

Commitments made at the hearing of

MARIYA GABRIEL

Commissioner-designate

Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth



The Commissioner-designate, Mariya Gabriel, appeared before the European Parliament on 30 September 2019 to answer questions put by MEPs from the Committees on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) and on Culture and Education (CULT). During the hearing, she made a number of commitments which are highlighted in this document. These commitments refer to her portfolio, as described in the [mission letter](#) sent to her by Ursula von der Leyen, President-elect of the European Commission, including:

- Education, research and innovation; and
- Culture, youth and sport.

Please note that the quotes included in this document only make reference to oral commitments made during the [hearing](#). The [verbatim report](#) of the public hearing is available on the [Commissioners-designate hearings website](#). The Commissioner-designate was also sent some written questions in advance of the hearing to which she provided [written answers](#).



Education, research and innovation

Ensure swift agreement on and full implementation of the future Horizon Europe programme

"[...] no decision will be taken unless Parliament has been consulted beforehand and has been kept informed."

"As for the budget, I am clearly on the side of the European Parliament. I will vigorously defend the budget increase for the Horizon Europe programme, because it will have to be understood that the budget for Horizon Europe is not an expense, it is an investment."

"Therefore, I intend to work extremely closely with Parliament right now. I will not wait until, for example, missions begin in 2021 to keep Parliament informed of what is happening. That's why I suggested for the mission councils, the mission boards, to designate each time a person who will be the interface of the Parliament to be able to answer at any time and indicate what are the evolutions and how the decisions are taken."

"Then, to go even further, I would like to insist on the possibility of launching an information campaign and making sure that 'science meets young people'. That's why I'll be organising a 'science meets regions and schools' initiative so that researchers show our young people the results of their research and inspire them to take this path."

"As for the humanities and social sciences, I am very clear: I want to integrate them throughout the Horizon Europe programme, not only in the missions, but also in the first and third pillars. First, because I would not want to put them in silos. I would like them to be taken into account every time we try to innovate under the third pillar or we will have missions under the second pillar."

"If we really want to make sure that there is no selection that does not meet the criteria we believe in, for me there is one word: it is transparency. If we really want to know how the European Innovation Council selects these projects, we need to receive regular information on the selection process."

"I would like to make a real commitment with my services, before the implementation of Horizon Europe, to go to the regions, in the different countries, and to talk about Horizon Europe."

Ensure sufficient investment flows to disruptive research and breakthrough innovations

"I will therefore be extremely careful that, as part of the next industrial strategy, through research and innovation, Europe is investing smartly, Europe is counting on its assets, but Europe as well, does not hesitate to be at the helm of the next wave of innovation."

Build a true European Research Area

"I want give a new life to the European Research Area."

"I really want to help revitalise the European Research Area: one of the issues I would like to bring to the fore is exactly the brain drain and how to attract and retain talent."

"I will touch on a much more sensitive question, it is the salaries of researchers. We have made the commitment to do a study, to follow the evolution and I am sure that this evolution will give us many lessons to be able to act more quickly."

"[...] we are committed to thinking about [an] incentive, a scholarship that will allow a researcher to return to their own country and be able to do research there."

"The European Commission will issue a Communication on the European Research Area in the second half of 2020."

Ensure that research, policy and economic priorities go hand in hand

"In the next Horizon Europe programme, SMEs will be a prime target of the third pillar "Innovative Europe", thanks to the creation of the European Innovation Council. Our ambition is to create a one-stop shop for SMEs, so that they can bring us innovative ideas and products and help them access the market faster. They can also participate in other activities. I am thinking, for example, of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology and the different Knowledge and Innovation Communities. We must ensure synergies between the two."

"We must help the energy-intensive regions and coal areas in their transition towards a low-carbon economy, we must provide skills. Education and learning will have a key role here. We must ensure that these regions can count on resources so as not to lose their competitiveness at all."

"I will support space technologies, especially since their potential is huge, but also and above all because space services open up markets in new markets and new applications."

"I will insist on the European Innovation Council as a one-stop shop where SMEs will have access, this will be the target group. Especially since the Parliament was very clear: 70 percent of the budget will be dedicated to SMEs."

"Now, what I would like to happen is that SMEs in all regions are aware of these possibilities, it is clear that we do not form closed clubs. That is why I will also pay particular attention to the activities of the European Institute of Innovation, because they also have initiatives aimed at regional innovation. They are also aimed at small and medium-sized businesses."

"We are very strong in science, we are at the forefront in science. And at the same time, we must cherish science because it is our raw material. But we have fallen behind on innovation. Therefore, I will place a strong emphasis on the change needed to integrate this culture of exploitation and commercialisation as early as possible, including in universities."

"If we want to succeed in the climate transition, if we want to have this famous European Green Deal, it will not be possible without research and innovation. That is why, of course, I will support all those projects that will allow us to reduce emissions, to have investments in hydrogen, and perhaps to have other solutions that we are not aware of yet."

"If we really want to succeed in being autonomous, if we want to take the new wave of innovation, it's time to invest. Europe has its assets and now is the time to invest in order to then ensure our technological sovereignty."

Support the objective of tripling the Erasmus+ programme

"I will strongly support the tripling of the Erasmus budget, which the Parliament called for and which has been accepted as a commitment by the President-elect of the Commission."

Delivering a greener and more inclusive Erasmus+ programme

"I will also propose a green Erasmus. I think that our young people have sent us a very strong message: protecting the environment and changing our habits require us to act. This is a concrete idea."

"Erasmus is a symbol that we are very proud of. I will support all measures that make it more inclusive, for vocational education and training and for teaching staff [...]. What I would like to see in the future is more projects taking into account local specificities in local communities and I want to see these initiatives multiplied [...]. I would like to see Erasmus focusing on informal levels, small organisations, local authorities, to see how we can try creating some very different projects."

