



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009–2014

Committee on Budget

Monday, 21 December 2009

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Hearing with Janusz Lewandowski, Commissioner-designate for Financial Programming and Budget

Please find enclosed the written answers sent by Janusz Lewandowski.

The Secretariat

**ANSWERS TO EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COMMISSIONER -DESIGNATE**

Janusz LEWANDOWSKI

(Budget and Financial Programming)

General competence, European commitment and personal independence

- 1. What aspects of your personal qualifications and experience are particularly relevant for becoming Commissioner and promoting the European general interest, particularly in the area you would be responsible for? What motivates you? What guarantees of independence are you able to give the European Parliament and how would you make sure that any past, current or future activities you carry out could not cast doubt on the performance of you duties within the Commission?**

Before being involved in the European project, I proved my commitment to European values being deeply involved in the movement to restore Polish sovereignty, true democracy and the rule of law, all of these being at the core of the European Union. I have also given my personal input to Poland's way to the market economy, acting as minister and member of national Parliament at crucial moments of the transition.

Since the mid 90s', I have played an active role in the process of Polish integration to the EU, working in the European Committee of the Polish Parliament that was responsible for the transposition of the "acquis communautaire" into Polish law and for monitoring the EU accession process. In June 2003, I was nominated as one of the Polish observers to the European Parliament, fully exploiting this opportunity to gain an initial understanding of the institutional machinery of the EU.

In 2004 I was elected to the European Parliament and immediately entrusted with the challenging responsibility of chair of the EP's Budgetary Committee for two and a half years (later as deputy chair), which gave me a unique insight into the formal and informal rules of the budgetary procedure. This "learning by doing" also taught me the value of the "triangular" inter-institutional cooperation: European Parliament-Council-Commission. The experience and professional skills I gained both in Poland and in the European Parliament give me the confidence to feel that I am prepared to serve efficiently as a Commissioner.

I am fully aware of the obligations foreseen in the Treaty and I hereby declare my solemn commitment to respect Article 17(3) of the TEU and Article 245 of the TFEU, regarding the basic guarantees of independence, impartiality and dignity of the Commissioner's office.

I will comply with the ethical standards set out in the Treaty and reinforced by the Code of conduct for Commissioners. My Declaration of interests will remain publicly accessible and updated.

Management of the portfolio and cooperation with the European Parliament and its committees

2. How would you assess your role as a Member of the College of Commissioners? In what respect would you consider yourself responsible and accountable to the Parliament for your actions and for those of your departments?

My understanding of the College of Commissioners is that of a team working together to ensure the coherence of the European policies in which each member contributes with her/his initiatives and all share a collective responsibility, once decisions are adopted. My particular responsibility covers the portfolio of "Financial Programming and Budget". Firstly, I will offer active leadership and direction in the portfolio-related matters (see my answers to point 4 and 5). Secondly, in my "horizontal" role I will assist fellow Commissioners in ensuring that EU policies have the resources required and their implementation complies with the principle of sound financial management.

The political accountability of the College of Commissioners to the European Parliament is the cornerstone of the democratic structure of the entire EU institutional set-up. Without prejudice to the principle of the Commission's collegiality, I feel responsible and accountable for any action in my domain, both at the level of my personal duties and that of my services. I firmly believe that my parliamentary background will facilitate the adequate cooperation with Parliament as one of the arms of the budgetary authority - strengthened under the Lisbon Treaty. The modified budgetary procedure introduced by the Lisbon Treaty will offer a prime opportunity in the months to come to firmly establish a dialogue based on openness, transparency, mutual trust, regular reporting and two-way exchange of information. In order to attain the desired quality of cooperation and to allow the EP to exercise its democratic oversight effectively I intend to be fully accessible to the Budgetary Committee.

3. What specific commitments are you prepared to make in terms of enhanced transparency, increased cooperation and effective follow-up to Parliament's positions and requests for legislative initiatives, also in the light of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon? In relation to planned initiatives or ongoing procedures, are you ready to provide Parliament with information and documents on equal footing with the Council?

In his political guidelines, President Barroso encourages Commissioners to upgrade to a new level the special partnership with the European Parliament, indicating concrete means to improve the flow of information. I fully subscribe to the principle of enhanced partnership. With regard to transparency and legislative co-ordination, this means the full implementation of the Framework Agreement on relations between the EP and the Commission, addressing more specifically the issue of flow of information (including the handling of confidential

information, provision of documents and follow-up to Parliament's requests) and my serious commitment to the Inter-institutional Agreement on Better Law-making. The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, and the subsequent modification of the budgetary procedure, makes the consensus building around future initiatives even more important. Furthermore, I support the efforts of the Commission towards greater transparency vis-à-vis the general public such as the "European Transparency Initiative" launched by the outgoing Commission in particular regarding the publication of beneficiaries of EU funds as citizens have a right to know where the EU public funds are going.

