

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT HEARINGS
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COMMISSIONER
DESIGNATE

Ms Dalia GRYBAUSKAITE

(Financial Programming and Budget)

Part A – General questions

I. Personal and professional

1. *What aspects of your personal qualifications and professional experience do you feel were of particular relevance with regard to your nomination and your prospective role as Commissioner?*

My qualifications and professional experience match the requirements of a Member of the European Commission.

Since 1991, my career has been closely connected with EU affairs. This has enabled me to obtain an excellent understanding of both the technical and political aspects of European policy issues. This experience will enable me to contribute effectively to achieving European goals.

As a Minister of Finance I gained first hand experience of a broad range of financial and fiscal issues, as well as the budgetary procedure, which will be an advantage in dealing with European finances.

My duties as both Minister of Finance and National Aid Coordinator also enabled me to acquire knowledge across a broad range of spheres of public life, which is an important quality for the Commissioner with responsibility for the budget.

As a Minister of Finance and Member of Government I was deeply involved with the process of rapid economic and structural reforms in Lithuania, which are widely recognised as having been effective and well implemented. This experience will also enable me to contribute actively to the design of policies to strengthen EU competitiveness and help achieve the goals set out in the Lisbon strategy.

I also have experience in diplomacy as well as good negotiating skills, which I developed while acting as Chief Negotiator for the Free Trade Agreement, later transformed into the

Europe Agreement, and while working as Chief Negotiator with the IMF and World Bank. Moreover, first hand experience of administration and managerial positions and good team building skills also provides a solid basis for my work as a Commissioner.

Finally, during the last five months as a Commissioner I have gained new knowledge and first hand insights into the work of the Commission, which will be extremely important in serving effectively in the next European Commission.

II. Independence

2. *How would you describe your obligation to be independent in carrying out your duties and how do you concretely envisage putting this principle into practice?*

I am fully committed to respect the provisions of paragraph 2 of Article 213 of the EC Treaty and to take all necessary precautions to avoid any possible conflict of interests in the performance of my duties. The same requirements will apply to every member of my Cabinet and administrative staff.

3. *Could you provide the European Parliament with details of your recent and present business, financial and political interests and positions, and of any other commitment that might clash with your prospective duties?*

I do not have any business, financial interests or any other commitments that might clash with the duties of Commissioner. I am not a member of any political party and I do not hold any party position. I am entirely ready to disclose any commitments to achieve full transparency.

III. Future of the European Union

4. *It is clear that until full ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, the Commission and its members are bound by the existing Treaties. However, the Constitutional Treaty having been adopted, which are in your view the actions the Commission can already undertake without waiting for its formal ratification?*

While the institutional provisions of the draft Constitutional Treaty cannot be anticipated prior to formal ratification, the Commission should, in all its actions and proposals, take into account the perspective of the new Constitution and respect the spirit of the Constitution where possible and appropriate. In addition, in areas where the innovations brought by the Constitution require implementing measures, the Commission can begin work to prepare proposals. The Commission can also work to ensure that European citizens are informed in a clear and objective way about the provisions of the Constitution, while of course avoiding any undue interference in national debates.

5. *The Lisbon Strategy is a ten-year strategy to make the European Union the world's most dynamic, competitive and sustainable economy by 2010. The Lisbon strategy comprises the three pillars of sustainable development: the economy, social affairs and the environment. The date of 2010 will coincide with the term of your mandate. What would you do, as Commissioner, to accelerate progress towards the Lisbon goals and what in your views should be the main priorities?*

It is essential that the Commission continues to work to maintain the momentum behind the Lisbon strategy and accelerate progress towards the Lisbon goals. As Commissioner for Financial Programming and Budget one of my priorities will be to help negotiate a successful outcome on the proposals for the next Financial Perspectives, which will provide the financial framework for European level actions to support the achievement of the Lisbon goals by the Member States. I think that the priority here must be to ensure that EU level action is focused on areas where it is most effective and brings a genuine value added, and that EU policies are accompanied by adequate financial resources to be effective. More generally, I believe that the main priorities for the Lisbon strategy should include creating the conditions for strong and sustainable growth in Europe through the promotion of strong macro-economic policies, sustainable national public finances and employment; exploiting the potential of the single market to foster the conditions in which business can thrive; and maximising the impact of investments in Europe's future, in particular in education, training and research. In addition, it is also crucial to foster the full involvement of and support from all stakeholders, and to develop an enhanced communication strategy, building on the mid-term review in 2005.

6. *How do you intend to improve the public image of the Commission?*

Improving the public image of the Commission requires action on a number of fronts.

First and foremost, the Commission must ensure that its policies and actions are relevant to and respond to the concerns of Europe's citizens. Money spent at EU level should be seen to bring added value to citizens and to be well managed.

In addition, the transparency of the decision-making process is of vital importance. The Commission should work to become closer to the people and ensure an open institutional relationship with citizens and their representatives.

