

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY, RESEARCH AND ENERGY

The Chairman

Mr Josep BORRELL FONTELLES
President
European Parliament

Brussels,
Ref.: ITRE/2004/D/41375

310591 12.10.2004

Dear President,

In accordance with Rule 99 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy held on 30 September 2004 a public hearing with Mr László Kovács, Commissioner designate, who, subject to the positive conclusion of the nomination procedure will be in charge of energy issues. Prior to the hearing, the ITRE Committee submitted a written questionnaire to which Mr Kovács had given written answers. These answers as drafted by the Commission services were generally considered acceptable.

In his introductory statement Mr Kovács referred to his priorities for the energy portfolio: competitiveness, sustainability and the international dimension. During oral questions Mr Kovács made the following commitments: completing a full 5 years term as Commissioner; ensuring a full implementation of the internal market Directives for gas and electricity; the importance of the promotion of new and renewable energy sources; increasing energy efficiency in the EU; continuing and improving energy dialogue with Russia, including ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.

He emphasized the importance of nuclear installations' safety as well as safe management of nuclear waste. He described greater transparency in decommissioning funds as "one of the key issues". At the same time Mr Kovács wanted to "keep the nuclear option open" as suggested in the Green Paper on security of supply.

On basis of the reactions of the Members present at the hearing and the results of the coordinators' meeting of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy which took place after the hearing, I offer you the following assessment: The Committee welcomed Mr Kovács' commitment to cooperate fully with the European Parliament and this committee. Members appreciated Mr Kovács' experience in international affairs. Unfortunately, Mr Kovács could not satisfy most members regarding his professional knowledge and expertise in the field of energy. Certain members expressed serious reservations concerning his responses on nuclear fusion, combined heat and power and hydrogen cycle. Mr Kovács' statement that he would take his position as Minister for Foreign Affairs in the new Hungarian Government until the end of October did not help.

In general terms, most Members of the Committee were not convinced by his professional competence in the energy field nor his aptitude to assume the high office he has been proposed for. However, one large group expressed their belief he would learn enough to cope once able to devote himself full-time to the job.

Yours sincerely,

Giles Bryan CHICHESTER

PE 349.302/BUR/12

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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND MONETARY AFFAIRS
THE CHAIR

309918 29.09.2004

Mr Josep BORRELL FONTELLES
President of the European Parliament

- CONFIDENTIAL -

through the good offices of

Mr Joseph DAUL
Chairman of the Conference of
Committee Chairs

Dear President,

In accordance with Rule 99 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs held on 28 September 2004 a public hearing with Mrs Neelie KROES, Commissioner-Designate, who, subject to the positive conclusion of the nomination procedure, will be in charge of Competition Policy.

Prior to the hearing, the committee submitted a written questionnaire to which the Commissioner-Designate replied in writing, in a satisfactory manner overall.

In her introductory statement, Mrs Kroes touched upon her professional background in the public and private sectors, emphasising her independent and entirely professional approach to her new functions. She also set out her personal ideas on how European competition policy should evolve over the next few years, and affirmed her willingness to engage in open dialogue with the Committee and the Parliament as a whole.

Following the debate the majority of Members considered that the Commissioner-Designate showed the required personal and professional capacity to assume the high office she has been proposed for, and that her actions and commitments, some of which go beyond that which would be strictly required, are sufficient to deal with the risk of future conflicts of interest.

However, the majority of Members were to some degree disappointed with her performance at the hearing, finding her detailed grasp of certain specific subjects to be insufficient. In particular we would urge Mrs Kroes to specify in writing how she would respond to a negative view of the European Parliament on her suitability for the office of Competition Commissioner. Furthermore, all members would request from the President of the European Commission the publication of the legal opinion drawn up by the Commission's legal service on Mrs Kroes' former business interests, after she clearly agreed to such a publication during the hearing.

PE 349.302/BUR/05

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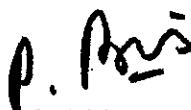
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Finally, prior to the debate and vote in plenary, President-Designate Barroso should be called upon to clarify the procedures by which the code of conduct undertaken by Mrs Kroes will be implemented. Concretely, how will potentially sensitive cases be identified, how will the transparency of implementation be ensured, and how will substitute Commissioners be designated for cases from which Mrs Kroes might have to withdraw, according to her self-imposed code of conduct?