My hearing provides the first opportunity to establish a good working relationship with the European Parliament, based on mutual trust. As declared above, making me available to attend EP meetings and establishing direct communication with the members of the Budgetary Committee should cement an effective inter-institutional dialogue.

Policy-related questions

4. What are the three main priorities you intend to pursue as part of your proposed portfolio, taking into account, where relevant, the financial, economic and social crisis and concerns related to sustainable development?

Underlining once more my desire to improve cooperation with the EP - my "consensus building priority" - I intend to adopt an ambitious forward looking agenda, focusing on the following three points:

1) Ensure a smooth adoption of the 2011 budget and beyond in accordance with the rules set out by the new institutional framework deriving from the Lisbon Treaty. A new Conciliation Committee will be established and both arms of the budgetary authority will have an equal say on all components of the budget. This implies a modification of procedure as well as a modified negotiating culture due to the single reading process. In accordance with the Commission's role as an honest broker as confirmed by the Lisbon Treaty, I will take all the necessary initiatives in order to secure a timely and sensible agreement on the annual budget of the EU.

2) Actively manage the current Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) in order to improve the quality of implementation of the annual budget and to respond to the forthcoming challenges. The new Commission will examine whether there is a need to adjust the current MFF in its report on the functioning of the Inter-institutional Agreement (IIA). Margins, in particular of Headings 1a and 4, under all ceilings of the MFF, are very tight. These margins and the flexibility foreseen in the IIA may make it difficult to meet future challenges, such as international public financial support to developing countries to help them tackle climate change. The outcome of the Copenhagen negotiations might require specific adjustment to the current MFF in order to enable the EU's prompt, adequate and coordinated action, still within the current programming period.

3) Facilitate an inter-institutional consensus on and a smooth adoption of the next financial package, including a new, reformed Multiannual Financial Framework. The difficult post-crisis fiscal situation of the Member States makes it even more necessary to focus the EU budget on key priorities to help the Union meet our well-identified challenges: strengthening EU competitiveness in a global economy, climate change and securing safe energy supply

sources. These political choices will need to be translated into a balanced package that makes it possible to simultaneously consolidate the traditional policies and to respond to future challenges, while maintaining sound budgetary discipline.

5. What are the specific legislative and non-legislative initiatives you intend to put forward, and according to what timetable? What specific commitments can you make regarding in particular the committees' priorities and requests attached hereto which would fall within your portfolio? How would you personally ensure the good quality of legislative proposals?

With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the provisions of the current IIA will need to be transposed into a legal instrument and adjusted where necessary. A legislative package, consisting of a Council Regulation on the MFF (subject to Parliamentary consent) and a new, residual IIA should be presented by the Commission as soon as possible. It is unlikely that this package will be in place before the start of the 2011 budgetary procedure. Therefore, it may be that the rules of the current IIA will continue to apply as well as the transitional rules for the budgetary procedure, including the rules for the Conciliation committee which will be agreed before the end of April 2010.

In parallel, the Commission has committed to present a fast-track revision of the Financial Regulation concerned specifically with the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) (in order to take into account its sui generis nature) and all other Lisbon-Treaty-related issues (in order to take into account the new budgetary procedure and the new adoption procedure for transfers in particular, and to introduce new provisions concerning the control and audit obligations of the Member States in the implementation of the budget).

Moreover, next year, the Commission needs to adopt the report on the functioning of the IIA, accompanied, if necessary, by appropriate proposals in time for the Draft 2011 Budget. By that time, several pending or potential issues will have been clarified (such as the potential EU budget contribution to an international climate agreement in Copenhagen and the budgetary impact of elements related to the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, in particular the EEAS).

Furthermore, it has also been intentionally left up to the new Commissioner to submit the Budget Review Communication reflecting in particular the priorities set out in the "EU 2020" strategy to be presented by the Commission and discussed at the Spring European Council. The Budget Review will build on the results of the extensive consultation undertaken by the previous Commission and on the important contributions submitted in that context by the European Parliament.

The Commission should also present in May 2010 the triennial revision of the Financial Regulation and its implementing rules. The main priorities are simplification, efficiency and flexibility of rules, notably grants and delivery mechanisms; the use of modern and efficient instruments, in particular in relation with the European Investment Bank and the use of public-private partnerships; the highest protection of the EU budget (sound financial management) and a wider use of the concept of Tolerable Risk of Error. With a view to put forward ambitious and quality proposals, the Commission has already launched a public

consultation and hopes that contributions will help make the financial rules clearer and simpler.

The Commission will present proposals for the next financial framework in the first Semester 2011 in accordance with the IIA.

Should any candidate country accede to the EU before the end of 2013, the 2007-2013 financial framework will need to be adjusted for enlargement according to point 29 of the IIA.

Finally, it will also be necessary to ensure that the financial and accounting systems remain at the adequate level, necessary to support the above mentioned institutional modifications, so that the Commission will continue to be able to receive a clean audit opinion on its accounts.