

Brussels, 27 November 2009

In the political guidelines for the new Commission which I presented to the European Parliament in September, I set out why this is a time of great opportunity for Europe. Our ambition should be to use the next five years to put the enlarged Europe firmly on the path to a sustainable and successful future. I am delighted that you will be joining the Commission to work within these guidelines and to help deliver our agenda for 2020.

The Commission is the essential motor for the European Union's efforts to address tomorrow's challenges and to use the benefits of the Lisbon Treaty to best effect. Europe needs a strong, political and dynamic Commission to offer the leadership and direction to drive this work forward.

The portfolio for Regional Policy

You will be the Commissioner with responsibility for Regional policy. As in the past, changing circumstances may also mean that I will need to take a fresh look at the mix of portfolios in the course of the mandate and may change responsibilities accordingly.

Regional policy plays a key role in strengthening social and territorial cohesion. The Lisbon Treaty introduces the notion of territorial cohesion to complement social and economic cohesion. I would like you to work with national, regional and local actors, as well as the Committee of the Regions to define these concepts and give them real meaning on the ground.

- One of your main tasks will be to prepare our future Cohesion policy for Europe's regions as they tackle new challenges and move into tomorrow's economy. The Regional Policy should support and help to deliver our EU 2020 vision. Shaping cohesion policy for the period after 2013 should be based on a comprehensive evaluation of the value added and effectiveness of past programmes, on simpler rules and streamlined management processes and on greater coherence and coordination with the other EU spending programmes.

Mr. Johannes HAHN
Commissioner Designate

- The European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund are amongst the main spending policies of the Union. In the context of serious fiscal constraints, the added value of the EU budget and the quality of our expenditure, as well as new and innovative sources of financing will all need to come together to promote sustainable development across all of Europe's regions. This will give you a particular responsibility for supervising expenditure in line with the financial regulation and sound financial management practices.

To help you to fulfil these responsibilities, DG REGIO will be under your authority.

Working together as a College

As President, I am determined to ensure that the College of Commissioners is the political heart of the Commission. Being a College means that all can contribute to decisions, and all share collective responsibility once initiatives are adopted. The Commission must be a team working together effectively to ensure the coherence and consistency of Commission policies. I will lead regular meetings and orientation debates to discuss important or cross-cutting proposals during their preparatory phase, to ensure relevant input from all Commissioners. My Cabinet, the Secretariat General and the Legal Service will work closely with your Cabinet and your services to make this approach a reality. As you know, and according to the Treaty, the President is the guarantor of collegiality.

Our effectiveness and credibility rests upon the quality of our output, our professionalism, and our respect for the highest standards of public service ethics. This requires a rigorous smart regulation agenda, respecting subsidiarity and proportionality and devoting our attention to where we can bring clear added value; particular attention to sound financial management; and full respect for the Code of Conduct of the Members of the European Commission. It also, of course, means that we must stay focused on our overriding mission to promote and defend the common European interest. I will establish the guidelines within which the Commission is to work and we will discuss them in more detail at one of our forthcoming seminars.

An effective Commission must also form a successful partnership with the Member States and the other institutions, and in particular with the European Parliament. The Treaty of Lisbon sets out the roles of the institutions very clearly. As you know, according to the Treaty, the Commission "shall ensure the application of the Treaties and of measures adopted by the institutions pursuant to them". The Treaty will also bring an important new dimension to our relations with national parliaments.

I would like us to take our partnership with the European Parliament to a new level. That requires an investment, in terms of political attention and in terms of time, from every member of the Commission. Availability for plenary sessions and committee meetings of the Parliament is a central part of the responsibilities of Commissioners, and directly linked to the accountability and legitimacy of the Commission as a whole.

Our first opportunity to start this process will be when you take part in hearings with the parliamentary committee covering your portfolio area. This is one of the foundation stones of the Commission's democratic accountability: it is not only an opportunity to set out your ambitions for your portfolio, but also to illustrate your understanding of the role of the Commission and the obligations of Commissioners.

My experience of a first mandate has shown that when the Commission focuses on the key challenges for Europe, and when we work together effectively, we can deliver enormous benefits to Europeans. I look forward to working together with you to shape a successful future for the EU for the decades to come.

José Manuel BARROSO