The elements contained in the present letter reflect the opinion expressed by a large majority of the members of my committee.

Yours sincerely,



Pervenche BERES

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE THE CHAIRMAN

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr Josep BORRELL FONTELLES
President of the European Parliament

Dear Mr President,

Pursuant to Rule 99 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the Committee on Agriculture held a public hearing on 6 October 2004 with Mrs Mariann Fischer Boel, Commissioner-designate for agriculture and rural development, with a view to the debate on approving the prospective Commission.

Prior to the hearing, the Commissioner-designate had received a general questionnaire (to be replied to by all prospective Commissioners) and a specific questionnaire drawn up by the Committee on Agriculture. Mrs Fischer Boel replied to the questionnaires.

In her introductory statement for the hearing, Mrs Fischer Boel stressed that she would act to defend Community interests and addressed the following issues in particular:

- the European Constitution, strongly supported by her, which would extend codecision to agriculture;
- the common agricultural policy (CAP), which she intended to champion, and her opposition to renationalisation;
- the CAP's contribution to the Lisbon process and to the Partnership for Europe launched by Mr Barroso;
- CAP reform, with decoupling and conditionality as vital components of the first pillar;
- rural development (second pillar), which had to be part of the Lisbon strategy;
- the 2007-2013 financial perspective, under which a sufficient funding allocation would have to be ensured for the second pillar;
- the World Trade Organisation (WTO), where, together with Mr Mandelson, she would make sure that the European Union's agricultural interests were defended;
- the dialogue which would have to be established with citizens in general and farmers in particular.

During the hearing itself, many questions were put to Mrs Fischer Boel on, inter alia, the reform and future of the CAP, including the role of small family farms, rural development, multifunctionality, the outermost regions and less-favoured areas, forestry, the transport of animals, reform of the common market organisations (CMO) for sugar and for fruit and

vegetables, milk quotas, non-GM seed, biodiversity, beekeeping, energy crops, the role of women within the CAP, young farmers, Turkey, the WTO, Mercosur, geographical designations, the CAP subsidies received by Danish farmers, application of the CAP in the new Member States, the prospective financial perspective, her declaration of financial interests, and her independence.

After the hearing this committee's coordinators held two meetings - on 7 and 12 October 2004 - to assess the Commissioner-designate's performance.

The overall impression gained by my committee was that, very often, the Commissioner-designate failed to answer, or did not want to answer, the questions put. She also avoided giving any undertakings to the Committee on Agriculture and Parliament. That was particularly conspicuous with regard to reform of the sugar CMO. Nor was Mrs Fischer Boel forthcoming as to the approach or positions she would be championing, within the College of Commissioners, on the future of the CAP in terms of either its internal or external aspects. All in all, the obvious unwillingness of the prospective Commissioner for agriculture to enter into a dialogue with Parliament is a worrying sign for the future, since, to date, there has been sustained dialogue between the two Institutions with regard to agriculture, rural development and international negotiations.

Furthermore, most members took the view that the answers given by Mrs Fischer Boel were lacking in resoluteness; and they cast doubt on her ability to defend the CAP vigorously and effectively either within the Commission or at the Council or within international bodies such as the WTO.

In spite of this mixed assessment, the majority position of this committee's members is that Mrs Fischer Boel, provided that she exhibited more of a fighting spirit in defending European farmers' interests and worked more closely and in a more sustained fashion with Parliament and its portfolio committee, could discharge the duties to be conferred on her. The minority position, however, is that her political approach to agricultural issues (which is not well disposed towards family farming), combined with the failings highlighted in this letter, does not qualify her for the office. Nonetheless, all things considered, my committee has decided to support the nomination of Mrs Fischer Boel as Commissioner for agriculture and rural development, but calls on her, and on Mr Barroso, to respond to the concerns voiced in this assessment.

Please notify the Conference of Presidents of this assessment.

Yours sincerely,

Joseph Daul

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

THE CHAIRMAN

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr Josep BORRELL FONTELLES
President
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Ref. D(2004)42158

Dear President,

In accordance with Rule 99 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the Committee on Foreign Affairs held on 5 October 2004 a public hearing with Mrs Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner designate, who, subject to the positive conclusion of the nomination procedure, will be in charge of External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy.

