

Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection
The Chairman

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Jerzy Buzek
Chairman
Conference of Committee Chairs
European Parliament
PHS 8B46

Dear Chairman,

In accordance with Rule 118 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection held an exchange of views on Monday, 6 October 2014 with Mr Ansip, Commissioner-designate, who, subject to the positive outcome of the nomination procedure, will be the Vice President of the Commission responsible for the Digital Single Market.

Prior to the hearing, Parliament had sent the Commissioner-designate a list of written questions to which he replied in writing on 25 September 2014.

Mr Ansip opened the hearing by making a statement in which he referred to the following:

- the transformative nature of the information and communication technologies, affecting all parts of the economy and society; the need to place the digital economy at the heart of the EU's efforts to restore growth, foster innovation and create new jobs by progressively transforming the single market into a digital one;
- his intention to put people at the forefront and to ensure that they can trust in the security of the digital economy and enjoy confidence that private data is protected and secure;
- the requirement to stimulate investment in new technologies to ensure the attractiveness of the EU as a production, innovation and investment location, both within the Single Market and globally;
- his intention to make full use of the proposed co-operative re-design of the new Commission in order to bring together all necessary policy initiatives and to "hard-wire" the digital perspective into the evolution of all relevant policies of the EU;
- his commitment to constructive dialogue with Parliament, in particular involving Parliament early on in legislative procedures and ensuring a timely consideration and follow-up of Parliament resolutions;

With regard to issues falling within the remit of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, Mr Ansip answered questions and made commitments on the following subjects:

- to steer and foster cooperation among relevant Commissioners, overcoming the prevailing narrow sector approaches and working towards a consensual, unified, horizontal policy approach;
- to ensure wide stakeholder consultation and rigorous impact assessments before presenting new policy initiatives, based on an agreed set of minimum standards and principles in order to improve the overall quality of the EU legislation;
- to overcome market fragmentation and to develop a holistic strategy to remove the obstacles, technical standards and interoperability, particularly for SMEs and consumers, in order to realise the growth potential of the digital single market, to overcome the digital divide and to avoid the EU losing its global competitiveness;
- to foster the growth of e-Commerce including through decisive action against geo-blocking and by working towards an integrated delivery market;
- to invest in digital skills and the digital workforce;
- to modernise consumer rules for digital purchases, ensuring that consumers are equally well protected online and offline and that they can easily shop online without borders; to address unfair commercial practices and to ensure adequate levels of data protection within the online market place as a basis of trust in the digital economy;
- to foster trust of consumers and citizens and strengthen security and protection from cyber-threats; to strengthen the EU's capacity to respond to such threats; and to such end work towards the swift adoption of the proposed Directive on Network and Information security;
- to continue working towards a timely adoption of the proposed Telecoms Single Market package, promoting consumer rights (in particular the abolishment of roaming charges and measures to secure the European Parliament definition of net neutrality in legislation) and infrastructure investment;
- to improve implementation of the European emergency number 112 ensuring better accuracy and faster response times;
- to make full use of digital technologies to drive public sector modernisation, work towards paperless government and make Europe more joined up; to encourage the Commission to lead by example by, inter alia, accepting e-invoices and e-procurement by 2015 and e-signatures by the end of the Commission mandate;
- to prepare a targeted proposal on the reform of copyright, taking into account new technologies, new uses and new market conditions, supporting innovation, fair remuneration for creators and better consumer choice beyond national borders;

Before the end of the hearing, the Commissioner-designate made a brief closing statement in which he reaffirmed that the digital single market is at the heart of fostering growth, jobs and investment in the EU. He stressed his commitment to creating an area where individuals

and businesses can, in a trusted environment, seamlessly access and exercise online activities under conditions of fair competition and a high level of consumer and data protection. Finally, Mr Ansip committed to working in close partnership with the European Parliament, in a spirit of mutual trust and transparency,

ITRE Committee opinion

The ITRE Committee welcomes the engagement of Commissioner-designate Ansip in relation to the information society, ICT networks and services and their security, and telecoms infrastructure. In particular it welcomes his undertaking to push for completion of the telecoms single market, for abolishing roaming charges, for greater harmonisation on spectrum allocation, and for enshrining net neutrality in law, in collaboration with the Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society.

Mr Ansip also recognised that the digital economy is at the heart of the EU's efforts to restore growth, foster innovation and create new jobs; that ICT is not only a sector of the economy but the foundation of a modern innovative society; and that it is crucial to stimulate investment in digital infrastructures, in particular broadband, and new technologies such as cloud computing.

The ITRE Committee agrees with the emphasis that Mr Ansip placed on cyber-security and the importance of trust in the internet and the digital economy, and takes note of his undertaking to coordinate the Commission's global efforts on the open internet and on internet governance.

LIBE Committee opinion

The Vice-President designate has shown his aptitude to become a member of the College of Commissioners and is qualified to carry out the particular duties he has been assigned. The LIBE Committee takes note of the statement of the Vice-President that the adoption of the data protection package is a top priority and a precondition for him and for the Commission for the development of the digital agenda; in this regards he commits to ensure a robust and consistent level of protection for online and offline activities which will not lower current EU standards. The LIBE Committee supports this and considers that the Vice-President designate could have been more precise and that in his replies he often lacked concrete proposals, in particular on how the first reading position of the Parliament would be supported by the Commission. As regards the Safe Harbour, the LIBE Committee notices that Vice-President designate has admitted that the Safe Harbour is not safe. While stating that suspending Safe Harbour is an option, the Vice-President designate failed to provide a concrete indication for a Commission decision on the suspension. The LIBE Committee urges the Vice-President to decide on this matter without delay. The Committee also notes that supporting open source software and systems will be an essential aspect of his policy to establish a digital single market. Taking into account of the involvement of several Commissioners at different levels in the areas of the competence of the LIBE Committee, this Committee considers it necessary for the Vice-President to work very closely with the

Commissioner for Justice, the Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society and the First Vice-President for Fundamental Rights in order to ensure consistency of the policies and actions of the Commission, in particular as data protection and fundamental rights are integral parts of his policy remit. Mr Ansip is invited to report back directly to the LIBE Committee on the matters under its responsibility once the Commission is confirmed.

Overall assessment

The Commissioner-designate demonstrated his professional attitude and far-reaching experience in the policy domain. Mr Ansip convinced the members of his skills as a politician and an articulate communicator, with a clear and political vision for the future development of the Digital Single Market.

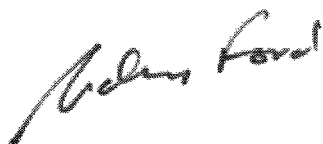
He displayed a good command of the diverse range of policies for which he will be responsible and put a notable emphasis on enhancing the benefits of the Digital Single Market for both citizens and businesses. IMCO Members were reassured that Mr. Ansip made convincing political commitments.

On the basis of the written answers and the responses of the Members present at the hearing, as well as the comments made by our committees' coordinators, who met after the hearing under our chairmanship, we hereby state the following:

The IMCO Coordinators concluded by consensus that Mr Ansip is qualified both to be a member of the College of Commissioners and to carry out the specific tasks assigned to him.

We would be grateful if you could bring this assessment to the attention of the Conference of Presidents.

Yours sincerely,



Vicky Ford