i nostri obiettivi in materia di energie rinnovabili e per gli sforzi di decarbonizzazione.

Potrebbe illustrare in che modo garantirà che, nell'attuazione della direttiva sulle energie rinnovabili, l'accelerazione delle procedure di autorizzazione per le stesse energie rispetti *standard* elevati di protezione ambientale? E come sarà adeguatamente affrontata la mancanza di capacità amministrativa, identificata, nell'ultima relazione sullo stato dell'energia dell'Unione, come ostacolo alla rapidità delle autorizzazioni?

1-0090-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – I used to serve on the ENVI Committee for almost 10 years, so I have a special fondness for that committee, obviously. Thank you for bringing up the necessity to find the balances again. So our environment, our nature is also dependent on us having a clean energy transition. If we don't fight climate change, then our nature and our environment will also obviously lose out. This is clear.

On the other hand, it's also clear that the fact that we're going through this transition should never be an apology to then just leave aside any concerns for our nature and our environment. So when I talk about speeding up, I don't talk about compromising the protection of our nature. I talk about making it with less burdens, doing it faster. Sometimes there are good reasons for things taking the time they take, but often there are not, and we know this because we've seen progress in many places

where we've changed the rules and where we've changed the procedures. So even just the fact that some countries have a one-stop shop for making offshore wind. So instead of calling 17 different authorities and getting 17 different permits, 17 different forms to fill out – that's probably even low – you call one authority and this is your point of entry and they will help you. The authorities will be your help and your guide instead of people that will try and block something. This is the way we need to look at it.

On a European level we've done a lot to change the rules. I will, if I'm appointed Commissioner, revise the legislative framework to see if there's more we can do. Again, for it to take four years on average to get a permit for onshore wind – sometimes up to seven years, three years on average to get a permit for solar; seven to ten years, sometimes, for offshore wind: this is unacceptable, and we can do better. But I think the point of your question was that you also want this, but you do not want us to do it on the back of environmental protection. And I agree with you. We need to respect that and we need to work for that.

1-0091-0000

Eubica Karvašová, *Vice-Chair of the REGI Committee*. – I read there that Denmark has the most affordable housing in Europe, so good credentials for the job! Listening to you, doubling the cohesion policy at the moment is the only existing EU source of funding for the European affordable housing plan. The only existing source. As I would bet, the pan-European investment scheme and also state aid rules will take some time to be up and running. And that's not good news, to be honest. Cohesion policy has had a limited role on housing, because of both the eligible rules, but also the narrow definition of housing investments.

So I have two questions for you. First, in the current uncertain regulatory context, how do you want to guarantee doubling the cohesion policy when EU funds have already been allocated by Member States on different but relevant, or equally relevant, priorities?

And secondly, how would you ensure that investing in affordable housing will not undermine the long-term goal of the cohesion policy, which is tackling regional disparities and achieving competitiveness for our regions?

1-0092-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – So I will be working with Executive Vice-President Fitto on these issues, obviously. Hopefully, we will be able to move fast, so hopefully you will see the effects, also with regards to the Cohesion Fund, and in the short term. Having said that, you also asked some very relevant questions about the functioning of the Cohesion Fund and the criteria. And there the mid-term review is coming up next year, which I will obviously also contribute to.

You asked more broadly also about financing, implying – I don't know if you were implying, but I heard it as if you were implying – that maybe this would not be enough. And if that was what you were saying, I certainly agree. This is also why the pan-European investment platform that we will be making in collaboration with the EIB will be extremely important.

Be reminded that no matter how much money we are able to find of public money, it can only always be a help to mobilise more private money, because the need for investments in new housing – to create affordable housing, to make sure that the supply is where it needs to be on a European level – is so big that I don't think anybody imagines the European budget will carry that debt burden alone.

Having said all of this, there are, of course, also other things we can do, other tools, which have to do with changing rules, which will then make it possible to mobilise more money. Many of you have asked about the state aid rules and, therefore, I'll also just repeat again that that is definitely one of the things that we'll be looking at from day one, with Executive Vice-President Rivera obviously leading that work.

1-0093-0000

Anna Cavazzini, *Chair of the IMCO Committee*. – Dear Commissioner-designate, on behalf of the IMCO Committee, I would like to ask you two questions, or two sets of questions.