Prior to the hearing, the Committee submitted a written questionnaire to which the Commissioner designate replied in writing. These answers were characterised by a preference for continuity and reluctance to take on board Parliament positions on certain issues. Some answers were, however, elaborated during the hearing in a positive way.

In her introductory statement, Mrs Ferrero-Waldner gave a general overview of EU external relations, touching briefly on most of its main aspects.

During the debate, the Commissioner designate answered questions relating to, in particular, the following issues:

- EU-Russia relations,
- the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP),
- the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Iraq,
- promotion of effective multilateralism and UN reform,
- transatlantic relations,
- security policy and the fight against terrorism,
- her attitude to cooperation with Parliament.

She made, in particular, the following commitments with regard to the policy areas she will be responsible for:

- to strive to ensure appropriate funding of EU external action under the next financial perspective, on the basis of the relevant parts of the Prodi Commission's proposal,

- to help ensure that the EU does everything in its power to contribute to the resolution of conflicts in the Middle East, insisting on the Road Map prepared by the Quartet and seeking the broadest possible international cooperation on Iraq,
- to endeavour to convince candidate countries which currently do not participate in some control regimes for dual-use goods to start doing so,
- to pursue continued improvements in the delivery of EU assistance via the EuropeAid office,
- to conduct a frank dialogue with Russia on its back-sliding as regards democracy and human rights issues,
- to endeavour to ensure that Ukraine maintains its pro-European choice,
- to send clear messages to the USA on the International Criminal Court, the Kyoto Protocol and the importance of international law,
- to strive to make the promotion of human rights and democracy more effective by greater use of 'carrots' in the form of release of assistance funds to countries which make progress,
- to continue discussions with Parliament on a range of issues, including Parliament's requests in relation to the appointment of Chief Election Observers and the appearance of Heads of Commission Delegations in the Foreign Affairs Committee before they take up their duties, the introduction into the ENP of clearer assessment criteria for progress in relation to human rights and democratisation objectives, and Parliament's proposal for a EU-Latin America Bi-regional Solidarity Fund as well as making a success of the EU-Latin America summit in Vienna in 2006.

On the basis of the reactions of the Members present at the hearing and the results of the evaluation meeting of the Committee's Enlarged Bureau which took place after the hearing, I am able to provide you with the following assessment of the hearing:

The Commissioner designate gave an excellent performance in her presentation and in the manner in which she handled most of the sensitive issues to be at the core of her portfolio. She will be able to draw upon her long diplomatic experience and she clearly appears also to have the ability to deliver tough messages to interlocutors, when necessary. It is to be expected that in the development of her future functions, she will lean more than she has done until now towards the community approach. This will put her in the best position to assure a close working relationship with the European Parliament. The Committee trusts that, as Commissioner, Ms Ferrero-Waldner will fully represent the interests of the Union in the world, including in our relations to Russia, and that she will work for an improved European Neighbourhood Policy with more developed multilateral components. The Commissioner designate's readiness to establish a fruitful dialogue on human rights with the European Parliament is especially welcome, including in particular further dialogue on the application of the human rights and democracy clauses in agreements with third countries.

In general terms, the Commissioner designate has given a convincing impression of her personal and professional capacities and her aptitude to assume the high office she has been proposed for.

The elements contained in the present letter reflect the opinion expressed by consensus of the Members of the Enlarged Bureau of our Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Elmar BROK

COMMITTEE ON THE INTERNAL MARKET AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND MONETARY AFFAIRS

THE CHAIRMEN

D(2004)43122

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr Josep BORRELL FONTELLES
President
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

310473 11.10.2004

Dear President,

In accordance with Rule 99 of the Rules of Procedure, the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, together with the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, held, on 7 October 2004, a public hearing with the Commissioner designate Mr Charlie McCreevy, who, subject to the positive conclusion of the nomination procedure, will be responsible for the portfolio of Internal Market and Services.

Prior to the hearing, a written questionnaire was submitted, to which the Commissioner designate had replied in writing in a satisfactory way.

on the Conduct of the Hearing

In his introductory statement on 7 October, Mr McCreevy touched upon his experience in European affairs - particularly in the ECOFIN Council - and personal qualifications for the job of Commissioner; the importance of the Internal Market for the Lisbon Agenda in terms of delivery for citizens and EU competitiveness, and the importance of compliance by the Member States with European legislation.

