

Commitments made at the hearing of

ILIANA IVANOVA

Commissioner-designate

Innovation, Research, Culture, Education

and Youth



The Commissioner-designate, Iliana Ivanova, appeared before the European Parliament on 5 September 2023 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 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 [dedicated website](#) for the changes in the European Commission in 2023. The Commissioner-designate was also sent some written questions in advance of the hearing to which she provided [written answers](#).



Research and innovation

Horizon Europe

"The main goal that I see for our Horizon Europe programme is to tackle [...] global challenges and boost the European competitiveness based on research and innovation that is focusing on excellence, inclusivity and sustainability."

Attaining its objectives

"The objectives of Horizon Europe are clearly defined in the regulation. If I am appointed, I will do my utmost to help achieve them. And I will do so first through supporting a stable and sufficient budget."

"I would engage and commit to strongly defend preserving the Horizon Europe budget to serve the objectives of the programme. I know there have been some flexibilities used, but so far no transfers of funds have happened and I commit to dedicate my efforts to preserve that."

"On flexibility, [...] we have to find a balance. I think it's good to be flexible, but we have to ensure that we have, first of all, sufficient budget to fund our priorities. So this, again, I will reiterate, will be my top priority."

"Besides the funding allocated in the long-term EU budget, there are a number of other ways to attract additional public and private financial resources, to use significant leverage, including from partnerships, and to exploit synergies."

"What we could probably explore further is the new synergies that could exist between Horizon and the RRF [Recovery and Resilience Facility]."

"I will also focus efforts on innovative ways to develop advanced technologies. The strategic technologies for Europe platform, for instance, is one new tool, which I will fully support to put us back in the lead in the race for leadership on new technologies that will define the green, digital future."

Simplification

"I'm glad the Commission followed some of the recommendations of the Court of Auditors, including the use of lump sums, which I think can be further developed because right now we use them in Pillar II, but they could be expanded also to pillars I and III. And I've always said that, for me, simplified cost options are probably one of the best ways to reduce red tape and also reduce the error rate."

Helping SMEs

"I am convinced that Horizon Europe should more strongly benefit SMEs, which are and have always been the backbone of our economies."

"Let me focus on one thing that does not cost that much, but can be a good tool to help them. And it is simplification."

"There are many more ways how we can reduce red tape for them and actually make the access of the programme much, much easier. Lump sums are one idea. [...] Then some reporting and accounting ideas that I bring with my background here, but I think they're worth exploring. For instance, the option unit costs for personnel cost to fix a daily rate for the entire duration of the project."

[...] "I would also explore another idea, that we could possibly do without much additional investment, to do targeted information campaigns for the SMEs and building on those existing networks to help them."

"On inflation and SMEs, I think just ensuring sufficient funding and appropriate conditions in which they can function should be a primary prerequisite for them to be able to operate and then deliver."

35% target of climate spending

"I will watch very closely how we are delivering on the 35% target. [...] I'm committed to delivering on 35% absolutely within the time of the mandate."

"Four out of the five missions are [...] aiming at actions related to greening and climate change. We have also the Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) on climate. And I will make sure that all these commitments are kept and that we deliver on the 35 % target, for which I will make sure that we have the proper methodology."

"[...] I can assure you [...] that we have a sound methodology [...]. I will look into that methodology to see if it can be improved. But I think for the moment we have a good basis where we could rely upon tracking [...] expenditures."

Water and oceans

"[...] the water KIC, [...] is one subject that I strongly welcome to be added. Water scarcity will be, I think no one can deny, a serious problem, not now, but in the future, and we have to address it. [...] This KIC right now is undergoing the ex-ante assessment. [...] In the beginning of next year I will make sure we speed up to the extent possible what the Commission can do to finalise this assessment, and then, depending on the outcome, [...] start the promotion of the new knowledge and innovation community."

The new European Bauhaus

"The new European Bauhaus is the soul of the Green Deal. And I think the idea of evolving this initiative further in the mission is excellent, and I will fully support that."

Accessibility conditions for EU research funds

"I can assure you that I will watch very closely to that, because at the end of the day, it is important that every euro that we invest delivers added value and clear benefits for the European citizens. [...] But how to make that more stringent? We have to keep also a balance in our programmes so that we don't overburden with rules and complexity – we just spoke about simplification – and we somehow strike the right balance between this simplification and control. And I can assure you that whatever is within my power I will do to guarantee that each euro spent is delivering these results."

"I will do my utmost within my powers to ensure additional private investment, including by way of cooperation with other Directorates-General".