Inter-institutional collaboration is also crucial. Only by working together for a stronger and better Europe can the European institutions hope for a better public image. Because of this, I will work for a close and intensive collaboration with the Parliament and Council.

Finally, the Commission's communication strategy should be improved. Communication should be an integral part of policy making, and the accessibility of information about both the general European project as well as specific policies needs to be further improved. All available means should be used to measure people's opinions and to respond to their questions in the best way.

IV. Democratic accountability to the European Parliament

7. *How do you envisage your accountability to the European Parliament?*

The accountability of Commissioners and the entire College before the European Parliament is a fundamental element of the democratic structure of the European Union. The European Parliament is the only directly elected European institution and it has a crucial role to play in furthering the process of European integration. I will work to ensure a high level of cooperation and dialogue with the Parliament and will fully respect the commitments entered into in the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the Commission.

a. From a strictly political standpoint, do you consider that, in case a hearing should lead to a negative conclusion, the concerned Commissioner designate should withdraw his/her candidacy?

The hearings with the European Parliament are a key step in the approval process and an important moment in establishing confidence between the European parliament and the Commission. In the case of a negative conclusion to a hearing, I defer to the responsibility of the President of the Commission to draw the appropriate conclusions. If Parliament expresses a lack of confidence, I accept the principle that the President of the Commission could ask for a resignation.

b. To what extent do you consider that you are responsible for the answers provided by your services to the Parliament as a result of requests emanating from its Committee on Petitions or other responsible committees? If called upon to justify or explain previous acts of the Commission, or previous omissions, to what extent do you consider yourself as being accountable to Parliament?

As Commissioner I would assume full political responsibility for the activities of my department. While I do not believe that Members of the new Commission can be held individually accountable for previous acts or omissions of the Commission, Commissioners are accountable to Parliament for the way in which they address all issues falling under their competence, including those inherited from the previous Commission.

c. What do you understand by the concept of political responsibility before the Parliament for the activities of your Directorate(s)-General? What steps do you intend to take to ensure your Directorate(s)-General are well-managed?

As Commissioner I would assume full political responsibility for the activities of my department. The Director-General is answerable for the day-to-day management of the department, acting in accordance with guidelines received from the Commissioner to put the policies and priorities into practice. In line with the Code of

Conduct between Commissioners and departments I will establish a mission statement, working arrangements and information channels as soon as I take up office. These arrangements will include regular information on internal control, resources management and other issues deserving the Commissioner's attention. I will meet regularly with the Director-General and his staff and will examine with a particular attention the management process implemented by the department to plan, monitor and report on its activities, including the necessary actions following audit and discharge recommendations.

8. *How important would you consider implementing interinstitutional co-operation (Commission-Parliament), in particular with the relevant parliamentary committees in your area of competence? In this new context, what does transparency mean for you, in the interinstitutional legislative procedure between the European Parliament, Council and Commission, as well as in interinstitutional relations in general?*

Inter-institutional co-operation with Parliamentary Committees and the European Parliament is essential to ensure the democratic legitimacy of the Union's decision making process. This co-operation should be based on mutual confidence and openness. I will fully respect the provisions laid down in the Framework Agreement, the agreement on comitology and the inter-institutional agreement on better law- making.

Regarding transparency, I endorse the principles and rules set out in Regulation 1049/2001 and commit myself to provide the EP with all information necessary for fulfilling its work, in accordance with the rules defined in the Framework Agreement. I will seek to work effectively with Parliamentary Committees, notably by ensuring a regular flow of information between myself and the chairperson of Committees and by attending meetings to which I am invited – and seeking to meet Committees upon my own initiative - whenever possible.

Regarding the legislative procedure, co-operation and mutual understanding between the three institutions is of paramount importance. The Commission has to ensure the objectives of its legislative proposal are well understood and shared by the co-legislators, and it is essential to provide all the information necessary to assess properly the expected impact of the proposal and demonstrate that the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality are fully respected. Moreover, I reaffirm and endorse the Commission's commitments made under the agreement between the two Institutions on procedure for implementing the comitology Council's decision of 1999.

V. Gender mainstreaming

9. *What concrete measures do you consider necessary in order to ensure that the concept of gender mainstreaming is implemented in your specific policy area? Do you have a policy strategy, and what financial and human resources do you think are necessary to implement gender mainstreaming in your portfolio?*

Within my policy area, I will promote the concept of gender budgeting, which has been developed in the Commission in recent years on the initiative of Ms Schreyer. Gender budgeting is an application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. It is a

relatively new approach to promote gender equality, which refers not only to the allocation of funds to women and men respectively, but also to the actual impact of EU expenditure on gender. Gender budgeting has been raised in two recent reports by the European Parliament and the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men that call on the Commission to look into the matter.

More generally, gender equality should be promoted through all operational policies, and I will work to ensure that the design and implementation of policies is improved so as to give a better picture of the financial contribution of these policies towards gender equality. To this end, and in line with European Parliament reports, I will emphasise the need for a more accurate reporting on the implementation of the EU Budget.