PE 349.302/BUR/22

Internal Market issues

During the debate the Commissioner designate answered questions relating to, in particular, the following issues:

- the proposal for a Directive on Services in the Internal Market, with particular reference to the country of origin principle and the audiovisual sector;
- how to consolidate the Internal Market in new Member States
- the proposed Directive on Spare parts;
- competitiveness and the Lisbon Agenda;
- transparency and Parliament's wish for the Council to legislate in public;
- problems of transposition and implementation of Internal Market legislation;
- the need to simplify the regulatory framework.

Financial Services

In his introductory statement Mr McCreevy touched upon his professional background in the public and private sectors, emphasising his experience as a Minister in the Irish Government and referring to his knowledge gained of financial services, most particularly as a recent President of the ECOFIN Council. He also set out in broad terms, but in a rather prudent manner, his personal ideas on how European financial services legislation should evolve over the next few years, and affirmed his willingness to engage in regular, open dialogue with the ECON Committee and the Parliament as a whole on these issues.

Members of the ECON Committee were heartened by Mr McCreevy's undertakings in his opening statement on Financial Services to fully respect the existing agreements reached between the Institutions in relation to the Lamfalussy process pending the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty. They further welcomed the importance he attached to respecting the roles of both EU legislative Institutions. In spite of his statement that the Level 3 Committees (such as CESR) performed an advisory role only, Members considered that he underestimated the de facto power of these Committees which might prejudice Parliament's role. With reference to Mr. McCreevy's comments regarding bodies such as the International Accounting Standards Board and the Basel Committee, members took the view that Parliamentary involvement was clearly needed at an earlier stage when developing standards that had initially been negotiated at international level without direct Parliamentary oversight. Members noted with satisfaction his acknowledgement of the need to strike a balance between market forces and an appropriate degree of regulation in the area of financial services.

The elements contained in the present letter relating to financial services reflect the opinion expressed by a majority of the Members.

on other Internal Market issues

Questions on the liberalisation of postal services and on patentability of computer-implemented inventions were addressed to the nominee by representatives of the Transport and Legal Affairs Committees.

on the commitments made

Mr McCreevy made the following specific commitments to the Parliament::

- a pledge of his commitment to regulatory reform, including a structured process for the assessment of the economic impact of EU legislation, and an undertaking to come up with specific proposals by the end of 2005;
- a pledge to defend the standpoint of the European Commission and, more generally, the European interest;
- an undertaking to dialogue with, and be open to, the European Parliament.

on the overall assessment

On the basis of a joint evaluation meeting of 7 October of the two Committees which took place after the hearing, the following was agreed by the members:

Mr Charlie McCreevy was fluent and relaxed during his Hearing and convinced the members of his skills as a politician and an articulate communicator, with a clear and political vision for the future development of the Internal Market.

Mr McCreevy's answers were, for the most part, straightforward, and delivered with a refreshing and engaging sense of humour. Nonetheless, some members found him evasive and hesitant on a number of issues, and looked for a more pro-active approach to the role and responsibilities expected from a future Commissioner.

Although a number of members considered that his approach to several answers reflected his long service in the Council of Ministers more than was appropriate for the office of Commissioner, most members were of the view that Mr McCreevy's ministerial experience could be an asset and that he had demonstrated his potential to be independent and inclusive. Equally, he was deemed to have demonstrated his willingness to take political initiatives and to involve the European Parliament at the appropriate stage of the legislative procedure.

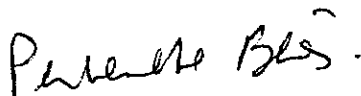
Mr McCreevy showed a coherent grasp of his brief, and was able to deal comprehensively with most technical questions, with an outlook which was pragmatic but not dogmatic.

In general terms, the Commissioner designate gave a convincing demonstration of his personal and professional capabilities. He assured the members that he desired the job of European Commissioner, that he would complete his mandate and that he would put his European responsibility before personal or national considerations.

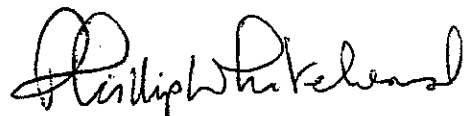
In short, Mr McCreevy demonstrated to the satisfaction of most members that he was capable of assuming high public office as a Member of the European Commission.

