

José Manuel Barroso
President of the European Commission

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Dear President,

In reply to your letter of 3 December 2009 and with a view to preparing the parliamentary hearings of Commissioners-designate, due to take place between 11 and 19 January 2010, I have the pleasure to send you their written replies to the European Parliament's questionnaire in the respective original language version. The translations into the remaining languages will be sent directly to your services on 6 January 2010, as agreed.

All candidates responded to the questionnaire with care and attention. They of course represent the Commissioners'-designate own views, but they also reflect the spirit of collegiality.

As regards question 5 containing a reference to the policy-related priorities listed by several parliamentary committees, I would like to underline that in the context of their global replies to this question, Commissioners-designate have taken into account those issues and questions would fall under their prospective responsibilities. This of course reflects the portfolio structure I announced on 27 November. All Commissioners-designate will be delighted to reply during the oral part of the hearings to follow-up questions or to develop their position on more detailed aspects. Inevitably, the process of writing succinct answers to the questions has meant that some issues have been left to the stage of the hearings.

You will be aware that some of the priorities listed by the different parliamentary committees fall under my direct responsibility. This includes the questions related to the Code of Conduct for Commissioners, Impact Assessments, EU 2020 as well as Services of General Interest. These are issues of common interest for many Commissioners and I therefore would like to use this opportunity to briefly explain our position on these issues.

As regards the Code of Conduct for Commissioners, and as I set out in my Political Guidelines for the next Commission, it is my intention to review this Code, which could act as a document of reference to inspire other EU institutions. Indeed, now that the Lisbon Treaty is in force, we need more than ever an inter-institutional approach to these issues. I am ready to enter into a constructive debate on such solutions with the EP and the other institutions.

Mr Jerzy Buzek
President
European Parliament
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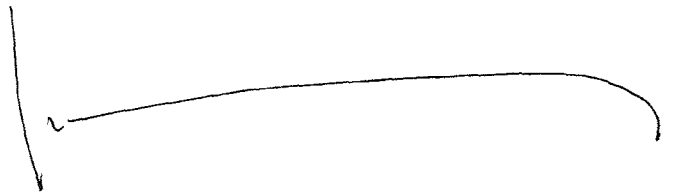
As for EU 2020, the new Commission will present appropriate proposals which will build on the achievements of the Lisbon Strategy, while looking to the future needs of the European economy. This means that I wish to use EU 2020 to continue forging consensus in Europe on the direction of reforms. In my view the Parliament must also play a greater role in this debate, both on legislative dossiers and by expressing its views on key decisions for consideration before each Spring European Council.

On Services of General Interest, let me recall that in my Political Guidelines I clearly mention the need to give a boost to the development of certain categories of services by establishing, for instance, a quality framework for Services of General Interest, thus recognising their importance in the European model of society. I intend to further discuss this subject, and in particular the implications of the Treaty of Lisbon in this field.

Finally, with regard to the independence of Impact Assessments, I would like to emphasise that the Commission's current impact assessment system is already strong in terms of independence and compares extremely favourably with international best practice. Already in 2006 I put in place an independent Impact Assessment Board (IAB) ensuring the quality of impact assessments, which examines all impact assessments produced by Commission services. All opinions of the IAB and the impact assessments themselves are transmitted to Parliament and Council along with the proposal adopted by the Commission. This ensures that the co-legislators can examine not only the proposal but the evidence and the reasoning that underpins it, and greatly increases the accountability of the Commission.

I would like to thank you and your services for the smooth cooperation as regards the preparation of the upcoming European Parliament hearings. I would be grateful if you could treat this letter as part of the package of Commissioners'-designate replies to the questionnaire, which you will distribute to all Members and at the same time publish on the new European Parliament web page devoted to the upcoming hearings of Commissioners'-designate.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a vertical line on the left and a long, sweeping horizontal line that curves upwards at the end.

José Manuel BARROSO