In your written answers to our committee, you basically said and underlined that the new strategy for housing construction in the single market will include a precise set of actions. You mentioned the development of new product standards, the digitalisation of the procedures, dissemination of best practices, of course, and the improved access to construction services. Can you be a little bit more specific and give further information on the operational measures that you envisage and also on the timeline?

And secondly, as you know, and you mentioned it already, IMCO in the last term did the short-term rental regulation that will provide more data on short-term rentals. A lot of colleagues mentioned today the problematic parts of it. You highlighted in your written answers that short-term rental services market trends can affect the affordability of the housing of the local population. In light of this, have you already identified any systemic issues with housing rentals and envisaged concrete ideas how to tackle them and how do you envisage to include stakeholders in that?

1-0094-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Short-term rentals is one of the most complex issues that we will deal with because we have regions – sometimes even regions pretty close to each other, I would probably even say sometimes different parts of regions – having different opinions on this.

We need to be mindful that these platforms also have good things. They lead to more flexibility in tourism. Sometimes they will even lead to people being able to afford the home that they live in, because they can rent it out sometimes. So, it's also a part of the market of services.

But on the other hand, and this is what really concerns me, it has led to prices rising in cities so that people need to leave their homes in order to give room for short-term rentals. I mean, this can never be acceptable. And although it is today possible for many Member States to do something about it with tax incentives, with regulation and so forth, still, it's also very clear that many regions, mayors, even governments, are lacking the specific tools and guidance. They are sometimes probably even afraid that they will breach European rules.

So I want to make it a top priority for the Commission, as fast as possible, to look at: one, how is it going with the implementation of the legislation already approved that will lead to much more transparency and the data that we need – which is a first step, for instance, if we want to make other rules for taxation nationally – and two, is there anything more we can do? I will definitely promise you that this is one of the issues that will be very high on my agenda.

1-0095-0000

Aurore Lalucq, *Chair of the ECON Committee*. – Dear Commissioner-designate, on behalf of the ECON Committee to question your mission later, I ask you to focus on attracting more private and

public investment and to cooperate with the European Investment Bank in this regard, to establish a pan-European investment platform for affordable and sustainable housing.

Would you be able to already outline some key aspects of your approach to attracting investment, including the cooperation with the EIB and some core characteristics of the platform? And second question: how can you ensure investments reach vulnerable households and micro-enterprises as mentioned in your written answer.

1-0096-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – So the EIB already has some experience and is providing between 1 and 2 billion in funding for social housing already now. So they have experience and we will be building on those initiatives. We also have some experience in different EU funding where, even though it hasn't been the main purpose, it's been one of the purposes to provide better, accessible housing. So we will of course be building on the different experiences that we have.

We will also be including other actors. So this is not only the EIB. There are also other financial actors out there on the market that might be interesting for us to listen to. And we will need to talk to the whole ecosystem of stakeholders in the housing sector, not only the ones actually providing the funding, but also the ones benefiting, hopefully, from the financing. Because if we don't do that, we risk running into barriers when actually implementing what we need to do.

Another principle that I want to mention is the principle of de-risking, because again, the EU will never be able to adjust as national funding does. We will never be able to bridge the enormous gap that we have right now with regard to lack of funding. But we can, with the substantial amounts that we have, leverage a lot of private funding if we do it in a smart way, and de-risking of investments here is definitely one of the tools that we need to look at, especially if we're looking at bigger institutional investors that have a long-term investment frame, then maybe it's not that difficult to put in place different frameworks where we can hopefully attract a lot of money, especially if we combine it with clean energy and energy renovation, which is also attractive to investors like that.

1-0097-0000

João Oliveira (The Left). – Senhor Jørgensen, as políticas propostas para a habitação e a energia não correspondem ao que é necessário. A falta de habitação não é só um problema de pobreza ou de exclusão social. É um problema que atinge milhões de cidadãos que não conseguem encontrar habitação a preços acessíveis. E ele não se resolve com medidas para aumentar os lucros do setor da construção ou a rentabilidade dos fundos de investimento imobiliários.

Os preços elevados na energia e nos combustíveis são um problema para as famílias e as pequenas e médias empresas. E ele será ainda mais grave se avançar em políticas de maior liberalização do mercado e de favorecimento das grandes empresas do setor.