The above reflects the opinion expressed by a large majority of the Members of our two Committees.

Yours sincerely,



Pervenche BERÈS



Phillip WHITEHEAD

DEPUTAZIONE AL PARLAMENTO EUROPEO

Présidente Commission Emploi et Affaires Sociales

PK/sa

310496 11.10.2004

CONFIDENTIALMr Joseph BORRELL FONTELLES
President
PHS 11B011

D(2004)40799

Dear President,

In accordance with Rule 99 of the Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs held a public hearing with Mr Vladimír Špidla, Commissioner designate, on September 27, 2004. Subject to the positive conclusion of the nomination procedure, Mr Špidla will be responsible for employment, social affairs and equal opportunities.

Prior to the hearing, the Committee submitted a written questionnaire to which the Commissioner designate replied in writing.

In his introductory statement, Mr Špidla presented his priorities as follows:

- to further the European social model,
- to promote good quality employment,
- to fight against social exclusion,
- to promote equal opportunities,
- to support the adaptation of social security systems to demographic change,
- to nurture an effective European social dialogue.

He foresees a partnership with the European Parliament on the basis of regular contacts with the Employment Committee and the presidents of political groups.

He highlighted the important role of the social partners and of the open method of co-ordination, explaining that legislation should only be used where necessary, as "it is undesirable to have a large amount of legislation, which is not respected by the people of Europe".

He declared that enlargement is not an obstacle for the EU to reach the Lisbon targets and develop the social model. He emphasised the role of the European social model as an essential element of the EU's competitiveness and stressed "quality of life" as the political objective that

DEPUTATO AL PARLAMENTO EUROPEO

Présidente Commission Emploi et Affaires Sociales

can be served through competitiveness. In that context, he highlighted the interplay between streamlining employment policy, productivity and social cohesion.

In relation to the Employment Strategy, he considered it essential to involve the European Parliament, as well as national parliaments along with the social partners in this process. He also expressed the wish of strengthening the link between the European Social Fund and employment. A cornerstone of his policy will be to support labour creation in Europe and avoid the mass transfer of businesses out of Europe.

He included among his political priorities the co-ordination of social security systems, the fight against poverty and social exclusion, particularly in relation to young people, and the promotion of co-operation between schools and enterprises.

During the debate, the Commissioner designate answered questions relating, in particular, to the following issues:

- the implementation of the Lisbon process,
- the free movement of people,
- the draft Constitution,
- the horizontal approach in social policy within the Commission,
- the adequacy of policy tools to strike a balance between employment, sustainable development and economic growth,
- combating unemployment particularly of the young and the elderly,
- the revision of the Working Time Directive and the compromise regarding the "opt- out" clause,
- the European Works Council Directive,
- immigration,
- repealing legislation which no longer meets its purpose,
- the proposal for a Directive on Services,
- combining professional and family life.

He made in particular the following commitments with regard to the policy areas he will be responsible for.

Mr Špidla committed himself to closely monitoring data in relation to the free movement of workers in the Member States, with a view to encouraging them to abolish the current restrictions after two years and opening up their labour markets.

He made it clear that he is in favour of closer co-ordination of social and economic policies and of promoting trans-departmental co-operation within the Commission.

DEPUTATO AL PARLAMENTO EUROPEO

Présidente Commission Emploi et Affaires Sociales

In relation to the "Services" Directive he pledged to reconsider its social impact and to give favourable consideration to amendments made by the European Parliament.

In relation to the revision of the Working Time Directive, he undertook to find a compromise which will be accepted by a larger majority of those involved and to review the opt-out clause which is currently included in the Commission's proposal.

He expressed support for further developing national action plans to combat unemployment with a particular focus on older people and the young.

He pledged to review Community legislation, which may have an impact on small and medium sized enterprises.

He made a personal commitment to proposing a specific Directive on disability.

Finally, he undertook to issue a Commission Communication on minimum income standards in the EU.

On basis of the reactions of the Members present at the hearing and the results of the evaluation meeting of the Employment and Social Affairs committee, which took place after the hearing, I am able to provide you with the following assessment of the hearing.

Mr Špidla has integrity and the necessary knowledge to assume the high office of Commissioner responsible for employment, social affairs and equal opportunities. The Members consider that for him to be successful in this position he has to convince the European citizens of the benefits of a strong social model.

