

**ANSWERS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE
Johannes HAHN
European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations**

1. General competence, European commitment and personal independence

What aspects of your personal qualifications and experience are particularly relevant for becoming Commissioner and promoting the European general interest, particularly in the area you would be responsible for? What motivates you? How will you contribute to putting forward the strategic agenda of the Commission?

What guarantees of independence are you able to give the European Parliament, and how would you make sure that any past, current or future activities you carry out could not cast doubt on the performance of your duties within the Commission?

I have been a Commissioner for 5 years and I have demonstrated in that time my commitment to the European interest and my independence, both in the decisions I have made and the political influence I have wielded.

In my current portfolio I have initiated and overseen a fundamental reform of Regional Policy. I have helped Europe's regions to resist the crisis at a time when public investment dropped dramatically in nearly every part of Europe. Under my lead, the Commission, side by side with the European Parliament, showed in concrete terms (i.e. reprogramming, lowering of co-financing levels) that the European institutions can act with flexibility and determination for the benefit of European citizens. Working in partnership with the European Parliament and Member States, we turned this policy into Europe's main investment tool, implementing the wider goals of Europe 2020. That has been an inclusive process involving civil society, business, social partners and political representatives at every level. Structural reforms and good governance, essential conditions to achieve common European goals, have been the guiding principles of our work.

I see a clear link between my current portfolio and my future responsibility as European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement negotiations. Achieving economic development and integration through concrete projects and strategic investments is one of the key elements of experience which I will bring to my new role. During my mandate we have pioneered a new form of regional cooperation in our macro-regional strategies already involving countries in the Western Balkans, and some members of the Eastern neighbourhood.

What motivates me is to use the transformative power of the European Union and its various instruments to improve people's lives, their prospects and prosperity. The EU was founded to promote peace through closer integration. If confirmed, that will be my mission with partners beyond the EU's borders.

During my whole professional and political career, Europe and the European Union have always formed the broader framework of my work. I have been committed to the idea of a united Europe without borders, from the very beginning of my political activities.

Regional Policy required working and engaging with nearly every policy area within the Commission (from energy to transport, from social policy to research, from environment to macro-economic policy). This experience will certainly serve me well in a Commission where team work and the ability to promote joined-up thinking to deliver European priorities is a key objective, and particularly in Neighbourhood policy and

Enlargement negotiations, where co-ordination of our instruments and policies is crucial to achieve maximum impact.

It goes without saying that I will exercise my function and work as a Member of the European Commission in full independence, as I have done over the last five years, committed solely to the common European interest. I will continue to avoid any situation that could call into question my independence or impartiality.

I am fully aware of my obligations under the Treaty, and remain deeply committed to respecting the highest ethical standards as set out both in the Treaty and the Code of Conduct for Commissioners. My Declaration of interests is complete and available to the public, and will be updated should there ever be changes to report.

2. Management of the portfolio and cooperation with the European Parliament

How would you assess your role as a Member of the College of Commissioners? In what respect would you consider yourself responsible and accountable to the Parliament for your actions and for those of your departments?

What specific commitments are you prepared to make in terms of enhanced transparency, increased cooperation and effective follow-up to Parliament's positions and requests for legislative initiatives? In relation to planned initiatives or ongoing procedures, are you ready to provide Parliament with information and documents on an equal footing with the Council?

As I have demonstrated in the last 5 years, I fully subscribe to collegiality as the key principle for the Commission's functioning. It is the basis for balanced and well-considered decisions that take into account the different aspects of the decision-making process as well as different opinions and approaches. It ensures coherence in our policies and proposals.

Within the overall competence of the Commission as a college, I see myself politically responsible and accountable for the activities of my DG. Good relations between the directorate general, my cabinet and me are based on loyalty, mutual respect and trust, transparency and an open information flow between the service and the political level. This is a necessary condition for exercising my responsibility.

I am fully aware of the obligations foreseen in the Treaties to ensure the independence of the Members of the European Commission. I fully support our new commitment to transparency set out in the political guidelines by the President-elect. I commit to making public all the contacts and meetings, I hold with professional organisations or self-employed individuals on any matter relating to EU policy making and implementation.

I am committed to furthering our partnership with the other institutions, notably the European Parliament. My understanding of our 28 Member States through exercise of my current portfolio will be of invaluable experience not just in policy terms but in communicating our wider European goals to citizens.

As I have demonstrated in my relationship with the European Parliament and its honourable Members, I am committed to continuing our open and constructive political dialogue on any matters of my portfolio.