Member States' R&D funds

"I think we have to [...] incentivise, but also [...] perhaps through the European Semester, [...] push a little bit for the reforms where they need to happen. Also use the RRF again where we could build on that leverage and synergies to make these reforms happen. Let's work in a positive, constructive way. Let's engage in dialogue. And I think at the end of the day we cannot force the Member States to put the 3%."

Building a true European Research Area

"Speeding up and delivering on the European Research Area, implementing the New European Innovation Agenda and strengthening the scientific advisory role of the Joint Research Centre will be equally important priorities for me in the remaining time of the mandate."

"On the researchers – and the younger researchers, I would say particularly – we have the Council recommendation on research careers and the aim to set some minimum standards of implementation. Also, we have to make sure we have the proper monitoring tool with the Research and Innovation Careers Observatory to monitor how these standards are kept."

"I would really welcome and support very strongly the initiative of my predecessor on young researchers, pooling consortia together to help young researchers, especially at the beginning of their careers, with fair remuneration and career opportunities. This is an idea I would really like to follow up and build upon."

Science and advisory mechanism and ethics body

"I think their role is undeniable. I'm really looking forward to the study on artificial intelligence, and I would like to strengthen their role because they help us to have this science-based approach when we are proposing our legislation and I appreciate that very much."

Visibility of joint undertakings and partnerships

"[...] many [...] great achievements sometimes may seem a little bit not sufficiently communicated. [...] I will focus to really boost [...] the communication campaign, use not only social media but also platforms as, for instance, the biennial forum on the clinical trial partnerships that happens every two years. Opportunities like that we could use to promote great achievements in the field of medicine."

Transparency

"How to increase transparency? I think this is a constant process and a constant effort that we have to do not only for Horizon but for all our programmes. I am committed to dedicate my efforts to do so."

Ensuring equal access to information

"I will implement targeted information campaigns, especially for the regions that are harder to reach and expand this possibility."

Inclusion and gender equality

"[...] I welcome a not only further opening up of programmes to partner countries, but also targeted action for inclusion and gender equality in our society. I shall support efforts to achieve diversity among beneficiaries and for the visibility of women's professional achievements through different actions, whether it be special awards, targeted trainings or initiatives intended to inspire more women to participate in our programs."

The international dimension

"We must use and strengthen the international aspect of Horizon Europe and we must increase the associate countries, while at the same time ensuring quality as set out in the strategy for economic security."

"I would focus on the innovative potential of the EU. The European Investment Council is the instrument which can be used in the context of risk and capital so that we can use this to be successful at the international level."

"The criticism that we have had for the European Investment Council (EIC) in the initial phase and the criticism of the decision-making process, I take note of. However, things have been corrected in the meantime. I will keep an eye on efficiency. I would also like to have a special dialogue on this subject with the European Parliament."

Widening countries

"I see potential, for instance, in using more the hop-on facility, which has proven to be successful, but [...] not been sufficiently used. So we could perhaps expand it to use it also with the partnerships [...] I would focus on building on synergies and expanding mechanisms such as the hop-on facility."

Ukraine

"There is a big list of initiatives that we do implement to help Ukraine. [...] I will be happy to promote for 20 million from the European Innovation Council action to help innovative Ukrainian deep tech startups."

"I will ensure the smooth establishment of a Horizon Europe office in Kyiv and also a European Innovation EIT hub because innovation is also an important part to support Ukrainian recovery."

Switzerland

"I will cooperate very closely with Executive Vice-President Šefčovič and, as soon as [...] we can start on our side, on research and innovation, the preparations for the negotiation mandate, I will do that immediately. And I will keep you fully informed about how this process is evolving."

Partnership on Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area

I think we're on the right track. I fully support it and I think it will bring tremendous added value for the development of this region."

Education

European Education Area

"[...] the completion of the European Education Area will be an absolute priority for me."

Basic skills and teaching profession

"I will focus my efforts on addressing current concerns, such as deteriorating basic skills and challenges for the teaching profession."

"[...] a concrete proposal for a recommendation on learning mobility, which will be proposed in a wider talent package later."

"[...] there will be a call – I think I can announce it now in the fall – for 15 more teachers' academies."

University alliances

"I will continue working on building the university alliances, encourage the efforts for mutual recognition of exams and diplomas, and the joint European degree."

Digital Education Action Plan

"The Digital Education Action Plan has proven to be a key enabler for learning opportunities across the EU, and I will support the Member States in ensuring the effective digital transformation of education systems."