The Members of my committee expect the Commissioner to forcefully deliver on his priorities and the above mentioned commitments, with enthusiasm and dynamism. In this context my committee will pay particular attention to his ability to further the social "acquis" and his co-operation with the European Parliament.

The elements contained in the present letter reflect the opinion of the large majority of the Members of my committee.

Yours sincerely,



Ottaviano del Turco

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY THE CHAIRWOMAN

CONFIDENTIAL

02-COM.FEMM(2004)D/42345

Mr Josep BORRELL FONTELLES
President
European Parliament

Brussels, 11 October 2004

Dear Mr President,

Pursuant to Rule 99 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality held a public hearing on 27 September 2004 with Mr Vladimír Špidla, Commissioner-designate, who, subject to a positive outcome to the nomination procedure, will be in charge of employment, social affairs and equal opportunities.

Prior to the hearing the committee had submitted a written questionnaire to the Commissioner-designate, to which he had replied comprehensively.

In his opening address, Mr Špidla stated that equality of opportunity was one of the EU's fundamental values. Much progress had been made in that area, but problems still existed, such as, for instance, trafficking in women and unequal pay.

The main issues on which the members present put questions were as follows:

- the causes of violence, abuse and prostitution, combating trafficking in women, and the rehabilitation of victims;
- designating 2006 as European Year Against Violence;
- gender mainstreaming and the establishment of a Gender Equality Institute;
- equal opportunities in connection with the Structural Funds;
- Commission financial support for European equal-opportunities organisations;
- gender budgeting and the new financial perspective;
- information technologies and the sexual exploitation of women;
- opinion on the Green Paper on the fight against discrimination and update on preparations for a directive on gender-based discrimination away from the work place (Article 13 of the EC Treaty);
- specific measures for reconciling working life and family life;
- situation of women in Turkey;
- discrimination against Roma women and forced sterilisation in the Czech Republic.

During the debate, Mr Špidla made specific commitments regarding his prospective Commission portfolio. He:

- stated that considerable progress had been made in Turkey and that he would be committed to combating discrimination against women there; the evaluation criteria had to include equal opportunities, but, as the Prodi Commission report on Turkey would be issued in a few days' time, he had not wanted to comment; he added that he was not sufficiently well informed about the situation of women in Turkey and that therefore, with regard to assessing Turkey, he had referred questioners to Commissioner Verheugen;
- advocated the establishment of a Gender Equality Institute and proposed that it be set up in one of the 10 new Member States and be given a sufficient budget and sufficient staffing;
- advocated better coordination of efforts in the justice and policing fields in order to combat the trafficking of women, which was disgraceful; the EU had a responsibility to provide support for the thousands of victims of trafficking; he stressed the importance of the various methods used to combat trafficking in women, such as the legislation introduced in Sweden and the methods introduced in other Member States;
- pointed out that the DAPHNE programmes had been successful and should therefore be continued;
- agreed with the idea of designating 2006 the European Year Against Domestic Violence; the term 'domestic violence' should preferably be used, since violence against men did exist, though was less common; he agreed that it was necessary to establish what led to violence and prostitution;
- stated that forced sterilisation had never been practised in the Czech Republic and rebuffed such accusations as unacceptable;
- was in favour of funding for as many European-level equal-opportunities organisations as possible;
- pointed out that the equal opportunities area received significant Structural Fund assistance, in particular from the European Social Fund;
- pointed out that information technologies and the Internet played a central role in international crime; this had to be debated and there had to be a Commission strategy.

On the basis of the reactions of the members present at the hearing, and the comments made by my committee's coordinators at a meeting (which I chaired) following the hearing, this committee's assessment is as follows:

We take the view, on the basis of the answers by the Commissioner-designate to the questionnaire, that he meets requirements in terms of integrity and independence and that he benefits from his professional experience. The Commissioner-designate intends to work together with Parliament and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. He said that he would chair the Group of Commissioners on Equal Opportunities, to a meeting of which members of this committee are invited each year, and went so far as to identify the areas in which he would like more specific cooperation, including rehabilitation of women victims of trafficking and prevention of violence and sexual exploitation at the workplace.

