



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

7.1.2010

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Hearing with John DALLI, Commissioner-designate for Health and Consumer Policy

Please find enclosed the written answers sent by John DALLI.

The Secretariat

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

John DALLI

(Health and Consumer Policy)

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? Which 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?**

I have served as Minister in the cabinet of the Maltese Government for almost two decades, having held a number of portfolios including the Minister for the Economy, Finance, Foreign Affairs and currently for Social Policy. This has given me an overview of all policies that are also relevant at the European level. In these twenty years, Malta was first negotiating entry into the European Union, which provided me with the occasion to familiarize myself in some detail with the *acquis communautaire*. Subsequently, new policies were worked out within the evolving European framework.

My most recent role as Minister responsible for Social policy, which includes Health, has enabled me to understand in more depth the problems faced by citizens in their everyday lives as well as their aspirations for a healthier life.

Having served in a national capacity on such a range of issues, building on my professional qualifications in management, having always taken a special interest in promoting innovation and collective co-creation of change, I feel I have the necessary tools and am ready to put my experience at the disposal of the European Union.

The portfolio that has been assigned to me is very broad and my experience as a Minister in a smaller country gives me two strengths to handle this. First, I am more accustomed to very broad responsibilities. Secondly, I have learned how to compromise and co-operate with a range of interlocutors and among a variety of issues. My motivation has always been and will continue to be the need to ensure a better life for our citizens. People must remain the focus of our policy formation and execution.

I have completed the Declaration of Interests foreseen by the Code of Conduct for Commissioners and this is subject to scrutiny not only by Members of this House but also by the public. I will fully respect the obligations foreseen in the Treaty and will not accept instructions from any government or any other body. I will fully respect the Code of Conduct. I also solemnly declare that I will refrain from any action incompatible with my duties as European Commissioner and will not engage in any other occupation, whether gainful or not during my term of office. I also undertake to act with integrity and discretion as regards the acceptance of certain appointments or benefits after my mandate and to comply with the highest ethical standards during my term of office.

I also clearly commit myself to inform the President of the Commission of any situation which might involve a conflict of interests in the performance of my official duties.

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?

I am a firm believer in the power of dialogue and co-operation and have always striven for reform and compromise managing to obtain consensus on major reforms. Acting within the College, I intend to continue in this vein. My objective will be to bring the benefits of my portfolio to the European citizen. To do this I am aware of the need to build strong links of co-operation with my colleagues in the College. The areas of responsibility assigned to me necessitate such close co-operation if we are to unlock the potential benefits for Europe as a whole.

I will take on my political responsibility for the activities of my services in these important areas mindful of the need to respect the principle of collegiality that underpins the functioning of the Commission and its College of Commissioners.

This spirit of dialogue does not stop with the Commission. It is a thread that will also guide my relations with the European Parliament. I am committed to ensuring a constructive political dialogue with the Parliament and its respective Committees. I believe that we should build policies together and not fight over them. This becomes vital also considering that all legislative initiatives within my area involve the ordinary legislative procedure. All this requires the establishment of an open and transparent relationship based on mutual trust, regular reporting and exchange of information that will allow the European Parliament to exercise its democratic oversight effectively. I will strive to achieve such a dialogue also because I am a firm believer in the value of your opinions and the strength of your arguments.

It also goes without saying that the relations I cultivate with my services and the numerous officials who serve the Commission will be based on loyalty, trust, and transparency. I will be guided by the necessity of having a two-way information flow and establish a relationship of mutual assistance with the services for which I am to be responsible.

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?

As a Parliamentarian since 1987, I understand and fully appreciate the importance of transparency, and accountability, of the executive towards the Parliament. The establishment of a sound inter-institutional relationship of co-operation is key to driving our important policies forward. I view the Parliament as the gatekeeper for strengthened legitimacy and accountability. You are the primary voice of the citizen and you are the vehicle which best carries their concerns and aspirations. Building such a relationship will further contribute to the principles of good governance and efficiency to which I am fully committed.

I will fully observe and implement the provisions of the Framework Agreement regarding the flow of information between our two institutions in line with the provisions of the new Treaty and enhance openness and transparency. Transparency, however, does not stop here. Contributing, even in my own policy area, to the broader efforts of the Commission to further transparency for the European citizen will be a priority.

I am also committed to a broad engagement with stakeholders and I am looking forward to completing my first round of stakeholder meetings, which I have begun immediately on learning my responsibilities. Stakeholders will be our focus as we take our policies forward and seek to address the concerns of our citizens in the fields of health and consumer protection.

I will strive to build a sound and consistent relationship, in particular with the Committees ENVI, IMCO and AGRI. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty your voice is consolidated and my engagement is reinforced. I commit to a regular and sustained dialogue with these Committees and will make myself available whenever you feel the need for exchange. I would however also ask you to be available to engage with me on important initiatives where I wish to have the benefit of your views and opinions. I will make myself available should you need to establish bilateral contacts with me to express particular concerns.

As is required by the Framework Agreement which guides our relations, I will deliver on the need to provide you with prompt and clear information and follow-up on the views that are expressed in this House.

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?

I believe I can make a contribution to the overarching President Barroso's goals of sustainability, competitiveness and innovation for the benefit of the European citizen. In a time of economic and social crises, the need to safeguard the priority for the health sector is

key. Equally important is the focus on the consumer who, in such times, is both at the receiving end of negative market and labour trends, whilst at the same time is the driver for building recovery and sustained growth.

The key challenges in terms of the Health Sector remain those related to the sustainability and accessibility of health services in a fast-changing demographic reality. This challenge transcends national borders and is shared by the Union as a whole. It is a particular concern at a time of economic downturn where pressures on national budgets are increased.