Concerning the follow-up to European Parliament's positions and requests, I will apply the provisions of the Framework Agreement and, in my areas of responsibility, make sure that the Commission responds to parliamentary resolutions or requests made on the basis of Article 225 TFEU, within 3 months after their adoption. In this context, I support and fully endorse the commitment made by President-elect Juncker that the future Commission will be particularly attentive to legislative initiative reports.

I am at your disposal for regular exchanges of view with the responsible Committee on on-going and planned initiatives and to present the annual progress reports and strategy papers directly after adoption by the College and before presentation to the press. I will inform you regularly in writing on my visits to our partner countries and I am ready to engage in frequent meetings with the AFET bureau, group coordinators and rapporteurs to discuss Parliament's position and to share information. A key element for me will be your inter-parliamentary meetings with the Parliaments of the partner countries. These meetings represent a great opportunity to enhance EU ties with national parliaments and I will attend myself whenever timing and venue allow.

Questions from the Committee on Foreign Affairs

3. On inter-institutional relations

With a view to ensuring appropriate parliamentary scrutiny, can you commit to ensure a better flow (type, frequency, content) of information shared by EU delegations in enlargement countries and neighbouring countries (including political reporting)? Which actions will you take to ensure that this Committee is pro-actively and systematically provided with concrete information about all stages of the negotiations, signature and implementation of international agreements? How do you intend to assist this Committee in the monitoring of the implementation of these agreements?

I fully recognise that your work needs to be based on facts and assessments and reports provided by the European Commission and the EU Delegations. I will engage in a constant dialogue with the European Parliament to inform you about developments in the neighbouring and pre-accession countries and our relations with them, including the preparation and implementation of international agreements.

My team and I will ensure that all letters, written questions and other communications from Members of the European Parliament are replied to in a comprehensive and timely way. I will instruct my services to continue to share reports from EU Delegations related to the accession process and I will work with the HRVP on how best to ensure a regular flow of information according to established practice and agreements. As regards international agreements and accession negotiations, I will ensure that the Parliament is kept informed and has the opportunity to express its views and make recommendations at all stages, which naturally I will take very seriously.

I am committed to ensuring an appropriate parliamentary scrutiny and keeping you informed about my work in a timely and comprehensive manner.

Neighbourhood policy being the corner-stone of EU foreign policy, how do you see the division of tasks with the High Representative/Vice President of the Commission on the neighbourhood policy? Which actions do you intend to take to ensure coherence of EU's external policies and improve policy formulation?

As President-elect Juncker set out, "the new High Representative will play her role as a Commission Vice-President to the full. She will notably steer and coordinate the work of all Commissioners with regard to external relations through a Commissioners' Group on External Action to develop a joint approach." I am fully committed to this joint effort and will closely coordinate my work with the HRVP and the other Commissioners to ensure full consistency of the EU's foreign policy approach. I will pay special attention to aspects related to approximation with the EU acquis.

I am committed to working in the closest possible partnership with the new High Representative/Vice-President to develop pragmatic ways to address together the many challenges before us. I also stand ready to deputise for the new High Representative/ Vice-President in areas of Commission competence.

In line with the provisions contained in the legal basis of ENI and IPA, can you confirm that the Commission will adopt amending delegated acts at mid-term review to confirm or amend the priorities defined in their annexes? How do you intend to engage in the Strategic Dialogue with this Committee?

I am looking forward to conducting a Strategic Dialogue with the European Parliament on these matters.

I am fully committed to implementing the obligations set out in the ENI and IPA II regulations, including those related to the empowerment to adopt delegated acts. Following the publication of the mid-term review report, and based upon the recommendations contained therein, I will propose to the College to adopt a delegated act amending the relevant annexes of the ENI and IPA II regulations.

I have also taken good note of the commitments entered into by the Barroso II Commission as part of the overall compromise between the institutions on both the IPA and ENI regulations. I will conduct a Strategic Dialogue with the European Parliament in preparing the mid-term review on the implementation of the instruments and before presenting any new or substantially revised programming document of a strategic nature during the period of validity of the ENI and IPA.

Our Strategic Dialogue in advance of preparing the mid-term review will provide an important opportunity to take stock of developments in the first three years and also to consider possible adjustments, as appropriate, of the list of the priorities set out in the respective annexes II.

As regards my engagement in the Strategic Dialogue, I am committed to a constructive relationship with the European Parliament. I look forward to maintaining and where possible strengthening the institutional commitment to the Dialogue.

In particular, I would welcome the opportunity to make a clearer connection between our discussions on political matters and debates on deployment of our financial assistance.

