



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

22.12.2009

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Hearing with Máire GEOGHEGAN-QUINN, Commissioner-designate for Research, Innovation and Science

Please find enclosed the written answers sent by Máire GEOGHEGAN-QUINN.

The Secretariat

**ANSWERS TO EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COMMISSIONER -DESIGNATE
Maire GEOGHEGAN-QUINN
(Research, Innovation and Science)**

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?**

I have always been a passionate supporter of the European Union which is the most successful peace project in the world. Over the past 25 years, I have worked at the very heart of the European Union.

As a member of the Irish Government with responsibility for European affairs between the years 1987 - 1991, I co-ordinated the organisation of the Irish Presidency of the European Union which took place in 1990.

As part of my duties during this EU Presidency, I was responsible for relations with the European Parliament and I was the Irish delegate at meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers. I also chaired meetings of the budget, culture, development and telecommunications Councils during this six month period.

My European and policy experience continued when I was the Irish Minister with responsibility for Tourism, Transport and Communications (1992-1993) and when I was the Minister for Justice (1993-1994). I represented the Irish Government at the appropriate meetings of the Council of Ministers during this three year period.

Since March 2000, as a member of the European Court of Auditors, I have had extensive political contacts with both the European Parliament and the European Commission on a range of European issues as part of my responsibilities.

During my career, I have held a number of important political responsibilities which I believe

are all very relevant for the proposed portfolio which has been allocated to me within the European Commission.

I am motivated by the need to ensure that the political, economic and social policies pursued by the European Union are promoted, defended and respected at all times.

As a member of the European Court of Auditors and as a former Irish Government Minister I fully understand how the important principles of collegiality and collective responsibility operate in practice.

At the European Court of Auditors, I have performed my treaty based duties at all times with complete impartiality and independence.

If I am confirmed as a member of the European Commission, I will guarantee that I will continue to be totally independent in undertaking my political work on behalf of all the citizens of the European Union. I will fully comply with both the spirit and the terms of the Treaty and the Code of Conduct for European Commissioners.

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 will work to pursue the interests of the European Union in a collegial way. This is particularly important when dealing with policy issues that will fall directly under my political competence but which are closely linked to the work of other European Commission portfolios.

I will work strenuously to ensure that the political guidelines for the next Commission as presented recently to the European Parliament by President Barroso will be achieved. In my view, to fully implement these important political objectives requires complete co-operation and partnership with the European Parliament.

I am a very strong supporter of the Lisbon Treaty which rightly provides new and enhanced powers to the European Parliament.

As a member of the European Court of Auditors, I have had the privilege and the opportunity to maintain close political contacts with members of the European Parliament.

I have also successfully been elected to the Irish Parliament on eight different occasions. This political experience has ensured that I am fully aware of the importance of parliamentary democracy.

If I am confirmed as a member of the European Commission, I will ensure that there will be a very constructive dialogue and a regular, transparent and timely flow of information with the European Parliament concerning all the key political and legislative aspects of my portfolio.

To succeed in implementing our political priorities the European Commission and the European Parliament must have a very close working relationship based on openness, trust and mutual respect.

I am fully committed to work with the European Parliament in accordance with both the spirit and the legal provisions of the Framework Agreement between the European Commission and the European Parliament.

As a member of the European Commission, I would be responsible and accountable to the European Parliament for the policy programmes that I will pursue.

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 committed to co-operate closely with the European Parliament so that we can effectively address the serious political challenges facing the European Union in the areas of research, innovation and science. The European Parliament will be centrally involved in these vitally important policy issues.

It is important to emphasise that the Lisbon Treaty gives new powers to the EU institutions in the area of research policy. Under this Treaty strengthening the scientific and technological base has become a specific objective of the European Union.

Under Article 182(5) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) specific powers are given to the EU institutions under the ordinary legislative procedure to adopt measures that are deemed necessary to achieve a successful European Research Area (ERA).

Moreover, under Article 181 of the TFEU, the Lisbon Treaty has added a clarification as to the kind of initiatives which the European Commission can take so as to promote the co-ordination of research activities between the different member states of the EU.

I will thoroughly examine any requests which are made by the European Parliament calling for the initiation of new legislative measures. I will regularly report to the European Parliament on the work that I will be carrying out as a member of the European Commission.