The Commissioner-designate, among the offices he has held, used to be Minister for Employment and Social Affairs in the Czech Republic. Accordingly, he will have gained appropriate experience concerning inter alia the labour market, equal opportunities, social integration and inclusion, policy on the family, and pensions.

This committee's overall assessment of the hearing is that the impression the Commissioner-designate gave of his professional capabilities and personal qualities, and of his ability to assume the high office for which he has been nominated, is encouraging. However, it is a pity that his replies to some questions were incomplete, e.g. on the situation of women in Turkey. The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality would therefore like the Commissioner-designate to submit a written reply to it on this issue.

This is the agreed opinion of the committee.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Záborská

310270 05.10.2004

Mr Josep BORRELL FONTELLES
President
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Dear President,

In accordance with Rule 99 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the Committee on International Trade held a public hearing on 4 October 2004 with Mr. Peter Mandelson, Commissioner designate, who, subject to the positive conclusion of the nomination procedure, will be in charge of Trade.

Prior to the hearing, the committee submitted a written questionnaire to which the Commissioner nominee replied in writing in a satisfactory way.

In his introductory statement Mr. Mandelson touched upon relations with the European Parliament, the most important issues of international and European trade policy, namely the Doha round and its implications for developing countries, as well as upon his personal motivation and his determination to defend the European interest.

During the debate the Commissioner designate answered questions relating to the following issues in particular:

- The role of the European Parliament in trade policy and, most importantly, the need to improve the communication and information channels between the Commission and the European Parliament;
- The state-of-play and future of the Doha Round, and, in particular, the ways to make sure that this Round really works in the interest of developing countries;
- The Parliamentary dimension of the WTO;
- The preservation of the interests of Least Developed Countries in the definition of the Community's trade policy, especially in the sugar and textiles sectors. In the case of sugar, the need to support ACP producers and ensure a financially viable EU sugar regime;
- The ongoing trade negotiations with Mercosur;
- Trade in services, especially, public services;
- Agriculture in the context of the recent Geneva agreement involving export subsidies;
- Transatlantic relations.

He made the following commitments with regard to "Relations with the European Parliament":

- Keep the European Parliament fully informed before the opening of negotiations and during the conduct and conclusion of international negotiations, by regularly taking part in formal and informal meetings with the European Parliament (in particular the Committee on International Trade);
- Send the Parliament all documents that are being sent to the Council's special ("133") committee at the same time;
- Inform the European Parliament on the same basis as the Council;
- Go beyond the existing practice in informing the Parliament, meeting the Committee on International Trade frequently and participating in a regular question time there.

Regarding policy areas for which he will be responsible, he made the following commitments:

- State that trade helps the economic development of the EU as well as in developing countries;
- Maintain the EU's position of not offering any new commitments during the services negotiations concerning health and education public services;

PE 349.302/BUR/14

- Pursue a pro-development trade agenda;
- Oppose the total deregulation of public services;
- Bring forward legislation to implement the WTO agreement on generic drugs.
- Support a reform of WTO rules in order to make them more inclusive vis-à-vis developing countries;
- Favour the progressive limitation of the trade distorting features of the Common Agricultural Policy;

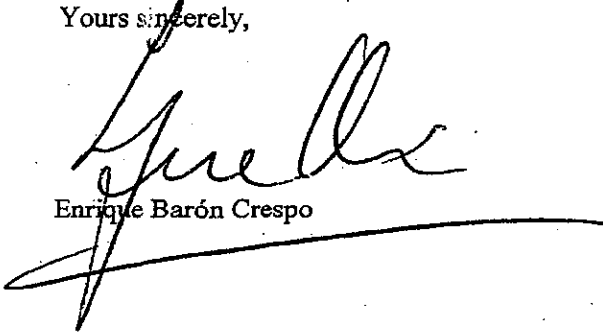
On basis of the reactions of the Members present at the hearing and the results of the evaluation meeting of the International Trade Committee, which took place after the hearing, I am able to provide you with the following assessment of the hearing:

- Mr. Mandelson's personal qualifications are appropriate. Although he has not referred to any specific training in the area of his competence, he seems to have made himself familiar with trade policy and has been able to answer questions thoroughly;
- He has put himself forward as a strong defender of European integration and has committed himself to defend the European interest in the future;
- His attitude towards the European Parliament was very positive. He wants to uphold the commitments entered into by the current Trade Commissioner and go beyond;
- The Commissioner designate gave proof of a good understanding of the connections between trade policy and development, particularly with regards to agriculture;
- Mr Mandelson supports the parliamentary dimension of the WTO and the European Parliament's work to strengthen it;
- On some issues, the Committee believes that more precision will be needed in future discussions with the Commissioner designate.