O que aqui trazemos é uma alternativa. Na habitação, propomos a criação de financiamento adicional e específico da União Europeia para que os Estados-Membros possam aumentar a oferta pública de habitação. E defendemos também a redução das taxas de juro fixadas pelo BCE.

Na energia, é preciso reverter a liberalização do mercado, regular e fixar preços e promover a eficiência energética e um maior aprovisionamento energético a partir de fontes renováveis, privilegiando os recursos endógenos de cada país.

1-0098-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – I definitely do agree with you that the market is not functioning right now. So, I guess you could say that there is a market failure. You didn't mention this directly in your question as far as I could hear, but it's also clear that we need to look into whether or not speculation is a part of what is distorting the market right now. I suspect that it is. So, I'll be looking at it together with Commissioner Albuquerque on this whether or not the financial market can be regulated differently.

But then it's clear that many of the things that you can do nationally to make sure that the market is well functioning and to make sure that the special political ambitions that you have are fulfilled by the market. That is exactly something that you need to do nationally. So, for instance, it's possible to make legislation if you want to say to a new contractor: 'If you want to build in this part of the city, X % of what you build needs to be social housing'. That is something you can do.

There's also countries that have legislation that prevents the rises of rents over a certain level, for instance, in connection with renovations. Again, a best practice that some other countries might want to apply also.

On the funding part, I think I have answered that extensively before, but I'll be happy to repeat that. Even if we spend all of our budget, that would not solve the problem in Europe. But since we're not going to spend all of the European budget on this, even though we are going to allocate money also more in the future than we are now, we need to spend it very wisely. So, we need to spend it directed at what it is that we want to achieve, and we need to spend it in a way that makes sure that this is not just one euro spent, but it's one euro spent that will then generate three or four or five euro. Hopefully that is possible. It's not something that's unknown to the market. We know of these principles also in huge energy infrastructure investments. So hopefully that can be used also in the housing sector.

1-0099-0000

Jutta Paulus (Verts/ALE). – Thank you very much, Chair. And thank you, Commissioner-designate, for being with us today and answering all our questions. And thank you especially for your commitment to propose new targets for renewables and energy efficiency post-2030, because this is what we urgently need, and also to end Russian energy imports as soon as possible.

Do you commit to include uranium imports from Russia, Russian technical support for European nuclear power plants, Russian participation in fusion research project ITER, and nuclear waste exports to Russia?

My question is also, how does the commitment to lower energy prices fit in with new nuclear power plants, which are three times more costly than renewable energy? And given the long building time for nuclear power plants, how do you envisage they are supposed to significantly contribute to our 2040 climate targets, taking into account that even when doubling the originally envisioned envisaged lifetime, many existing nuclear power plants will be off grid by then?

1-0100-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – May I suggest that you go into a room with Mr Grudler, and then you sort it out, and then tell me what the compromise is! But this shows you, of course, the polarisation of the debate. I have to correct one thing: I did not promise a target on energy efficiency post 2030, But I did say that I will work for one on renewables. We will, of course, have to look at the impact assessments and stakeholder dialogue on energy efficiency to see what to do

better there, but I'm not sure a new target is the right thing. I'm not excluding it, but I'm not sure it's the right thing. Whereas I do think, on renewables, it is clear that that will be a good way to work.

On the nuclear fuel that you mentioned, I don't think we've spoken about this today, because that is also a real problem. We speak about being independent of Russian gas, yes. But we also get nuclear fuel from Russia. So we need to diversify that. And in the process of making a new strategy, maybe that's also good to be mindful of. Who do we make ourselves dependent on in the future?

1-0101-0000

Anna Stürgh (Renew). – You've mentioned yourself the importance of massive investments in physical infrastructure and we've touched on interconnectors and transmitters, but we haven't touched as much on energy storage and particularly on distribution grids. Now, the Commission itself in the grid action plan has acknowledged the significant role of distribution grids for the European energy transition, thereby the increasingly European nature of this issue.

Now, there's estimates that around EUR 425 billion are going to be needed by 2030 for investments in distribution grids alone. So my question is, and I'd like to ask you to answer as specifically as you can, will you revise the TEN-E Regulation to introduce something of a 'TEN-E lite' to make investments in distribution grids possible, or introduce another new budget line to help these investments?

