



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009–2014

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

4.1.2010

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Hearing with László ANDOR, Commissioner-designate for (Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion))

Please find enclosed the written answers sent by László ANDOR.

The Secretariat

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United in diversity

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

László ANDOR

(Employment and Social Affairs)

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 your duties within the Commission?**

My entire professional life has been dedicated to European integration and I see the portfolio attributed to me as crucial to the development of a fair and modern labour and social agenda for Europe.

As regards my professional qualifications, my background as an economist, a lecturer at various universities in Europe and elsewhere, advisor to various governmental and non-governmental bodies, and as a member of the Board of Directors of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development have enriched my understanding of the many different angles of the most pressing issues in society. Moreover, this experience has taught me workable and constructive ways and means of reconciling the differing and often conflicting interests that parties concerned may well have in a given matter, a precious asset when working in a European Institution.

My sole motivation is to work for the general European interest. In other words, to guarantee that the Commission's actions are geared towards the citizens' and workers' common and fundamental needs. What we are now experiencing is by far the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression and it is well expected that labour market will take longer to recover than we had hoped, with severe social consequences. To alleviate these negative effects, I am fully committed to doing my utmost to stop rising unemployment and to help the jobless return to work, thereby preventing further poverty and exclusion. I believe that, in partnership with the European Parliament, we will be able to help the Member States achieve higher levels of quality employment, a stronger and more inclusive labour market and greater social cohesion.

When it comes to the issue of independence, I am fully aware of the Treaties' requirements and the institutional duty of the Commission to promote the general interest of the Union. I will not be influenced by any government or other bodies, and will avoid any action incompatible with my obligations under the Treaties (particularly in Article 17.3 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 245 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). I will fully observe both the letter and the spirit of these rules and those of the Code of Conduct for Commissioners. To make sure that none of my past, current or future activities cast any doubt on the performance of my duties within the Commission I have completed and will make publicly accessible the Declaration of interests foreseen by the Code of conduct for Commissioners. This will be regularly updated should the conditions change. The fact that I represented four countries – Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Croatia - in the EBRD is a further proof of my independence.

While staying fully in line with the above legal rules, I will consult widely in my work, so that all the interested parties, and in particular those immediately affected by Commission decisions, can contribute to their preparation. I believe that this guarantees that the European general interest is fully met alongside each and every decision in which I will be involved.

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?

Among the five key challenges confronting Europe today, as set out by the President of the Commission in his 'Political guidelines for the next Commission', fighting unemployment and reinforcing social cohesion comes at a high place. I fully agree with this. In fact, due to the growing importance of globalisation, the ever more explicit linking of economic and social policies both at European and national levels, as well as the failure of financial markets that gave rise to a global economic crisis and an avalanche of job losses and worsening social conditions, the Commission has to exploit its full potential within the area of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. That being said, I am confident that I will be able to play a major role in developing a modern labour and social agenda for Europe, as part of the EU 2020 strategy that will enable the development of dynamic, sustainable and inclusive economies and labour markets. I will do that as a pro-active and integral member of the College of Commissioners ensuring the coherence and consistency of Commission policies. I will have to work very closely in particular with Vice-President designate for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship on issues such as non-discrimination and gender equality, but also with the President and other Commissioners on matters such as migration and integration, economic affairs or education and skills.

Regarding responsibility and accountability to the Parliament, the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the Commission provides in unambiguous terms that "without prejudice to the principle of Commission collegiality, each Member of the Commission shall take political responsibility for action in the field of which he or she is in charge". Moreover, the Code of Conduct for Commissioners states that Commissioners are responsible in front of the College for their own, as well as their services' activities. I fully

subscribe to these rules.

In more pragmatic terms, I am genuinely interested in building and maintaining an open and continuous dialogue with the European Parliament, its committees and individual Members on a regular basis. This should be done on the grounds of transparency, mutual trust and collegiality in order to facilitate the Parliament's role in exercising its democratic supervision effectively. I guarantee that my services, including my private office will work fully in line with this approach.

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 an equal footing with the Council?

I am fully committed to cooperating closely with the European Parliament and I fully understand the significance of transparency and the need for open channels of communication. I fully subscribe to these general principles.

Transparency, to start with, is fundamental. It enables citizens and other interested parties to be involved more closely in the European institutions' work while ensuring a higher level of efficiency and good governance. In this context, the Commission has improved transparency for the general public, for example through consultations to the policy-making process and by disclosing relevant documents. These efforts need to be maintained. Beyond this general transparency policy I also undertake to implement fully the provisions of the Framework Agreement on greater openness to improve transparency and enhance the flow of information between Parliament and Commission.

I believe that the increased cooperation between our two institutions is crucial to guaranteeing the functioning of the European institutional system in the interest of citizens.

Also, I am keen to establish a close working relationship with the Parliamentary Committee on Employment and Social Affairs. I will make myself available to its Members and attend committee meetings on a regular basis while establishing proper channels to facilitate communication between my services and the Committee.

Further, I commit myself to fully observe the Framework Agreement regarding the need to ensure equal treatment in the Commission's relations with Council and Parliament under the ordinary legislative procedure. In more pragmatic terms, I believe that one of the essential features of the co-operation between the different European institutions is the constant dialogue and exchange of information. Should this not be the case, our common objective to promote general European interest through efficient cooperation cannot be fulfilled. This notwithstanding the specific Treaty provisions on the role of the European social partners in legislative process in the employment and social affairs field.

