



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Herr Per WESTERBERG
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Riksdagen
Sveriges riksdag
SE – 100 12 STOCKHOLM

Dear President,

The European Commission thanks the Riksdag for having examined the Commission Work Programme for 2012 (CWP) {COM(2011) 777 final} and for having provided its Opinion. The opinion constitutes a valuable contribution to the continuous dialogue between the Commission and the national Parliaments concerning the political priorities of the Union.

The Commission welcomes the important convergence of views in most policy areas and thanks the Riksdag for its support. The Commission's comments on a few specific points raised by the Riksdag opinion are presented below.

Building a Europe of stability and responsibility

The Commission thanks the Riksdag for its general support to the ongoing reform of financial services regulation. Specifically as regards the proposal for a Regulation on prudential requirements for credit institutions and investment firms (CRD-IV)¹, the Commission refers to its detailed reply to the Riksdag's reasoned opinion of 20 December 2011.

The Commission takes note of the remarks concerning the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), including the importance, which the Riksdag attaches to the reform and modernisation of the EU budget to more efficiently underpin growth. The Commission also notes the views expressed concerning some of the proposed elements of a revised own resources system, including the proposed Financial Transaction Tax² and the new VAT own resource³. For these matters as well as MFF, the Commission likewise refers to its specific replies.

¹ COM (2011) 452 final, 20 July 2011

² COM (2011) 594 final, 28 September 2011

³ COM (2011) 737 final, 9 November 2011

Building a Union of sustainable growth and solidarity

The Commission fully shares the views of the Riksdag regarding the importance of a well-functioning Single Market for boosting growth, employment and competitiveness. The Commission also agrees that increasing the employment rate, including for women, is an important factor both in stimulating growth and consolidating public finances.

Free movement of workers is one of the building blocks of the EU and the Commission agrees on the importance of open labour markets. In this respect, by the end of the year the Commission will present an initiative for removing legal and practical obstacles to free movement of workers. As regards employment initiatives at European level, the Commission confirms that advancing the equality between women and men is a priority. The Commission agrees that the mutual sharing of best practices on employment and labour market reform among Member States can be a source of inspiration and improvement.

The Commission also fully shares the preoccupation expressed concerning the particular urgency and importance of supporting the integration of young people in the labour market. This is why the Commission, following the informal European Council on 30 January 2012, has launched concrete action to combat youth unemployment delivering quickly on two concrete objectives: Support young people in getting in to work, education or training and help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) – creators of 80% of jobs in Europe – get affordable access to financing. Available EU funding and expertise will be used as a catalyst to boost national efforts to tackle youth unemployment and SME funding problems, and Commission experts are working on the ground with the Member States most affected.

Giving the EU an effective voice in the wider world

The Commission does agree that the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) must focus better on supporting democracy, given the events particularly in the southern neighbourhood in 2011, but also in the eastern neighbourhood. Indeed, supporting democracy forms a central plank of the approach outlined in the two Joint High Representative and Commission Communications on 'A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean'⁴ and 'A new response to a changing neighbourhood'⁵. In these documents, the EU has outlined its strategic support for people's drive to democracy, better lives and greater respect for human rights.

The Commission and High Representative have reported on delivering this new ENP on 15 May 2012, showing where progress has been made and where challenges still lie ahead⁶.

The Commission would like to recall that the European Council on 1st March 2012 stated that 'the EU is promoting and supporting the democratic transformation in its Southern Neighbourhood (...) and remains committed to developing partnerships with the

⁴ COM (2011) 200 final, 8 March 2011

⁵ COM (2011) 303 final, 25 May 2011

⁶ JOIN (2012) 14

Southern Neighbourhood countries, based on differentiation, mutual accountability and adherence to universal values'.

The Commission welcomes the Riksdag's support for implementation of its proposals of last October in relation to EU development policy. The Commission is eager to begin implementation once endorsed by the Development Council and, in the case of the Commission's proposals for the new external relations instruments under the next Multiannual Financial Framework, once the Council and European Parliament have adopted these.

Smart regulation and effective implementation

Concerning the Riksdag's comments referring to "legislative packages", the Commission takes note of the practical difficulties, which may arise due to the fact that the translation of component parts of such packages, as well as their transmission to national Parliaments for subsidiarity control, does not take place at the same time. This may indeed imply that the eight-weeks deadline mentioned in the Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality can expire at different moments for each components of the legislative package.

In reply to this concern, the Commission is currently examining the technical possibility of streamlining the relevant deadlines for subsidiarity control in case of different legislative proposals forming one and the same "package" and will of course keep the Riksdag duly informed.

As far as subsidiarity justifications are concerned, the Commission can only reiterate its commitment to ensure that the explanatory memorandum of a legislative proposal fully reflects the arguments and findings of the impact assessment as regards the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

I hope that these comments address the main issues raised in your Opinion, and I look forward to continuing the political dialogue with the Swedish Riksdag.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*