4. Policy framework for Neighbourhood

Do you consider the current policy framework covering under a single umbrella 16 countries from Morocco to Ukraine still relevant, given diverging prospects for political stability, security, capacity for reform and commitments to reform? What concrete initiatives will you present to reform the Neighbourhood policy, and how do you intend to follow up on European Parliament's resolutions on the matter?

Since the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was launched ten years ago, there have been profound changes in our neighbourhood. Although the ENP was revised in 2011 in response to the Arab Spring, the instability throughout the neighbourhood but in particular in Ukraine, Syria and Libya underlines the need for further change. President-elect Juncker has asked me to take stock and suggest a way forward within the first year of the new mandate, and I regard this task as both essential and pressing.

Without prejudging the outcome of this reflection, I believe the ENP continues to provide a broad, overarching framework for our action in the neighbourhood, based on European interests as well as values, ensuring coherence of all policy instruments of EU external action, and underlining the high importance the EU attaches to relations with its nearest partners.

If confirmed, it will be my priority to ensure that the ENP is fitter for purpose and that it contributes more effectively to preserving Europe's security and values. To achieve this, it is clear that the ENP must be further adapted to and targeted on our neighbours' individual situations and needs.

The ENP needs to become more flexible. Our neighbouring countries are too diverse to apply a one-size-fits-all approach. The ENP needs to be able to respond more quickly and effectively to crises. The policy needs to work not just country by country, but field by field, to ensure that we have the right tools to deliver on all key issues, including energy, free trade, migration, and with a particular emphasis on good governance. The Union must deliver when our partners do, but also have a clear strategy how to maintain our influence with partners who do not, or who do not at present, embrace European values. Lastly, the ENP needs to allow for stronger joint ownership of bilateral relations with each partner country. I want to see more local buy-in, with a strengthened role both for businesses and civil society.

I will work closely with the HR/VP on the changes that are necessary to bring the ENP into today's world. I will closely associate the European Parliament in this process and look forward to an intense dialogue to ensure that the European Parliament's expertise, as reflected in its resolutions on the matter, is used to its full potential. The overall objective remains as clear as ever: building as close a political association and economic integration as possible, in the joint interests of the EU and its partners.

To what extent would you introduce some further differentiation (political, financial etc.) on the basis of needs, merits and EU priorities? Which groups of countries would you then envisage for policy differentiation, both in the Southern and in the Eastern Neighbourhoods? How will you ensure the implementation of the Human Rights conditionality in Neighbourhood Policy?

Differentiation is a core element of the ENP, and we should go further to take into account the situation in each country. Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine in the East, as well as Morocco and Tunisia in the South, are all willing to move ahead with reforms and to form very close links with the EU. I will make sure that they receive all the support they need, in a tailor-made way, to continue the political and economic reform processes. The success of the democratic transition in Tunisia is an important example for others in the region that demonstrates the

benefits of the choices it has made. Cooperation with other countries might in some cases have to be less ambitious, and we need to reflect further on how to pursue relations on a case by case basis.

A priority for me in the East must be to contribute to a solution of the crisis in Ukraine. In the South the EU must support a political solution to the crisis in Syria, with close attention too, to developments in Libya.

Democracy, rule of law and the respect of human rights are essential elements of all the EU's partnerships and cooperation agreements with third countries. Human Rights conditionality must be used astutely to give us more leverage over reforms. It also impacts on other areas including trade, political dialogue and migration. I will strengthen these tools, broadening the more-for-more principle, developing a long-term strategy for promoting European values and in particular by targeting support to civil society in our partner countries.

Bearing in mind that strong democratic principles and a solid civil society remain an objective for all countries of the Neighbourhood, which policy tools, positive leverage and rewards would you foresee for countries that are particularly effective in their reform process?

Civil society organisations play a crucial role in vitalising the public debate, providing policy input, and developing new initiatives. I see them as major actors in promoting democracy and human rights, the rule of law and good governance as well as sustainable economic and social development.

I will work closely with the European Parliament to explore ways to further strengthen positive leverage on democracy and support civil society organisations. The forthcoming review should consider how the EU can maximise its influence, going beyond the current ENP instruments to reward good progress.

5. Policy framework for Enlargement

Which actions do you intend to take to maintain the momentum of enlargement and keep the respective countries focused on preparation for accession?

The prospect of EU accession is a major anchor and driver of reforms, and we must use this leverage wisely. At the same time, I am determined that each country should join the EU only once they are fully prepared. Quality goes before speed. Moreover, as our citizens need to digest the addition of 13 Member States in the past ten years, no further enlargement will take place over the next five years.

I will continue work preparing the countries through the enlargement framework, including the accession negotiations, and the Stabilisation and Association Process. Our partners must understand that these preparations will take time, but that our commitments to them remain in place. Deep reforms are needed and can only be achieved gradually, with our strong support.

