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## ASSIGNMENT

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### IMPORTANT NOTICE

**This document presents a fictitious scenario. It has been produced solely for the purpose of this exercise. All references to existing countries, international organisations, private companies, departments and their representatives, etc. have been invented purely as examples. Any views expressed should not be taken to represent the opinions of those bodies or persons. When dealing with the assignment, participants should therefore rely solely on the information presented in the exercise and not on any prior expertise in the field.**

For this exercise, you will be asked to take on the role of an administrator of the European Commission (Commission), who is a member of a Biofuel Policy Working Group (BPWG) with a view to advising the College of Commissioners of the European Union (EU) on the topic of biofuel policy. All the documentation that you need to prepare yourself for your interview is included in this information brochure. It comprises a number of documents, reports and other information that you need to analyse in order to be able to deal properly with the situations presented to you during the interview.

It is important that you accept the scenario as it is presented. You may print the documents, rearrange them in any order you wish and add comments or make notes as necessary. Neither your knowledge in the field nor your knowledge on the topic of this exercise will be assessed during the interview; therefore, conducting any additional research is unnecessary. This Situational Competency-Based Interview is designed to assess the following general competencies: Leadership, Learning & Development, Resilience, and Working with Others.

You will have until the day of the interview to go through the information individually in order to prepare for the interview. The interview will last 25 minutes.

**Please note that for the purpose of this exercise:  
the interview will take place on Monday 02 March 20XX  
Last year was 20XX-1, next year will be 20XX+1**

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Climate change

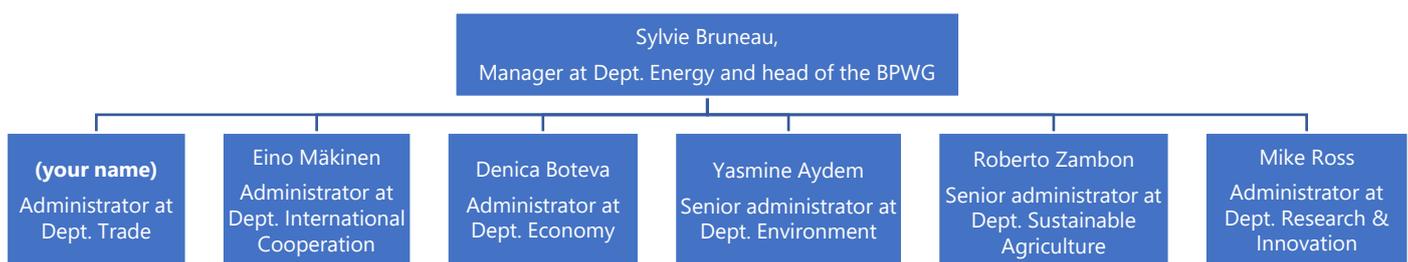
The increasing concentration of greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere is fuelling a rapid change in climate, with shifting temperature zones and altered rainfall levels leading to the depletion of water resources in many regions. Besides seriously degrading biodiversity, climate change is also expected to (a) have a negative impact on agricultural production and (b) reduce food security.

In order to mitigate the impacts of climate change, targets regarding greenhouse gas emissions around the world were set two years ago in the International Climate Agreement. To meet its emissions target, the European Union (EU) has looked for ways of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions from transport, as this sector is responsible for nearly 30% of all EU greenhouse gas emissions. Since biofuels emit less greenhouse gases than fossil fuels, the EU has set all Member States the target of replacing 10% of the fossil fuels used in the EU transport sector with biofuels by 20XX+10.

### The Biofuel Policy Working Group (BPWG)

In order to meet the 10% biofuel target imposed by the EU, the European Commission has appointed a working group consisting of administrators from various Commission departments (Dept.). The BPWG is responsible for (a) identifying the main challenges relating to biofuels that need to be tackled in order to meet the greenhouse gas targets set under the International Climate Agreement, and (b) decide on the best way forward for policymakers.

*Organigram of the working group*



The EU's College of Commissioners will convene on 23 March 20XX to decide on future policies for various aspects of biofuels. As head of the BPWG, Sylvie Bruneau has been asked to present this topic at this upcoming meeting.