Finally, I also intend to keep the European Parliament closely informed about the initiatives that I will be promoting over the coming years. For instance, I would be particularly keen to

come to you and hear your views in the framework of the consultation that the Commission intends to launch on the future of pensions in the course of 2010. Similarly, I will be looking for your opinion on the future employment part of the integrated guidelines that will form the backbone of the next European Employment Strategy as part of the future EU 2020 Strategy. In more general terms, I plan to present regularly, for instance every two months, to members of the EMPL Committee the state of play regarding the dossiers with a particular topicality. This would allow us to construct a regular dialogue between the Commission and the Parliament on employment and social issues

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?

My top priority will be to tackle the consequences of the crisis on the employment and social situation in the EU. This means preventing further job losses and creating jobs. It also means addressing social exclusion and the concerns of the most vulnerable. The EU has reacted promptly to the crisis in a coordinated manner through the European Economic Recovery Plan. It is my intention to build on what has been done and, under the EU 2020 strategy, I plan to work with the Member States to coordinate their actions and combine our efforts.

Beyond that, we need to strive for dynamic, sustainable and inclusive economies and labour markets in the long-run. The crisis offers us the opportunity to develop a competitive and sustainable economy that efficiently deals with environmental and social policy challenges. New sources of growth, such as the green economy and healthcare and social services need to be considered. It is with this in mind that I will pursue the “flexicurity” agenda and the promotion of training and life-long learning as a reform pathway towards modern labour markets. I also intend to support Member States’ recovery efforts by making full use of the European Social Fund and the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund. We will hopefully have the new micro-financing facility soon too. In my initiatives and actions, I am determined to work with the full involvement of the European Parliament.

Another priority area will be to promote policies to support vulnerable groups and address the root causes of poverty and social exclusion, including issues such as child poverty and multiple discrimination, or the alarming development in the situation of many Roma people. In partnership with the Member States, the European Parliament and other stakeholders, I will ensure that the common principles on active inclusion are fully implemented and further promoted. 2010, the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion is an important opportunity to raise citizens' awareness in this respect.

In the wake of the crisis, national welfare systems have contributed to stabilising the economy and to supporting vulnerable people. To address the challenges facing these systems, I will also deal with the problems of an ageing society as a matter of priority, more specifically with the rising number of pensioners and increased health and care costs, and I will continue to work with the Member States, the European Parliament and Social Partners to improve the adequacy and sustainability of social protection systems. This means encouraging people to remain active longer, and ensure that they have the resources to grow old in dignity.

I will give great attention to the proper implementation of the *acquis* in the social area. This means monitoring the transposition and implementation of existing Directives, providing support and guidance for their correct implementation, and taking legal action vis-à-vis Member States as appropriate. I will also ensure that, within the Commission's integrated approach to impact assessment, all new initiatives involve an in-depth assessment of social impacts that is sound, robust and evidence-based.

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?

The most pressing challenge Europe faces in the coming years is to combat massive and long-term unemployment. Joblessness is set to hit double digit figures in 2010 and to bring employment levels back to levels of 2008 means rethinking the European Employment Strategy in the context of an unprecedented economic crisis. This is where I will focus my main efforts. My intention is to contribute significantly to the EU 2020 strategy and, as a consequence, I expect an intense social dialogue at EU level. This will not be easy - the challenge will be to find the right policy mix, which implies political compromises from all sides. What we need at this stage is not a shopping list, but rather a common understanding and agreement on the necessary steps to take.

"Flexicurity", if rightly interpreted, can be the guiding concept for the further development of labour markets. This is why it must continue to be the cornerstone for modernising European labour markets and social security systems, bearing in mind that our ultimate goal should be the creation of competitive, sustainable and inclusive economies. An indispensable component of this will need to be a forward-looking skills policy. We will need new jobs which will require new skills. In this context, active labour market policies, lifelong learning, training and tailored support for jobseekers are vital, and reflecting on New Skills for New Jobs is the conceptual work we need to do first.

Following a thorough and wide-ranging impact assessment process, I will consider the options for a comprehensive review of the Working Time Directive, and if necessary put a proposal for adoption by the Commission in due time. Due to specific provisions of the Treaty, I will first have to give the European social partners the possibility to express their views and let them choose whether they wish to initiate a social dialogue. In line with President Barroso's commitment, I will take initiatives to improve the implementation of the Posting of Workers Directive and strive in particular to make the obligations of national authorities, companies and workers clearer.

I will also propose adaptations of the EU *acquis* in the area of health and safety at work to respond to emerging risks, seek ways how to prevent work-related musculoskeletal disorders and to improve the protection of workers against the risks arising from exposure to electromagnetic fields.

I will launch a reflection on a modern service sector, efficient social protection systems and

active policies for the integration of immigrants, in close cooperation with the Commissioner designate for Home Affairs. This may result in the launch of specific initiatives and, linking up with the EU 2020 Strategy, I will look at the labour-market and social aspects of immigration. In line with President Barroso's political guidelines, I will launch a Green Paper on developing a European Framework for adequate and sustainable pensions and a reflection on public and social services, thus recognising their importance in the European model of society. Also, a debate on the changing workplace and its implications will be launched, in close cooperation with the Commissioner responsible for the Digital Agenda.

It is also my intention in close cooperation with Vice-President designate for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, to promote Fundamental Rights, in particular bearing in mind the Charter's provisions.

Lastly, and keeping in mind that we need to have the tools and resources to live up to our ambitions, I will see to it that the new generation of financial instruments responds more effectively to medium and longer-term challenges.