

Commitments made at the hearing of

MAROŠ ŠEFČOVIČ

Vice-President-designate Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight



The Vice-President-designate, Maroš Šefčovič, appeared before the European Parliament on 30 September 2019 to answer questions put by MEPs from the Committees on Legal Affairs, on Constitutional Affairs, on Industry, Research and Energy and on Petitions. During the hearing, he made a number of commitments which are highlighted in this document. These commitments refer to his portfolio, as described in the [mission letter](#) sent to him by Ursula von der Leyen, President-elect of the European Commission, including:

- Interinstitutional relations and better regulation; and
- Putting foresight at the heart of better policymaking.

Please note that the quotes included in this document only make reference to oral commitments made during the [hearing](#). The [verbatim report](#) of the public hearing is available on the [Commissioners-designate hearings websites](#). The Vice-President-designate was also sent some written questions in advance of the hearing to which he provided [written answers](#).



Interinstitutional relations

Strengthening the special partnership with the European Parliament

"It will be my priority to take our cooperation a step further into a special partnership based on trust amongst ourselves, as well as with our citizens. In particular, I will propose that our partnership extend beyond the legislative domain. It should apply more fully throughout the whole political cycle."

Enhancing cooperation in the agenda-setting stage

"[...] I foresee close-knit cooperation between our institutions in the agenda-setting stage. As you know, I should support the President-elect by developing the Commission Work Programme. This will be a matter of priority [...]. From day one, I will therefore work with my colleagues in the Commission as well as reach out to you, to political groups, and to the Conference of Committee Chairs in the Parliament. On this basis, we should also adopt a Joint Declaration on legislative priorities between our three institutions."

Commitment to act on Parliament's Article 225 TFEU resolutions on legislative initiatives

"[...] a Right of Initiative for the European Parliament that would mark the start of a new institutional era. As announced by the President-elect, when the Parliament, acting by a majority of its Members, requests a legislative proposal, the Commission will respond with a legislative act, in full respect of the proportionality, subsidiarity and better law-making principles."

"To deliver swiftly, I will propose that our institutions engage in the earliest phases of conception of parliamentary resolutions and work hand in hand at every stage in designing them. I want to put in place an early warning mechanism to ensure constant dialogue between the Commission and Parliament."

"Once a parliamentary resolution is adopted, I will ensure that the College of Commissioners holds a political discussion on the subject [...]."

Commitment to resume interinstitutional negotiations on Parliament's right of inquiry

"[...] I will encourage to revive discussions on pending institutional files, in particular on the Right of Inquiry. I have full understanding for the Parliament's attempts to review the Regulation. As the discussion has been stalled over institutional and legal concerns, I stand ready to engage in trilateral discussions."

Encouraging the Council to participate in the Framework Agreement of 2010

"[...] what I will do would be to approach the Council again. Here we have a Framework Agreement, let us look at it to see [...] what needs to be updated, and how can we get the Council to cooperate closer with us, also on the basis of this Agreement."

Parliament's role in the Conference on the Future of Europe

"[...] as regards the Conference on the Future of Europe, we clearly have to work on it together. The President-elect was very clear that she is absolutely ready to work in close cooperation with the European Parliament, and she is ready to accept that the European Parliament and the Members of the European Parliament will lead this conference."

Transparency

International negotiations

"Regarding international negotiations, I will work with the relevant Commissioners to ensure that the European Parliament is regularly briefed, notably before major events and at key stages of international negotiations."

Increasing transparency in the Council

"It is important that there should be a high degree of transparency [...]. What I want to do is to appeal to the Council to discuss this issue with the Ombudsman."

Transparency Register

"[...] when it comes to the transparency register I think what we need to do is complete this effort. That means finding how the European Parliament and the Council can be part of this effort and I am ready to engage fully, to discuss it with you and look for the best possible solution."

Comitology - Register on expert groups

"We are trying to put together the register on expert groups and the register on comitology. [...] I hope that next year together we can launch it and you will see if that new tool works to your satisfaction."

Petitions

Pledge to improve Commission's handling of petitions

"As input from citizens to detect and, where appropriate, to act upon breaches of EU law, I will work closely with the Committee on Petitions"

throughout the year and of course, attend its presentation of the annual report. Moreover, should we see a significant number of petitions on one topic, I will encourage the presence of the Commissioners responsible to discuss what can be done to remedy the concerns expressed."

Timely responses from the Commission

"If [...] you will just send us really the petitions for which the Commission can do something, and is responsible for, I'll do my utmost that they will get a good answer in three months and you will have the Commissioners ready to be in your committee."

Better Regulation

Commitment to adopt the Multiannual Programme

"I will [...] propose to adopt the first ever Multiannual Programme as foreseen in the 2016 Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making."

Coordinating the Commission's work on Better Regulation

"[...] I want to work with you on Better Regulation and its effective and transparent implementation. Our objective should be to adopt and implement a future-proof legislation that can stand the test of time, which does not create unnecessary burden, and delivers results at minimum cost. To this end, I want to advance the Better Regulation agenda further."

