

Conversations

Quarterly review
N°1 — 2021

for tomorrow

Article by
Frans Timmermans,
Executive Vice President for
the European Green Deal,
European Commission

#GetTheFutureYouWant



Frans Timmermans

Executive Vice President for
the European Green Deal,
European Commission

A GREEN RECOVERY AND HEALTHY FUTURE FOR ALL

Frans Timmermans began his career with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1987. In 1998, he was elected as a member of the House of Representatives for the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA), where he dealt principally with foreign affairs. From February 2007 to February 2010, Mr. Timmermans was Minister for European Affairs in the Dutch government. In 2010, Mr. Timmermans returned to Parliament as the Labour Party's spokesperson on foreign policy. On November 5, 2012, Mr. Timmermans became Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Dutch government. Two years later, on November 1, 2014, he became First Vice-President of the European Commission, responsible for better regulation, interinstitutional relations, sustainable development, the rule of law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Since December 1, 2019, he is the Executive Vice-President of the European Commission, responsible for the Green Deal.

Some may want to run from science, but no one can hide from reality. While the pandemic continues to dominate day-to-day life, the climate and biodiversity crises remain a clear and present danger. The droughts, the wildfires, the floods, the storms, the viruses; they are all the harbingers of worse to come.

Taking cues from the best science available, and simply by opening our eyes and ears, it is clear that we're rushing towards a dangerous tipping point. Even die-hard climate deniers and fossil fuel fans will now admit that the end of their bonanza is in sight. Slowly but surely, all nations are coming to terms with the fact that the costs of non-action will be huge, and the consequences dire.

“

The pandemic forced our world to a grinding halt. As it did, it offered us a chance to take a step back and reflect: what world do we want our children to grow up in?”

Over the past year, the pandemic forced our world to a grinding halt. As it did, it offered us a chance to take a step back and

reflect: what world do we want our children and grandchildren to grow up in?

There is a simple, but fundamental, choice to make for each government and every business. Do we continue on the path

we know by growing shareholder dividend on the back of a slash-and-burn economy while poisoning our air, seas and lungs? Or, are we ready to embark on a new path of sustainable growth in a clean, circular, and inclusive economy, where health is wealth instead of the tally of GDP indicators?

We can green inner cities and move around with sustainable, electric transport. As hundreds of mayors already know, this is how we



**We have the skills
and technology to do it**

2030

The EU has committed
to cutting at least 55% of greenhouse
gases by 2030

“

All it takes is clear-
sightedness and the
courage to finally say
farewell to a 150-year-
old carbon-based
society.”



“Around the world, we are about to spend enormous amounts of money to build back better. We have one chance to get it right, to spend it on where we want to be tomorrow. Let’s not waste it by locking ourselves into soon-to-be obsolete technologies and outdated carbon business models.”

can purify the air and cool down our streets and parks, preventing hundreds of thousands of premature deaths per year due to air pollution. We can make agriculture less dependent on poisonous pesticides, saving the insects that pollinate our crops and help put healthier food on the table. And we can renovate our homes, make them more energy efficient and comfortable, and support local jobs. We have the skills and the technology to do it. All it takes is clear-sightedness and the courage to finally say farewell to a 150-year-old, carbon-based, take-make-dispose society.

The European Commission, in response to European government leaders’ request to chart the EU’s long-term course, is working to make Europe the world’s first climate-neutral continent in 2050. As we do so, we challenge everyone to beat us to it: in a global race to zero, we all win.

The European Green Deal is our growth model, our plan to invest in innovative technologies, new markets, and sustainable jobs. The EU will cut at least 55% of greenhouse gases by 2030. Our Climate

Law puts the targets for 2030 and 2050 into law. This way, we provide as much long-term predictability and stability as possible, especially now.

In the next couple of months, the European Commission will prepare the legislation to support our climate targets and to deliver regulatory consistency. This is exactly what many in business have been asking for, and rightly so. Because you know the change is coming. Many companies, especially the largest ones, even recognized it much earlier than we politicians did. Investors are increasingly switching their portfolios.



Make no mistake: what we will do on the European emissions trading system, on renewable energy, in automotive; all these steps will imply structural changes in many industries.”

Make no mistake: what we will do on the European emissions trading system, on renewable energy, in automotive; all these steps will imply structural changes in many industries. We are at the start of an incredibly complicated transformation process. It will require enormous efforts, but it can be done.

Around the world, we are about to spend enormous amounts of money to build back better. We have one chance to get it right, to spend it on where we want to be tomorrow. Let's not waste it by locking ourselves into soon-to-be obsolete technologies and outdated carbon business models. It would be dereliction of duty if we were to invest in sectors with a limited future, only to create stranded assets and economic problems further down the line. Let's focus our recovery on our common future instead.

At the end of the day, this is not about saving the planet. It will do fine without us. This is about a healthier and better life for all of us. Climate change will not stop because we close our eyes. Not acting is not an option. •

To hear from more global leaders, read the full edition of Conversations for Tomorrow – <https://www.capgemini.com/research/conversations-for-tomorrow-edition-1/>