The negotiation process provides a robust framework with clear guidance. I will ensure that every country understands clearly what is required of them to move forward, focussing their efforts efficiently on the most important next steps. Especially on the key rule of law chapters I intend to increase high level political dialogue and engagement with the countries and to use the full potential of IPA II to incentivise reforms. I will strive for more consistency in our approach, to ensure we are seen to keep our side of the bargain. We must be seen as credible, fair, and supportive partners.

The role of Members of the European Parliament is very important. The Joint Parliamentary Committee can each help maintain the momentum for reforms by working with counterparts in the national parliaments of the enlargement countries.

What further actions do you intend to take to develop socio-economic transformation, including economic governance, democracy, the rule of law, including the independence of the judiciary, and the fight against corruption in enlargement countries?

These issues are fundamental to preparing each country to meet the Copenhagen criteria, and in due course to function as a fully effective Member State.

On rule of law, the functioning of an independent and professional judiciary is key. Tackling organised crime and corruption and establishing clear track records of investigations, prosecutions, convictions and appropriate sentencing is also essential. Fundamental rights need to be fully respected in practice not just in law. It is

particularly important to ensure integration of minority groups and prevent discrimination on any grounds. These issues will be our priority with all countries and in our annual progress reports.

I would also like to improve the way we support countries to meet the economic criteria. We need to reflect the very substantial changes in the EU's own economic governance and use them as extra levers to push reforms in the enlargement countries. We need to prioritise jobs, growth and investment through an increased focus on key structural reforms. We will allocate increased IPA funding for this purpose and work with IFIs to multiply our leverage on the reform process.

In terms of democratic transformation, national parliaments need to be at the heart of the reform process in each of the enlargement countries to ensure democratic accountability and inclusiveness. We will work even more closely with local civil society actors to anchor reforms across society.

I want these fundamentals to be at the heart of our political dialogue and a main focus for our assistance. Regional cooperation will also be a focus of my work to overcome the legacy of the past.

Should an enlargement country take measures or adopt policies that are not in line or compatible with the acquis, values and principles of the EU, which concrete steps would you take?

I will use the full range of tools available, in particular the frameworks for the accession negotiations, to encourage countries to continue on the right track. The system of benchmarks across the 35 negotiating chapters provides us with levers to encourage continued alignment. The most recent negotiating frameworks introduced the possibility to stop negotiations on other chapters, if progress on rule of law chapters slows down. All negotiating frameworks include a clause allowing for suspension of overall negotiations in case of a serious and persistent breach of EU values. For countries not yet negotiating accession, the Stabilisation and Association Process also provides mechanisms to deal with breaches of obligations under the Stabilisation and Association Agreements.

I will continue to use the Commission progress reports to signal shortcomings and draw the necessary conclusions, including changes to the assessment of compliance with the political criteria if necessary. IPA funding should be used more to reward those making most progress.

Preventive engagement is also key and I will not hesitate in my own political contacts to pass strong messages when required to ensure EU principles and values are respected.

What concrete proposals would you make to ensure that enlargement policy is coordinated, coherent and consistent with other policy instruments of EU foreign policy?

I will co-operate closely with the HR/VP, and together we will work closely with key members of the College to ensure that all EU internal policy priorities on issues such as rule of law, jobs and growth and energy, continue to be fully reflected in our European Neighbourhood and Enlargement policies.

To what extent could enlargement and neighbourhood policies interact (principles, policy frameworks, financial incentives etc.) and help define a potential intermediate status between enlargement and neighbouring countries?

The European Union has a clear strategic interest to develop relations in all areas in the immediate proximity. Many of the structural challenges facing the pre-accession and other neighbouring countries are similar, including the need to improve governance, make economic and other reforms.

Similarly, there are parallels between what the EU can offer to partners from both groups. For example, many obligations under the DCFTAs and Association Agreements (AAs), recently concluded with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, are inspired by those under the SAAs and in some cases the acquis.

The announced establishment of a Directorate General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations will provide added opportunities and synergies for a more coordinated and strategic approach to both enlargement and neighbourhood countries, at the same time as benefiting from internal concentration of structures and political and sectoral expertise. We will apply lessons learned from the use of our financial instruments, and continue to provide technical assistance under Taixex for both enlargement and neighbourhood

countries. The reflection on ENP that has been announced will provide an opportunity to consider whether new options should be considered.

In both Enlargement and ENP, I will seek to achieve a higher profile for the EU as a key actor in its own neighbourhood, making clearer both to our citizens and to our partners the contribution we are making to prosperity and stability in our mutual interest.