

Commitments

made at the hearing of

FRANS TIMMERMANS

**First Vice-President of the Commission,
Commissioner for Better Regulation,
Inter-Institutional Relations,
the Rule of Law and
the Charter of Fundamental Rights**



In his answers to the questionnaire and during the hearing on 7 October 2014 before the Conference of Presidents, Commissioner-designate Frans Timmermans made a number of commitments. These are summarised below¹.

Inter-institutional relations

Upholding the commitments under the Framework Agreement

"I want to work with the Parliament to give new vigour to our special partnership under the Framework Agreement of 2010".

Inter-institutional programming (Art. 17 TFEU)

"I am convinced we can have a thorough political debate on multiannual programming... and thus give meaning to Article 17 of the Treaty."

Follow-up to legislative initiative reports (Art. 225 TFEU)

"Concerning the follow-up to European Parliament positions and requests, I will make sure that the Commission responds to parliamentary resolutions or requests made on the basis of Article 225 TFEU within three months after their adoption."

"We could consider whether the Commission could react with a Communication (to this kind of initiative)".

Participation in trilogues

"I will also, both personally and within my team, pay particular attention to the importance of representation at political level in trilogues."

Better Regulation

Pledge to conclude a new Inter-Institutional Agreement on Better Law-Making

"...By the end of next year, I hope to conclude an Inter-Institutional Agreement on better law-making that will hopefully align and reinforce our efforts to better serve Europe's interests."

EP consultation on proposed withdrawal of legislation

"...By the beginning of next year, I will propose to the College a list of pending proposals which should be withdrawn, after consulting this Parliament".

Pledge to take steps to clarify the "subsidiarity" principle

"For legislative proposals at European level...the onus is on the Commission in the first instance to examine and explain in understandable terms exactly why its proposals are needed and how they comply with the principle of subsidiarity. I will pay particular attention to this."

Pledge to engage with national parliaments

"When a yellow or orange card is used, the Commission should consider this carefully. I see it as part of my role to encourage colleagues to take the discussion directly to national parliaments and listen to remarks and provide justified replies. The results of these debates should also be shared with the European Parliament."

High-quality, independent impact assessments

"It is important that the Commission's Impact Assessment Board is composed of people who can act independently of vested interests and bring in outside expertise. And I will personally express my view on the quality of impact assessments when they are brought to the College."

"I will encourage the Council to follow the European Parliament's lead in making sure that the impact of proposals is not only assessed by the Commission and not only at the beginning of the legislative procedure."

Transposition, Implementation and Enforcement

Commission to support Member States in drawing up implementation plans

"I would like the Commission to work intensively with Member States to develop implementation plans wherever useful."

Commitment to ensure enforcement through infringement proceedings

"The Commission must be ready to launch infringement proceedings and move more quickly to a referral to the Court if a Member State continues to fail to comply with EU law."

Delegated and Implementing Acts

Pledge to provide an objective rationale for the instrument proposed

"The Commission's job is to include in its proposal what it considers to be the right choice between the two procedures. I will ensure that the choice is made following objective criteria in full respect of the treaties."

EP participation in expert groups

"I can certainly recognise the wish for better consultation and more transparency. I will (...) consider whether the Commission could systematically publish draft measures at the point at which consultations with expert groups are due to start. This would allow the European Parliament and the Council as well as other stakeholders to express their views before formal adoption."

Commitment to review the use of the "regulatory procedure with scrutiny"

"...It is not acceptable that use of the obsolete "regulatory procedure with scrutiny" is still so common. I want to give renewed energy to secure an agreement, and I intend to propose to the Presidency to take this point up in the General Affairs Council."

Transparency

Commitment to deliver a cross-institution transparency register

"I will prepare a proposal for an Inter-Institutional Agreement creating a mandatory lobby register covering the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council."

Personal commitment to transparency

"I commit to making public all the contacts and meetings I hold with professional organisations or self-employed individuals on any matter relating to EU policy-making and implementation."

Treaty change and Eurozone governance

Pledge to exploit fully the Lisbon Treaty

"I don't think we have fully exploited the potential of the Lisbon Treaty yet".⁴

"We should not rule out being able to make the case for using the "passarelle" clauses allowing a shift to qualified majority voting or the ordinary legislative procedure."

Commitment to integrate the Fiscal Compact into EU law

"The full integration of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the legal framework of the EU is something I intend to work towards with Member States."

Opposition to a Eurozone Parliament

"That is exactly my position (that there should be no stand-alone Eurozone parliament)"

Caution on external Eurozone representation

"Having a single representative for the whole Eurozone would right now diminish Europe's influence...As the Eurozone grows to encompass almost all Member States, the question will become more relevant and I know the Union will have to respond."

European Citizens' Initiative and Petitions

Pledge to take a more political stance on ECIs

"The Citizens' Initiative is clearly politically - rather than legally - driven. I propose taking a more political stance on future Citizens' Initiatives."

Commitment to explore restrictions for petitions under article 51 of the Charter

"I am happy to sit down and talk to the Chair of the European Parliament Petitions Committee to see where there are problems with article 51...If there are difficulties with article 51, I'm open to persuasion that we need to do something on that."

European Law of Administrative Procedure

Pledge to examine option of a European Law on Administrative Procedure

"I intend to examine the option of a European Law on Administrative Procedure."

Rule of Law

Support for the proposed Rule of Law Framework with equality for all Member States

"My first priority will be to seek to prevent a systemic threat to the rule of law from emerging in the first place. I strongly believe that prevention is better than cure. Engaging swiftly in a dialogue can itself help to defuse problematic situations"

"I would not hesitate to make use of the rule of law Framework, as well as to launch infringement proceedings where appropriate. Clearly, Article 7 TEU should be a last resort. I would hope that we never have a situation which requires its use. But if we do, I would be ready to make the necessary proposals."

Fundamental Rights

Pledge to mainstream fundamental rights and to apply the Charter in all EU actions

"There is no cultural excuse for fundamental rights, there is no cultural context which would justify a violation of human rights and every single Member State... has subscribed to the Charter."

"There must be systematic fundamental rights checks at different stages of the legislative process. I will look in particular at how to achieve this in respect of Commission proposals or other initiatives."

Cooperation with other key players

"I will work closely with all national, European and international organisations dedicated to the promotion and protection of fundamental rights... I will organise an annual colloquium on the state of play of fundamental rights in Europe."

Commitment to complete EU accession to the ECHR

"...Once the opinion of the European Court of Justice is received, I will swiftly take the necessary steps to conclude the European Convention of Human Rights accession by the EU."

¹ Quotes are either taken from the commissioner-designate's answers to the questionnaire or from the hearing held on 7 October 2014. In case of multiple quotes on the same issue, only one is reported here to enhance legibility. Some quotes may be free translations of the original language spoken.

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