I can assure every Member of the European Parliament that I will deal with any political requests that are made to me by an MEP in a fair, complete, thorough and non-discriminatory manner. I will ensure that Members of the European Parliament will have direct access whenever the need arises.

I am committed to implementing a policy programme with the European Parliament, based on the principles of partnership, transparency and efficiency.

The European Union works at its best and can achieve key political, economic and social objectives when the European Parliament and the European Commission are working together pursuing common objectives in a determined, structured and co-operative manner.

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?

A key priority for me will be to ensure that a clear strategic focus is put in place at a European level in the policy areas of research, innovation and science so that the EU 2020 strategy can be comprehensively achieved. I want to guarantee that EU research, innovation and science issues will always be at the very heart of policy making within the European Union. This is necessary if we are to maintain and create jobs in the knowledge based economy of Europe, if the EU is to remain attractive as a future location for foreign direct investment and if we are to accelerate economic recovery.

We can develop a competitive and a smart economy in Europe. The EU can become a world centre of excellence in the fields of research, innovation and science.

But to achieve these policy objectives, all the stakeholders from the private and public sectors within the EU must work together in a spirit of partnership and co-operation. Policies must be implemented that will develop the fifth freedom in Europe and ensure that there will be free movement of information and knowledge in the areas of research, innovation and science in Europe.

A greater level of international co-operation will be necessary in the fields of research, innovation and science if the 'grand global challenges' of today which most notably include climate change, energy security and an ageing population are to be effectively tackled.

I want to achieve the establishment of a modern European Research Area (ERA) which can address in a strategic manner the challenges facing both our economy and European society. I am fully committed to implementing the Ljubljana process of 2008 which seeks to strengthen co-operation between the European Union and individual Member States in the areas of research.

There must be a proper simplification in the financial and administrative procedures that are at present in place under FP7 so that we can make the practical operation of this framework programme more efficient and user friendly. Policies must be put in place that will ensure that there will be a greater level of participation by small and medium sized enterprises in FP7 in the future.

An innovation strategy must be linked to the policies that are implemented to develop both the European Research Area and future EU Research framework programmes. Closer connections between researchers and industry must be strengthened so that we can maximise the

commercial and social benefits that can accrue to the citizens of Europe from newly developed innovative products.

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?

We need to show clear and decisive leadership if we are to meet the challenges facing Europe's knowledge society.

I am committed to taking the necessary policy steps that will ensure the completion of the European Research Area. I will thoroughly assess the progress that has been made to fulfil our specific policy objective to develop a modern European Research Area.

The European Commission and the European Parliament must analyse what forward looking and new initiatives are needed to make the European Research Area fit for purpose in an increasingly competitive and globalised world. Together, the EU must set out clear strategic objectives and policy targets. We must ensure that we have proper governance structures in place so that we can maximise the potential that will accrue to the European Union from a successful, competitive and innovative European Research Area.

I am fully committed to engaging with the European Parliament in a comprehensive mid term review of the EU Research Framework Programme which will commence in 2010. We must analyse closely how we can put in place more simplified procedures to govern the future operation of FP7 in the context of this review process. This review takes place as we re-define our political, economic and social priorities both within the European Union and in an international context. Any changes that may be brought about in the context of this review process must be based around the following guiding principles: predictability, consistency, accessibility and accountability.

The European Commission policy paper on innovation will be defined in 2010. It must set out clearly how innovation policies will deliver the EU 2020 strategy. I am also looking forward to working with colleagues on the strategic energy technology plan, which will be an important tool to deliver on our 2020 commitments.

The European Commission and the European Parliament must then work closely together in identifying the initiatives to be launched as part of this policy framework. Possible issues for review could include public procurement, venture capital, intellectual property rights, knowledge based training, technical barriers and regulatory matters. The EU can successfully move innovation to the top of the policy agenda in Europe if all interested parties and stakeholders work together in a co-ordinated, determined and connected way.

International co-operation must be strengthened so that we can collectively work together and use the best science and technologies available in order to effectively tackle global problems such as climate change. I will use the expertise of the Joint Research Centre so that the European Union can implement policies which will support the development of low carbon

technologies. This will assist the European Union in achieving our climate change policy goals.

I can assure Members of the European Parliament that I would rigorously assess the impact of any new initiative. Having served as a cabinet minister in three Irish Governments, I have extensive experience in the field of law making. Moreover, my work at the European Court of Auditors has ensured that proper financial management, value for money and transparency will be intrinsic elements of any new proposal.