Relations with National Parliaments and respect for the principle of subsidiarity

"In the first two years of the mandate, I plan to visit all national parliaments to better value their important work in relation to active subsidiarity and proportionality, and I will discuss with them our Multiannual Programming."

"This is the concept of active subsidiarity. We should look for ways in which we can consult, or bring into our European debates, the national parliaments, regional authorities, or – if they exist – regional parliaments, earlier on."

"What I am explaining to our colleagues – and I am ready to work on it even more in the political sense – is that once we in the Commission see that the proposal we might table would face the opposition of more than 50% of the national parliaments, we are not even going to put it on the table."

Alleviating the regulatory burden for people and for business

Applying the new 'One In, One Out' principle

"I will apply the 'one in, one out' principle, [...], meaning that every legislative proposal with a new burden for the users should be offset by an equivalent reduction elsewhere. This is particularly key for small and medium enterprises, and I will make sure that this new principle is applied in all areas. However, [...] I say a clear 'no' to a mechanical approach and to endangering our high standards, especially social and environmental."

Commitment to work closely with the Member States to avoid additional red tape

"I also aim to engage more actively with the Member States to ensure that, when transposing EU legislation, they do not add an unnecessary administrative burden."

"The EU institutions should be warned when a Member State introduces measures going beyond EU legislation requirements, and I will involve the Commission Representations in this, and I will make sure that the Members of the European Parliament are properly informed as well."

Alleviating overregulation for SMEs

"I'm ready to work with you on this to make sure that our SME sector is satisfied with the new changes we are going to introduce."

REFIT Platform

Rebranding the REFIT Platform into a 'Fit for the Future Platform'

"I will propose that the REFIT Platform is rebranded to a 'Fit for the Future Platform'. I am convinced that our legislation should be for instance, fit for e-government and digital use. Regularly, I will report to Parliament on the platform's findings."

Including Artificial Intelligence in the REFIT Platform

"[...] we also want to bring in new rules on how to develop artificial intelligence in Europe. But, at the same time, I also want to assure you that we will approach all the tackling of the administrative burden with the utmost care, with sensitivity, and as a top priority and that in no way are we going to drop our standards."

"[...] we have to make absolutely sure that our data is well protected, that our fundamental rights are respected, and that we know who is liable, who is responsible, and that humans must be always in control."

Representing the Commission in the General Affairs Council and in discussions on cross-cutting issues in the Parliament

"I would like to be equally close to the European Parliament and to the Council because I believe that it helps to translate sometimes the grievances of the European Parliament towards the Council and again explain the Council's position to the European Parliament [...]."

Strengthening evidence-based policymaking

A Common Evidence Register

"I [...] want to safeguard the quality of evidence and to reinforce its transparency. In practice, I will explore with the other institutions the setting up of a Common Evidence Register – open to the public – where we will share the evidence used in our legislative proposals."

"It would be [...] under your control, it would be interinstitutional [...]."

Improving Commission's Impact Assessments

"We will have to bring in many new elements to modernise the impact assessments and, therefore, we would like to combine it as much as possible with foresight [...]."

"When it comes to the impact assessment, we clearly need to improve the quality and transparency even further."

Enhancing Public Consultations

"[...] we will need to take out public consultations much more to our countries, to our regions, talk to professional associations, to make sure that we will have a better response in the future."

Supporting the Regulatory Scrutiny Board

"What I want to do is to support them (the external experts) [...], to give them more resources to do their

work even better, and also to use the potential of the Joint Research Centre on some of the issues where we would need more scientific evidence [...]."

Strategic foresight

Pledge to build foresight capacity

"[...] I will propose that we strive for world-class anticipatory governance, building foresight capacity inside the Commission to serve our policy goals, and my intention is to mobilise the resources of the Joint Research Centre as a crucial enabler."

Setting up the EU Network of Strategic Foresight

"We need to set up an EU Network of Strategic Foresight, bringing together the best of EU institutions and the Member States."

Producing a yearly Foresight Report

"[...] the President-elect's mission letter gives me mandate to prepare a yearly Foresight Report on the most relevant emerging trends. This Report will inform the State of the Union speech and our programming exercises. Based on it, I will champion strategic debates in the European Parliament as well as at the European Council. I want us to agree on transformative megatrends that we need to approach strategically and develop our long-term vision for Europe [...]."

Coordinating the Commission's work on the European Battery Alliance

Linking the European Battery Alliance to other strategic sectors

"[...] I would like to use these foresight responsibilities to come to you and tell you in which other strategic sectors we should do the same and establish such an industrial pact, so that we can really keep up pace with our major global competitors."

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Manuscript completed as of October 2019; Date of publication: November 2019
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This document is available on the internet at: www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses

Print ISBN 978-92-846-5550-2 | doi: 10.2861/186654 | QA-02-19-778-EN-C
PDF ISBN 978-92-846-5549-6 | doi: 10.2861/376032 | QA-02-19-778-EN-N