Citizens demand better services and when confronted with choice must be empowered as consumers to make those choices. This is not only true of the health sector but across society. As the single market is consolidated, consumers will seek opportunities and exploit them. In doing this, consumers are key drivers for economic growth and putting the right tools at their disposal is crucial.

My first priority would be to complete the food chain strategy and to push for better regulation in our highly regulated internal market for animals, plants, seeds, food and feed, in order to boost the European agro-industry and to stimulate innovation while respecting the health, and interests of consumers and the environment. In this area the overarching principle remains 'safety first'. This, however, does not mean zero risk, or that we should not take action to enhance growth and innovation.

My second priority would be to contribute, within the Commission's area of competence, to the development of effective and efficient health care systems in all Member States, leading to longer and healthier lives. I will seek to secure an increase in Healthy Life Years - the number of years which citizens can, on average, expect to live in good health. My emphasis would also be firmly on measures to prevent disease, as well as make affordable, safe and efficacious medicines available to patients across the EU. Indeed, the integration of the pharmaceutical area into public health is one that requires careful management and I look forward to the challenge. We must strive to reinvigorate this sector through innovation and enhancing its economic competitiveness. This is not in contradiction to the paramount principle of patient safety. All these areas hold great potential to secure significant health but also economic gains and to ensure the sustainability of our health systems in the future. My objective will be to build strong links across the Commission to ensure our focus on where there is value added and where we can develop synergies with areas such as education and environment. I very much hope to be able to count on the Parliament's support towards this ambitious objective.

My priorities in the area of consumer policy would be to keep the consumer at the heart of the functioning of the internal market. Primarily, I will continue to expand information to the consumer so as to empower them to make informed choices. I see this unfolding by firstly focussing on the promotion of the essential issue of sustainable consumption with a view to ensuring sustainable consumer behaviour but also that essential services remain accessible and affordable for all citizens. Secondly, I will focus on my share of responsibility for the digital internal market notably by ensuring that consumer rights are not compromised in online transactions. This will be a key contributor to the drive for recovery from the economic and social crises. I will work with Commissioners responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship and for Digital Agenda and with national authorities on these issues and I will also pursue further discussions on the subject of consumer collective redress.

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?

I will strive to ensure that the legislation that will be proposed will bring benefits to citizens and be light in bureaucracy and costs for business. To achieve this I would involve stakeholders and above all Parliament at the early stages of formulation to explore the sensitivities of the various proposals. There will be widespread use of impact assessment, also, and in some cases, for delegated acts, to ensure the effectiveness and net benefit of legislative initiatives.

There are a number of ongoing dossiers such as cross-border healthcare, information on food, the quality and safety of organs, novel foods, biocidal products and the package of pharmaceutical proposals which will be pursued. Their closure will depend on the decision making process. I am aware of the sensitivities surrounding these issues and want to explore with you and with all stakeholders the right and quick solutions.

I will target the completion of legislative proposals such as the animal health strategy, the plant health strategy and the review of the seeds legislation, veterinary medicines, medical devices and clinical trials. Working together on these dossiers should see us adopting the relevant proposals by the mid-point of this Commission mandate.

I look forward to the upcoming evaluation report on the functioning of the European Medicines Agency and in this context to evaluating whether there is scope for measures whereby we can optimize the bringing of new medicines to the market as quickly as possible and with the minimum of expense.

I am well aware of the great work done by my predecessors in the field of Consumer Protection and will assiduously build on it. Understanding that some of the proposals like information on products, and collective consumer redress generate pressures from opposing directions, we will pursue further consultations and endeavour to build consensus towards an effective position. The Consumer scoreboard initiative will be continued and expanded so that we can have a clear idea of the realities of the supplier-consumer relationships.

Enforcement is key to an efficient Consumer Policy and the fight against counterfeiting will be intensified not only because this is an affront to consumers, but also because this attacks Europe's economic wellbeing especially as it undermines innovation. I am ready to work with my fellow Commissioners responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship and Taxation in order to develop an effective response in the interest of consumers. I have an intense commitment to this issue and would like to engage Parliament and all stakeholders to develop initiatives to combat *internet counterfeit practices of pharmaceuticals*. I am well aware that this will be a daunting task and will require the engagement of a number of services and national authorities.

We clearly need better monitoring and reporting to the European Parliament through

improved complaints data, market studies and market surveillance so that we improve the implementation and strengthen co-operation between the Commission and the European Parliament. Enabling EU consumers to reap the potential benefits of e-commerce will remain a priority for me, through the close monitoring of this issue and by working with my fellow Commissioners to remove those obstacles already identified.

Any policy on issues such as cloning, nanotechnology will continue to be based on scientific facts and will respect ethical values while striving to enhance Europe's innovative drive and at the same time eliminate risks to our citizens. Equally in the area of GMO's science will continue to guide our actions and I will put into practice President of the Commission's guidelines concerning cultivation.

I will work with my colleagues in the College to ensure that we find ways to support Member States actions for their health systems to be sustainable and efficient in order to respond to the needs of the changing demographic reality that we face throughout Europe, to ensure indoor air quality is a central element of a new environment and health action plan, and to effectively enforce the recent Council Recommendation on smoke-free environments. I will work with the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion in order to adopt measures for protection of workers from environmental tobacco smoke. I will continue to encourage Member States to use graphic warnings on tobacco labelling and, together with the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth examine how to make tobacco use less attractive, particularly to young people. Funding of patients' groups from the Health Programme will be reconsidered with the aim of supporting non-profit organisations which represent patients' groups effectively, without any conflict of interest.