



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Cabinet of Executive Vice-President Mr Frans Timmermans

Head of Cabinet

Brussels, 8/2/2021

Ares (2020) 7737848

Dear Professor Palmer,

I would like to thank you for your letter of 17 December 2020 to President von der Leyen, bringing to her attention recent findings about climate change and highlighting some of their possible policy implications. President von der Leyen asked me to reply to you on her behalf.

The European Commission is very much aware of the challenges posed by climate change. Not only do we follow closely the developments in our scientific knowledge, but we have been contributing very substantially to that evidence base, most notably through our research programmes and work carried out by the European Commission Joint Research Centre. We are committed to step up these efforts in the context of Horizon Europe, our new framework programme on research and innovation.

Copernicus, as one of the European Union flagship programmes, is a pillar in the reference system of global monitoring, with strong commitment and investment on the part of the European Commission. The current Copernicus 1.0 program already offers pre-exascale computing through the WEkEO platform for data analysis and modelling applications and, within the Climate Change Service (C3S), seasonal predictions and climate projections. Copernicus 2.0 (2021-2027) will deliver an operational decadal climate prediction service, as well as CO₂ emission monitoring capacity.

The Green Deal call in Horizon 2020 and the Work Programme of Horizon Europe for 2021 and 2022 will also extend and reinforce climate and integrated assessment modelling capacities across the European Union and with Associated Countries. Modelling teams in the UK have been leaders in Europe. We hope that the association of the UK to Horizon Europe will allow for a continuation of the long-established cooperation in this field.

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Professor T.N. Palmer
Royal Society Research Professor in Climate Physics
Professorial Fellow Jesus College, Oxford

E-mail: rjam@globe-eu.org

The Digital Europe Programme and its Destination Earth component in particular are also expected to contribute significantly in the coming years to greater capacities in High Performance Computing that will be made available for climate modelling development and simulations serving EU's climate mitigation and adaptation objectives. The idea of a "CERN for climate" relayed in your letter has been repeatedly proposed by some stakeholders. Such an appealing idea, from an EU perspective, has not reached a level of official maturity and consensus that would secure the buy-in of EU Member States.

Should you wish to convey your suggestions in this regard, I would suggest that you provide them to Philippe Tulkens (Philippe.Tulkens@ec.europa.eu), Acting Head of the Climate and Planetary Boundaries of the "Healthy Planet" Directorate in the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation.

With regard to EU climate policy, the European Green Deal is at the heart of the policy agenda of this Commission, mainstreaming climate action in all policy instruments. The EU has agreed the objective of becoming climate neutral by 2050 and is developing the first European Climate Law, to enshrine this objective into legislation. However, this is not an excuse for delaying action. On the contrary, we have also increased the EU's reduction target for 2030. By the end of the decade, we have committed to reduce our overall greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% compared to 1990, instead of the previous target of 40%. By June 2021, the Commission will also review and, where necessary, propose to revise all relevant policy instruments to deliver these additional greenhouse gas emissions reductions. This higher ambition was motivated, among other things, by the need to avert the risks you outline in your letter. We are also aware of the need to increase our resilience to the change we cannot avoid, and therefore create a new framework for that in the new EU Adaptation Strategy for which research and innovation outputs and modelling capacities will be critically needed as emphasised in the scoping document of the Horizon Europe Mission "A Climate Resilient Europe".

We thank you once again for your constructive comments and confidence in our efforts. We appreciate your insight and any help in increasing awareness of these monumental challenges and the need to act.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Diederik Samsom', with a stylized circular flourish above the name.

Diederik Samsom