

ANNEX XVII : Guidelines for the approval of the Commission

1. The following principles, criteria and arrangements shall apply for making the entire College of the Commission subject to Parliament's vote of consent:

(a) Basis for assessment

Parliament shall evaluate Commissioners-designate on the basis of their general competence, European commitment and personal independence. It shall assess knowledge of their prospective portfolio and their communication skills.

Parliament shall have particular regard to gender balance. It may express itself on the allocation of portfolio responsibilities by the President-elect.

Parliament may seek any information relevant to its reaching a decision on the aptitude of the Commissioners-designate. It shall expect full disclosure of information relating to their financial interests.

(b) Hearings

Each Commissioner-designate shall be invited to appear before the appropriate committee or committees for a single hearing. The hearings shall be held in public.

The hearings shall be organised jointly by the Conference of Presidents and the Conference of Committee Chairs. Appropriate arrangements shall be made to associate relevant committees where portfolios are mixed. There are three options:

(i) if the portfolio of the Commissioner-designate falls within the remit of a single committee, the Commissioner-designate shall be heard by that committee alone;

(ii) if the portfolio of the Commissioner-designate falls more or less equally within the remit of more than one committee, the Commissioner-designate shall be heard jointly by those committees; and

(iii) if the portfolio of the Commissioner-designate falls mainly within the remit of one committee and only to a small extent within the remit of at least one other committee, the Commissioner-designate shall be heard by the committee mainly responsible, which shall invite the other committee or committees to attend the hearing.

The President-elect of the Commission shall be fully consulted on the arrangements.

The committees shall submit written questions to the Commissioners-designate in good time before the hearings. The number of substantive written questions shall be limited to five per committee responsible.

Hearings shall take place in circumstances, and under conditions, whereby Commissioners-designate enjoy an equal and fair opportunity to present themselves and their opinions.

Commissioners-designate shall be invited to make an opening oral statement of no longer than twenty minutes. The conduct of the hearings shall aim to develop a pluralistic political dialogue between the Commissioners-designate and the Members. Before the end of the hearing, Commissioners-designate shall be given the opportunity to make a brief closing statement.

(c) Evaluation

An indexed video recording of the hearings shall be made available for the public record within twenty-four hours.

The committees shall meet without delay after the hearing to evaluate the individual Commissioners-designate. Those meetings shall be held in camera. The committees shall be invited to state whether, in their opinion, the Commissioners-designate are qualified both to be members of the College and to carry out the particular duties they have been assigned. If the committee is unable to reach a consensus on both of those points, its chair shall, as a last resort, put the two decisions to the vote by secret ballot. The committees' statements of evaluation shall be made public and presented at a joint meeting of the Conference of Presidents and the Conference of Committee Chairs, which shall be held in camera. Following an exchange of views, the Conference of Presidents and the Conference of Committee Chairs shall declare the hearings closed unless they decide to seek further information.

The President-elect of the Commission shall present the whole College of Commissioners-designate and their programme at a sitting of Parliament which the whole Council shall be invited to attend. The presentation shall be followed by a debate. In order to wind up the debate, any political group or at least forty Members may table a motion for resolution. Rule 110(3), (4) and (5) shall apply. Following the vote on the motion for resolution, Parliament shall vote on whether or not to give its consent to the appointment, as a body, of the President-elect and Commissioners-designate. Parliament shall decide by a majority of the votes cast, by roll call. It may defer the vote until the following sitting.

2. The following arrangements shall apply in the event of a change in the composition of the College of

Commissioners or a substantial portfolio change during its term of office:

(a) When a vacancy caused by resignation, compulsory retirement or death is to be filled, Parliament, acting with dispatch, shall invite the Commissioner-designate to participate in a hearing under the same conditions as those laid down in paragraph 1.

(b) In the event of the accession of a new Member State, Parliament shall invite the Commissioner-designate to participate in a hearing under the same conditions as those laid down in paragraph 1.

(c) In the event of a substantial portfolio change, the Commissioners affected shall be invited to appear before the committees concerned before taking up their new responsibilities.

By way of derogation from the procedure laid down in paragraph 1(c), third subparagraph, when the vote in plenary concerns the appointment of a single Commissioner, the vote shall be by secret ballot.