



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion concerning the Commission Work Programme for 2015 {COM (2014) 910 final}, and for its support of the general approach to propose only a limited number of new initiatives in 2015.

The Commission also welcomes the Bundesrat's support for the key initiatives listed in the Work Programme to foster growth, jobs and investment, as well as in the areas of tax law, energy and climate, environment and migration. The views of national Parliaments constitute valuable contributions to the debate on the political priorities of the European Union. The Commission encourages national Parliaments to see the Work Programme as a strategic tool which allows for an early exchange on priorities.

The Commission has already presented a number of concrete proposals to flesh out the announced legislative packages, including the proposal for a European Fund for Strategic Investments as part of its first priority, the Investment Plan for Europe, the proposal to speed up the implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative, and the Energy Union Strategic Framework.

Upon taking office, the new Commission revamped its working methods and put in place new rules on transparency. As regards the Bundesrat's concerns on the future application of the Transparency Register to regional and municipal authorities of Member States, the Commission will propose an Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory Transparency Register later this year. This initiative will offer a fresh opportunity to tackle any outstanding questions and any possible remaining shortcomings, including in relation to the provisions concerning the status of regional and local authorities in the Register. The Commission will certainly keep the views expressed by the Bundesrat in mind in this context.

As regards the Bundesrat's comments on subsidiarity, proportionality, the balance of competencies, increased transparency of EU decision-making, reduction of administrative

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burdens and improvement of impact assessments for EU legislation on regions and municipalities, these items will be addressed in the Commission's Better Regulation strategy in May 2015, which will also contain a proposal for a revision of the Inter-institutional Agreement on Better Law-Making.

The Commission has noted the Bundesrat's comment that the Work Programme does not adequately respond to all aspects of the European Council's Strategic Agenda from June 2014. The Commission would like to stress the high degree of convergence between the Strategic Agenda and President Juncker's Political Priorities for the coming years. The Work Programme only sets out the immediate priorities for 2015; other aspects of the Political Priorities will be delivered in subsequent years. The Commission would also like to emphasise that the protection of social systems is an integral part of the Political Guidelines and will therefore constitute a clear priority for the Commission.

The Commission shares the Bundesrat's views on the importance of an effective climate change policy and of the ecological dimension. In that regard, the Energy Union package presented by the Commission on 25 February 2015 included the Communication "The Road to Paris" with the aim of sending a strong signal and coordinating a common European position in the combat against climate change. A new proposal replacing the withdrawn proposal on the circular economy can be expected before the end of 2015. In addition, later this spring, the Commission will adopt a European Agenda on Migration. In that context a well-functioning Common European Asylum System can be expected to be an important item.

The Work Programme for 2015 reflects a new start and a strong commitment to openness and transparency, and to working better together with the other EU institutions and with national Parliaments.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Bundesrat and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*