How will you enable the mobilisation of private investments, of anticipatory investments that are needed here? And what other steps are you willing to take to enable these investments?

And a cheeky side question: yes or no, will you propose a storage target?

1-0102-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – I'm not able to give you the answers that you were probably hoping for, but I do agree with your analysis, I do agree with where we need to go. So it's true that we haven't spoken that much about storage. Storage is also a very complex issue since this covers storage in the form of, for instance, batteries. And even that is complex because that's also huge, large-scale batteries and it's the batteries that we have in our cars, in our homes. How do we make sure we have an energy system that takes these things into account?

Storage will also be hydrogen, so when you have energy production that exceeds what your demand is at certain times of the day, when we have electrolyser capacity at a level where it's feasible and rational, you can then exploit that and store the energy, and, by the way, transport it as hydrogen – that'll probably be as ammonia, but nonetheless it can be done. It'll also help us decarbonise other parts of our energy systems. So these are parts of the challenges that we are facing there.

On the huge investment needs that you talk about, most of this needs to be privately financed, and there could be public money engaged in this, yes, but that will then be – primarily, in my view, and I think most Member States will agree – directly targeted and not make the electricity prices go up. Because right now an energy bill is composed of three things: the price of the energy from the retailer, the taxes and levies, and the transmission costs. And imagine a situation where we actually managed to get the prices down because we do something about the taxes – more or less up to the Member States, often – and we do something about the deployment of more renewables and energy efficiency, which we're hoping to, but the prices don't go down because the transmission costs go up. This will of course not be the right way of doing it.

Now the reason why probably it will be possible to find, I would assume, private financing here, is also because it's a pretty safe investment. It's a long-term investment, but it's pretty safe, and the way you'll get the money back is, of course, via the tariffs, taking into account the responsibility that I just talked about with not raising the tariffs. But if you have a long-term payback then that can be part of the solution.

1-0103-0000

Francesco Torselli (ECR). – Signor Commissario designato. In molti Stati membri vi è stata una forte resistenza, che Lei non ignorerà, in seguito all'adozione della direttiva sull'efficientamento energetico degli edifici, la cui attuazione e i cui costi saranno a carico dei cittadini, compresi quelli appartenenti alle fasce più vulnerabili, come giovani o anziani. La transizione ecologica non può diventare un lusso e non può essere solamente appannaggio di chi se la può permettere.

In fase di approvazione di questo regolamento, a chi obiettava che non vi fossero le risorse necessarie per accompagnare questi provvedimenti veniva risposto che la questione veniva demandata al 2028, con l'entrata in vigore del nuovo bilancio pluriennale.

Arrivo alle domande: cosa ha intenzione di fare? Ha intenzione di rivedere una *roadmap* più precisa e di anticipare questa data? Come intende trovare il giusto equilibrio tra le nuove normative green in tema abitativo e i portafogli delle famiglie in difficoltà?

E come intende qualificare il percorso verso la sostenibilità ambientale degli edifici? Promuovendo una politica di finanziamenti e di incentivi, magari coerente con lo sforzo che viene richiesto ai nostri concittadini?

1-0104-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – First of all, I 100 % agree with you that we need to be very mindful that when we give the speeches that we give – I definitely do when I give the speeches that I give when I talk about: "okay, so citizens saved EUR 100 billion from 2021 to 2023 because of renewables" that is actually true. They did. It's also true that we save billions every year because of the eco-labelling scheme.

It's also true that more than EUR 100 billion that we've spent supporting renovation of buildings will lead to savings. And this is true. I mean, had we not done it, the prices would have been even higher. The costs would have been even higher. But for the actual people that are still getting bills that are too high, they will want more answers. So I agree with you on that.

I've tried to convey some of the ways to do it today. I by no means think we have all the answers, but we do have things we can do. So one of them is decoupling the prices so that the electricity price doesn't follow the gas price in the retail level. Another one is, of course, making sure that we have the deployment of renewables and energy efficiency much faster than we do, making sure that the way that the energy efficiency measures are implemented in countries don't hit the most vulnerable groups.