### Types of biofuel

Biofuels are transport fuels produced from biomass. Currently, the following three biofuel types account for almost all biofuel consumption in the transport sector worldwide:

- **Bioethanol** is the most common biofuel at world level, accounting for more than 90% of total biofuel consumption. It is produced from starch crops (wheat, rye, etc.) and sugar crops (sugar cane, sugar beet, etc.).
- **Biodiesel** is produced from oil seed crops (such as sunflower and soya) or from other sources (such as waste cooking oil and animal fats).
- **Biogas** is produced from different sources of organic waste (agricultural waste, sewage, food waste, etc.) and is used as a transport fuel in certain countries; in the EU, it has made a breakthrough in Sweden only.

Microalgae are another highly promising renewable and sustainable source of biofuel, but their potential has yet to be fully explored. The results of an ongoing Global Microalgae research study will be shared at the 19th edition of the International Conference on Biofuels in April 20XX.



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## PREPARING THE NEXT MEETING WITH THE COLLEGE OF COMMISSIONERS



From Sylvie Bruneau, Head of the BPWG  
To All members of the BPWG  
Date 15/02/20XX

Dear Members of the Working Group,

As you know, I have to prepare the upcoming meeting with the Commissioners and I have a number of concerns on which I would appreciate your opinion:

- My first concern is the state of the Biofuel Start-up Fund initiative, which the Commission set up two years ago to provide funding support to help Least Developed Countries overcome the initial financial hurdles involved in starting up biofuel production. As this initiative is currently struggling to yield tangible results, I would like to hear your thoughts on any potential obstructions before the Commissioners' meeting, so that we can advise them on the viability of this initiative.
- In addition, I worry that our non-EU trade partners will not be able to grow enough sugar crops to produce bioethanol at a sufficiently low cost to export to the EU at a competitive price. While it would be possible in theory to meet the EU biofuels targets using EU-produced biofuels alone, this would also be very likely to have serious effects on the EU agricultural markets (see the latest Commission report on the matter). Therefore, I would like you to (a) summarise the latest information regarding the costs and benefits of increasing EU bioethanol production and (b) advise the Commissioners on the volume of sugar crops that would need to be imported (and at what price) in order to safeguard EU agricultural markets.

I am looking forward to getting your input on these matters.

Kind regards,

**Sylvie Bruneau**



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar containing the URL [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/biofuels\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/biofuels_en.htm). The page header features the European Commission logo on the left and the text "ENVIRONMENT A Future with Biofuels" on the right. The main content area has a dark blue background with white text. It begins with an introductory paragraph, followed by three sections: "BIOFUEL PRODUCTION", "INTERNATIONAL TRADE", and "CONSUMPTION", each with a detailed paragraph. The final section is "MICROALGAE RESEARCH".

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

**ENVIRONMENT**  
A Future with Biofuels

Given the ever-increasing importance of finding more environmentally-friendly solutions and meeting the International Climate Agreement targets, the Commission sees great potential in the possibilities offered by biofuels. A number of decisions must still be taken in order to pave the way for a more sustainable future.

**BIOFUEL PRODUCTION**

In order to meet the 10% target set under the International Climate Agreement, it is clear that the EU's production capacity needs to increase. However, many EU farmers have insufficient knowledge of biofuels. They do not know how to produce biofuel from biomass and are unaware of the standards required. Therefore, the Commission started funding the retraining of EU farmers last year.

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

The Commission is convinced that a balanced approach is needed for future biofuel trade. The option of introducing some form of preferential trade system for biofuels is currently being investigated. The Commission also wants to provide support to strengthen the economies of Least Developed Countries (e.g. in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania and Uganda) by encouraging the production of biofuels in these countries, and therefore it is currently considering the option of renewing the Biofuel Start-Up Fund initiative.

**CONSUMPTION**

The Energy Taxation Directive makes it possible for EU Member States to grant tax reductions/exemptions on the final consumption of biofuels. These tax concessions are regarded as State aid, which may not be implemented without prior authorisation by the Commission. The Commission is now exploring the option of renewing the Energy Taxation Directive, which allows Member States to stimulate domestic biofuel use. Visit the European Foundation for Climate Action's website for more information on the Directive.

**MICROALGAE RESEARCH**

The Commission sees huge potential in microalgae technology. The Commission therefore proposes to set an individual quota for each Member State for the minimum percentage of biofuels they need to produce from microalgae feedstock. These quotas should encourage Member States to increase their efforts to reach the International Climate Agreement targets.