In general terms, the Commissioner designate has given a convincing impression of his personal and professional capacities and his aptitude to assume the high office for which he has been proposed. However, two groups (GUE/NGL and Greens-EFA) do not agree with this assessment.

The elements contained in the present letter reflect the opinion expressed by the majority of the International Trade Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Enrique Barón Crespo

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND MONETARY AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON THE INTERNAL MARKET AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

THE CHAIRMEN

310471 11.10.2004

Mr. Josep BORRELL FONTELLES
President of the European Parliament

- CONFIDENTIAL -

Dear President,

In accordance with Rule 99 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs held on 7 October 2004 a public hearing with Mrs. Ingrida Udre, Commissioner-Designate, who, subject to the conclusion of the nomination procedure, will be in charge of Taxation and Customs Policy.

Prior to the hearing, the committee submitted a written questionnaire to which the Commissioner-Designate replied in writing, in a satisfactory manner overall.

General assessment

From Mrs. Ingrida Udre's answers to a series of questions Members were unable to reach definite conclusions about allegations of financial irregularities in the funding of her political party. Members recommend that you ask President-Designate Barroso to investigate fully, and to report to the European Parliament, on the basis of the information duly provided to the European Institutions, on the integrity of Mrs. Ingrida Udre, including obtaining an undertaking from her that, if any of the alleged illegal acts were subsequently proven against her, she will immediately resign her position. Members also noted that she has not yet fully disengaged from her political commitments in Latvia and assume that, if confirmed, she would complete this process by 1 November.

Taxation issues

In her first introductory statement, Mrs. Ingrida Udre touched principally on the challenges which she saw for the Commission's term and beyond: the issue of tax competition, the elimination of tax obstacles, progress in the field of taxation taking into account the unanimity requirement in Council, possible enhanced cooperations and subsidiarity, a consolidated company tax base, tax policy linked to job creation and the Lisbon strategy, the VAT regime and the question of VAT fraud.

PE 349.302/BUR/24

During the debate that followed, the nominee Commissioner answered questions relating to, in particular, low company tax rates in some Member States and whether tax dumping exists in the EU, the problem of double taxation, healthy and unhealthy tax competition, excise duties, VAT fraud, the possibility of a 'green-tax', the issue of a European tax to finance the EU budget, reduced rates of VAT on labour intensive services, as well as inter-institutional relations.

On the basis of the reactions of the Members present at the hearing, we are able to provide you with the following assessment of the hearing insofar as taxation policy is concerned:

Whilst Mrs. Ingrida Udre demonstrated a sufficient grasp overall of the issues for which she would be responsible, her answers to some specific questions were often vague, even though she showed some knowledge of the field. She clearly expressed her position in favour of tax competition, with a limited vision for the future, and in particular the Members considered that she did not have a clear sense of the Commission's right of initiative.

Customs issues

During the debate the Commissioner designate answered questions relating to the Customs Union, in particular, the following issues:

- protecting consumers and businesses against counterfeiting;
- how the Customs Union and the implementation of electronic customs can contribute to competitiveness;
- how to consolidate the Customs Union in regard to the new Member States;
- pending disputes with the United States in the area of customs.

The members of Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection found that Mrs. Ingrida Udre's answers, although they fell somewhat short of a comprehensive vision on how the sector could be developed in the five years of a Commissioner's mandate, nevertheless demonstrated a commendable understanding of, and familiarity with, the technical issues. They noted her objective of promoting a fair trading environment for business, combating fraud and contributing in this way to the European Union's competitiveness.

Mrs. Ingrida Udre expressed her willingness to take a co-operative approach in relations with the European Parliament.

Against this background and subject to satisfactory resolution of the allegations regarding Mrs. Ingrida Udre's integrity, a majority of Members of both committees, after prolonged discussion, considered that she was acceptable for the position for which she has been proposed.

Yours sincerely,



Philip WHITEHEAD



Pervenche BERÈS