Actually, something that I haven't mentioned is that I'm also very mindful that the legislation actually puts an obligation on Member States to identify energy poverty and to reduce it by 50 %. This is a part of the legislation. So although I acknowledge your concern, and although I think that we need to take it very seriously, I do think we need to be careful not saying the legislation of the EU just proved more expensive and it's bad for the most vulnerable parts of our population, when in fact we have tried, you have tried, to make legislation that takes into concern these exact potential problems for people.

1-0105-0000

András Gyürk (PFE). – Commissioner-designate, two issues briefly for further clarification, if I may.

First, nuclear, once again. You've made clear that you respect the Treaty and the Member States' right to determine their energy mix. That's great, but it's obvious. The real question is the following: by what specific proposals do you intend to promote the principle of technology neutrality in the energy sector? Are you planning to draw up an action plan dedicated to nuclear energy and what concrete investment support steps will you undertake regarding this energy source?

The second issue is residential energy subsidies, which are in force in many Member States. These often mean essential help for families to mitigate the impact of sky-high energy prices. Based on this, do you intend to maintain the practice of the Commission's regular proposals, suggesting the ending of the Hungarian overhead reduction scheme, or are you willing to reconsider it?

1-0106-0000

Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner-designate. – On nuclear, I think this debate has shown very well that it is still a polarised topic. It was a polarised topic when I was a Member of this Parliament almost 20 years ago and it's also been so in many, many meetings in the Council when we've had nuclear on the table. Very often it's polarised the debate so much that it's blocked other decisions.

What I will say about this debate today and the many talks I've had for many of you before this hearing today, is that I hope and feel that there might be reasons for us to be able to move on. Even though I acknowledge you say that it's obvious that I respect the Treaty, obviously I do, but nonetheless, if it's so obvious, then it should be obvious for everybody that we should move away from the discussion on whether or not to have nuclear or not have nuclear. We have nuclear. It is a part of the of the energy mix now and it will be also in the future. So how do we then move on to the more specifics?

And then I'll be concrete with your question. I will put forward and illustrative nuclear programme, a so-called PINC report, that will assess the different needs. I will make it also a part of the clean energy investment strategy to look at the needs for nuclear investments. I will put forward a programme when and if that is deemed necessary and relevant after we get the recommendations from the industrial group that's working on SMRs now. Here, of course, it would be premature of me to do something now without listening to them, and that is about as concrete as I can get.

1-0107-0000

Yannis Maniatis (S&D). – Dear Commissioner, the high and volatile prices that European citizens have had to pay for their energy and gas bills are at the forefront of our citizens' daily life. As you know, having to choose between heating or eating is a daily reality for millions of people across the continent.

What approach do you plan to take in tackling energy poverty? Will the upcoming action plan for affordable energy represent a clean, long-term response to energy poverty? Will the plan address the commitments to ensure EU-level energy-efficiency measures and strong investments in renewables, coupled with targeted support measures for the most vulnerable and poorer people, especially in renovating the worst-performance buildings?

1-0108-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Forty-seven million people in Europe did not have the possibility of adequately heating their homes last winter. Think about that: they are choosing between eating or feeling warm. It is totally unacceptable and we need to address this. We need to address the energy poverty issue, not only as something that will be solved because of all the other things we will do – to some extent that will hopefully be the case, because many of the things that I have talked about will also help remedy this problem. But that is not enough. We need a dedicated strategy, and the energy poverty issue will be also a part of the broader poverty strategy that we as a Commission will put forward.

So if I'm confirmed, I'll be working with my colleagues in the College to make sure that we have a holistic view on poverty, and that we will deal with the factor that is the most expensive for many people when living in a home, apart from the actual rent or mortgage.

1-0109-0000

Tomas Tobé (PPE). – Commissioner-designate, as the Chair said, I'm the last one, so we are nearly there. I fully agree with you that affordable housing is crucial for our citizens, but it's also very clear that the challenges are very different in the Member States. I would argue that it's quite hard to find an efficient European policy. So therefore, I wonder how do you plan to implement the principle of subsidiarity when developing the housing policy? I don't think that was really clear in your written answers.

Lastly, on nuclear, I listened carefully: you said that you cannot promise EU funding for nuclear. Fine. But I guess you are in favour of EU funding for renewables. You also say that we need to move on in this debate and I fully agree with you. So therefore my question is, do you exclude the possibility of EU funding of nuclear in the future? Yes or no?