Erasmus+

"The Erasmus+ programme is perhaps the most emblematic and successful tool that inspires enthusiasm about the European integration idea. [...] I

will utilise the upcoming evaluations to learn lessons and reflect them in the direction for the future."

"[On] simplification [...] I think in Erasmus [...] we can explore the possibility we have with the mid-term review to take stock of the situation. Where are we now? What is done right and what is done wrong? And we can build on these experiences to see what ways we could use to simplify and to streamline the programme."

"Another tool I see is more communication effort. We try to reach, especially through the agency, more regions, especially more young people, to promote the opportunities that exist."

"[...] it will be a top priority for me to ensure actually a smooth implementation and functioning of the IT platforms, because here there is a reputational risk if we are not able to provide this access. So I will make sure [...] to follow closely on the matter, on this action plan, and ensure that there is proper access for all beneficiaries."

"I would focus efforts to ensure a stable budget, whether it would be higher I cannot guarantee, given the stretched and uncertain circumstances that we are operating in. But I will defend a strong budget."

"[...] inclusion is at the heart of the European values and programmes and I will certainly encourage and promote all measures that are aimed at tackling racism and xenophobia."

Subsidiarity

"[...] I will fully respect the competences of the Member States where they do exist in these parts of the portfolio. But at the same time, that doesn't mean that I will not engage in structured dialogues with them, cooperate, collaborate, share good practices and ideas to try to reach our common goals."

Culture

Creative Europe

"I will promote keeping the [Creative Europe] budget and I would rely very much on our cooperation with the European Parliament to help sustain this. But let me remind you also that [...] there were quite good new opportunities introduced with the new KIC for culture and creative-sector industries, with the new cluster in Horizon Europe, that help to fund those priorities that we have. [...] Nevertheless, we know that more than 100 000 [cultural creative sector industry] professionals had to change their jobs due to [pandemic] consequences. [...] We need to fund them and to help."

"On [Creative Europe] simplification; [...] we can explore the possibility we have with the mid-term review to take stock of the situation. [...] And we can build on these experiences to see what ways we could use to simplify

and to streamline the programme. [...] Another tool I see is more communication effort. We try to reach, especially through the agency, more regions, especially more young people, to promote the opportunities that exist. Also build on initiatives that are successful, such as Culture Moves Europe. [...] I would build on such examples and focus effort in all directions in order to make this programme more accessible."

Synergies in funding

For the cultural and creative sectors and InvestEU, there is [...] a good possibility for synergies with this guarantee facility that is provided by InvestEU [...].this is what [SME] need in order to be able to apply for funding and to look for opportunities to create more synergies with their partners in the local or regional or international market."

"I think we have a very good tool called CultureEU. It is not a portal, but it is an information tool that keeps a very good pool of information about all the possibilities that we have for synergies."

Subsidiarity

"[...] I will fully respect the competences of the Member States where they do exist in these parts of the portfolio. But at the same time, that doesn't mean that I will not engage in structured dialogues with them, cooperate, collaborate, share good practices and ideas to try to reach our common goals."

Youth

European Solidarity Corps

"Our ability to involve next generations in the European project is the guarantee for our democracy. The European Solidarity Corps is, for me, one of the best examples of our commitment in that regard."

European Year of Youth legacy

"I will engage actively with the national coordinators and the youth stakeholders' group to build further on

the legacy of the European Year of Youth. I am aware of the European Parliament's interest in the idea of a 'youth test', and I am ready to explore, together with you, what it could realistically include in practice."

Sport

European Sport Model

"[...] Sport is another important asset for the cohesion of our society. The European Sport Model is a powerful tool to promote our values. Global sporting events taking place in Europe will be opportunities that, if appointed, I will use to promote the visibility for the EU in sport."

Gender equality

"The high-level group on gender equality in sport [...] is a tool that we could use with the idea of issuing recommendations that are aimed at safety in sport, [...] to fight against harassment [...] and [...] build on more role models. "

"Be Inclusive Awards [and] Be Equal award [...] can be some good examples how we can foster the use of role models, encourage participation of women in sports and build on that. So I will encourage all such ideas and initiatives."

Promotion of physical activity

"I fully acknowledge, welcome and support the role that sport can have [...] putting it at the centre of health, of mental health, obesity problems [...]. The HealthyLifestyle4All initiative is [...] a very good example that we could build upon to sustain that. And the European Week of Sport – I would also use opportunities such as this to promote those values as initiatives."

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