Make the European Education Area a reality by 2025

"I would also like to insist on the new idea of the European Education Area. From this moment onwards, we need to ensure that research is fully integrated in a new vision for European universities."

"I would really like to introduce the European Student Card by 2021 [...] as an addition to national cards [...] so that each student can use this card when they are abroad as well."

Promote excellence and networking among European universities

"As for European universities, we are right at the very beginning of a long road [...]. My question for the universities will be: do you share a strategic vision and are you all moving in the same direction? Do we want common strategic programmes that can ensure that education and professional development are taken into account?"

"We do not just learn within the four walls of a school, university or work place. That is part of the thinking of lifelong learning and developing skills without distinguishing by age [...]. That is the objective of Erasmus+ and I want to ensure that it is more open [...]. It is important to diversify careers and personalise possible pathways. I will pay attention to how European universities take that into account."

"I will wholeheartedly defend academic freedom. I will defend the freedom for research to be led by curiosity [...]. This is something really important to me. It is not just in terms of research freedom or funding. It is one of our principles. We have charters at the European level and they are not coincidental. I will really try to do my best to ensure that they are complied with."

"I will pay particular attention to the research that will allow us to make breakthroughs. That's why I quoted the European Research Council and insisted on the importance of keeping Frontier Research."

"[the question of open science] is dear to me and I will work on it. [...] I think, for example, in the European framework of research, how to encourage researchers who support open science [...]."

Lead on the updating of the Digital Education Action Plan

"Critical thinking equips you to take informed decisions. That is something we welcome and we will continue in that direction. As part of the next digital education plan, which I want to have updated by next year, we are going to address media literacy. For me, this is the key element to combat misinformation."

"On fake news and misinformation, you are touching on an issue which is very close to my heart. I have always been extremely clear about the importance of this balance between freedom of expression, free access to information, but also transparency and responsibility."

Culture, youth and sport

Ensure the full implementation of the New European Agenda for Culture

"Culture will always be right at the top of my agenda. Culture is our opportunity to work on a more inclusive

Europe, a more innovative Europe and to help us cope with the new global challenges.”

Develop ways to strengthen Europe’s commitment to preserving and protecting our cultural heritage

“By preserving our heritage, supporting our artists’ creativity and promoting technological innovation, we will help build more united and peaceful European societies, which should be stronger in an ever more unpredictable world.”

“I will devote attention to digitalisation of the cultural heritage. [...] I will also use “Europeana”. We need initiatives that are more attractive to young people and people who do not have access to culture.”

“The first pillar of our cultural [heritage] policy has to be increasing accessibility. Digitalisation is doing that and new partnerships with European innovation capitals, for example.”

Promote creative industries as a catalyst for innovation, jobs and growth

“The portfolio that the President-elect has in mind for me [...] incorporates such prominent programmes as Horizon Europe, Erasmus, Creative Europe or DiscoverEU. This forms a consistent whole and we need to build synergies, we need to make it all work. The common denominator among all these areas is that they touch on citizens in their daily lives, embody a Europe of talents and a Europe of hearts.”

“I will remain faithful to the increase [of the Creative Europe budget] that we called for. I’ll secure it and try and achieve the best possible impact by working together with other programmes, such as Horizon Europe.”

“I reiterate my support to SMEs, particularly regarding culture, that’s where we can really count on creativity and innovation. In the Creative Europe programme, there is the idea of creative innovation laboratories. [...] I expect SMEs to have privileged access to that. [...] It’s also very important to ensure they get their fair share under Horizon Europe. We also need to give more visibility to different examples that already work.”

“We must here synchronise as much as possible our actions with Commissioner-designate Goulard. [...] what

I will try to do is really to create more synergies with the possibilities that exist within Horizon Europe.”

“The European Institute of Innovation and Technology, plans to create a new KIC [Knowledge and Innovation Communities] in 2022 on the creative and cultural industries. It would be very important right now to think about the possible synergies, to see how they can cooperate, and then to cooperate with what is already being done at Horizon Europe level. That will require constant cooperation and coordination to make sure that the issues as regards audiovisual content are not left solely under the MEDIA programme and to ensure instead that there are other outlets with research and innovation under Horizon Europe and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology.”

“We have created exceptions for research, education, libraries and cultural heritage [in the Copyright Directive]. What I would like now is to follow the process more closely to see how it is implemented.”

“Today we need to adapt our [E-Commerce Directive] rules to the new realities of the digital transformation.”

Promote sport as a tool for inclusion and wellbeing

“The sport part [of Erasmus+] can be very effective for integrating migrants, we’ve got programmes underway, including on prevention of radicalisation, preventing people from dropping out, from falling behind culturally.”

“In the area of sport [...] my key word is inclusivity. I want to ensure that people with reduced mobility can be included.”

Foster cultural cooperation as a part of the Union’s partnerships with countries around the world

“Cultural diplomacy is a real soft power tool and allows us to keep an open dialogue. [...] Our partners in the Western Balkans need to hear that we will provide them with some palpable support. [...] There is a wonderful nursery of young talents there. The creative industries and culture are much appreciated and this is an area in which we will continue to have very close cooperation.”

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Manuscript completed: as of October 2019; Date of publication: November 2019
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This document is available on the internet at: www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses/IP/A/ITRE/2019-04

Print ISBN 978-92-846-5557-1 | doi:10.2861/751266 | QA-04-19-609-EN-C
PDF ISBN 978-92-846-5558-8 | doi:10.2861/992911 | QA-04-19-609-EN-N