1-0110-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – The subsidiarity principle is extremely important on all issues, but on housing, I think we will see that we need to be extra careful. This goes for both sides of the question. So subsidiarity is often used in discussions, and rightly so. But it's mostly used when somebody thinks that the EU is imposing something on a nation state that would be better solved there. But actually it refers to the fact that you need to make the decision where it is best made. So sometimes it also means that it's actually better to make it at a central level. So it goes both ways.

I do think that many of the things we need to do from a European level will have to do with sharing best practices, knowledge, technical assistance. I haven't mentioned the European Semester yet, but the European Semester is also an opportunity to monitor the housing markets and thereby also maybe give recommendations to countries. I think it's very clear, also, that, looking at different ways that countries use taxation, the different ways that they regulate the markets, surely there must be a way to do it more rationally, also seen from a European level.

On nuclear funding, I'm not going to be making any revolutions, although I think you would probably want me to. It is not the job of the European Union use our funding to support, for instance, a new nuclear power plant. We will look at nuclear energy as a carbon-neutral part of our energy mix. We will also make it a part of the clean energy investment strategy. And I've also given a commitment today to make an illustrative nuclear programme that will assess the needs. Hopefully that will also provide the data and the knowledge that we will all need to make the conversation that we have all talked about is necessary, more feasible.

1-0111-0000

Li Andersson, *Chair of the EMPL Committee*. – Thank you very much and as was said, we are almost done, but only almost. I would now like to give the floor to the Commissioner designate to make a brief closing statement of no more than five minutes.

1-0112-0000

Dan Jørgensen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Mr Ehler did not believe me when I said I was looking forward to these couple of hours. I was, I do admit I had some butterflies in my stomach, but I will say again, honestly, thank you so much for this exchange. I feel that it has not only been me answering questions, being tested by you – certainly that has also been the case – but it's also been an opportunity for you to send signals to, if I'm confirmed, me of what to expect for the collaboration in the years to come in the next mandate.

It truly has been a pleasure to see your dedication, but also the level of knowledge. I'm not surprised, since I used to be a Member of this House myself and some of you were even my colleagues then and I've come back often, so I know that you are indeed experts on your different fields. But I'm just very proud that maybe also people behind their screens at home have been able to watch and see that you are indeed not only representing the values of the people that have elected you, you also do it with integrity and a very, very high level of expertise.

So I'm not only saying this to suck up to you, I am saying it because I mean it. So thank you so much for that.

Now, can I just be a little bit more serious? So we haven't spoken that much about Ukraine. I've visited Ukraine twice during the war, met people who have lost people they love, people who have lost their homes, people who have been living without the most necessary things that we consider ordinary parts of our lives: electricity, heating. And this goes on. Since March this year, Ukraine has lost an electricity capacity equal to that of the collective capacity of the Baltic countries. Since March, they've lost two thirds of their electricity capacity overall since the start of the war.

The EU is already doing a lot. We've contributed with more than 2 billion for help in the electricity sector and energy sector, but I think we can do more and I think we should do more and I will definitely commit to me, if I am approved, taking this extremely seriously and having it as one of my main priorities: to stand by Ukraine, to help them through what will most likely be a very tough winter.

With those words, all EU institutions are important. The Commission that I hope to serve, the Council that I have served, but only one is directly elected by the people. So therefore, it's only fair that you're the ones deciding whether or not I get this job or not. I hope you'll say yes. If you do, I can promise you a very close collaboration. I will listen and I will expect you to guide me in the many difficult challenges that I will then face.

1-0113-0000

Li Andersson, *Chair of the EMPL Committee*. – Thank you. I would like to thank all Members who took part in the hearing for your questions, as well as Mr Dan Jørgensen for his replies. An evaluation meeting will be held in camera at 18:30. Also, thank you to Mr Budka for co-chairing the hearing.

1-0114-0000

Borys Budka, *Chair of the ITRE Committee*. – Thank you very much. We are exactly in time. This is maybe the first time you are just in time, so congratulations to you, and to our Members, thanks a lot.

The meeting is closed.

1-0115-0000

(The hearing closed at 17:37)