

MONDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2014
BRUSSELS

COMMITTEE ON BUDGETARY CONTROL
WITH THE ASSOCIATION OF
THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

HEARING OF VALDIS DOMBROVSKIS

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE
(Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue)

IN THE CHAIR: ROBERTO GUALTIERI
Chair of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

1-003

Chair. > Good afternoon, colleagues. Ms Ulvskog and I will co-chair this hearing according to our Rules of Procedure. First of all I would like to welcome Commissioner-designate Valdis Dombrovskis to this very interesting and important hearing before our two committees, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON) and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL). As you know, the purpose of the hearings is to allow Parliament to exercise its Treaty-based right to vote on any new Commission College. In particular, in hearings of individual Commissioners, Members are required to evaluate the Commissioners-designate on the basis of their general competence, European commitment and personal independence and to assess their knowledge of their prospective portfolio, their communication skills as well as their political priorities and their contribution to the general strategic agenda of the new Commission.

I would like also to remind you that before the hearing Commissioner-designate Dombrovskis replied in writing to a preparatory questionnaire. The written answers have been distributed to Members in all languages. In line with the applicable procedure the candidate has submitted a declaration of interests and the Committee on Legal Affairs has indicated that it has no observation on the Commissioner-designate's declaration of interests.

The structure of this debate will be as usual. First, an opening oral statement by the Commissioner-designate of no longer than 15 minutes and five minutes at the end of the meeting for a closing statement. In between there will be 45 questions from Members with slots of three minutes each: one minute for the question, and two minutes for the answer. I would like to remind Members that the three-minute slot principle will be strictly applied in order to allow all Members to put their questions. I would like also to draw attention to the fact that interpretation will be provided in 22 languages so all speakers can use their own language. Also, as I said at a previous hearing, I would ask you not to speak too quickly in order to allow a good quality of interpretation.

Finally, on the substance, the tasks which are assigned to Commissioner-designate Dombrovskis are particularly relevant, namely to steer the reform of the economic and monetary union, to make our governance more coherent, more effective, more democratic, and to face the current economic crisis by achieving stability, growth and social cohesion. The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs has been working hard to provide Parliament's contribution to the genuine EMU agenda and we will start next week our review of the economic governance framework. Together with you, and the other responsible Commissioners, we need to identify the best use of flexibility within existing rules in order to strike the right balance between stability and growth and encourage investment and structural reforms. We need to announce economic policy coordination and the final road map for further integration in order to address the existing asymmetry between the EU's exclusive competence on monetary policy and the coordination competence of economic policy.

Finally, we need to concretely streamline and strengthen the social dimension within our governance framework. Parliament has called for a European Social Pact.

I now give the floor briefly to Marita Ulvskog, who will be chairing on behalf of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, who will continue this introduction.

1-004

IN THE CHAIR: MARITA ULVSKOG
Vice-Chair of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

1-005

Marita Ulvskog, *Vice-Chair of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs*. – I will make a few remarks on behalf of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.

1-006

EU:s inre marknad med fri rörlighet är en grundbult i EU-samarbetet. Den har stor potential att ge den tillväxt och de jobb som EU så väl behöver. Men för att marknaden ska fungera effektivt måste EU sätta upp bindande garantier till skydd för arbetstagarna. En gemensam marknad får inte utnyttjas för att pressa löntagarnas villkor nedåt, social dumpning, missbruk och illojal konkurrens, eller hota rätten att teckna kollektivavtal.

EU måste stötta uppbyggandet av en fungerande dialog mellan arbetsmarknadens parter i de länder där det behövs. I hanteringen av krisen måste partautonomin respekteras.

Vi har dock sedan de s.k. Laval- och Vikingdomarna en situation där nationella krav på likabehandling av arbetstagare inte accepteras av EU, då det anses utgöra ett oacceptabelt hinder för den fria rörligheten. Dessutom utnyttjar oseriösa företag de kryphål som finns i existerande EU-regler. Detta kan inte accepteras.

Kommissionsordförande Juncker deklarerade också i sitt öppningstal till Europaparlamentet att utstationeringsdirektivet, *Posting of Workers Directive*, ska ses över och implementeras på ett sådant sätt att – jag citerar – detta direktiv säkrar att social dumpning inte har någon plats i Europeiska unionen. I vår union ska lika arbete ge lika lön. *In English: Same work at the same place should be remunerated in the same manner.*

Som ansvarig för den sociala dialogen blir det er uppgift, herr Dombrovski, att nå detta mål som kommissionens ordförande har gett oss sitt löfte om.

Parterna måste vara jämbördiga för att det ska fungera. Skyddet för den fria förenings- och förhandlingsrätten, inklusive rätten att vidta stridsåtgärder, måste stärkas. EU kan aldrig bli en vinnare om medlemsstaterna väljer en annan väg att konkurrera sinsemellan med lägre löner och sämre arbetsvillkor.

1-006-500

IN THE CHAIR: ROBERTO GUALTIERI
Chair of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

1-007

Valdis Dombrovskis, *komis ra amata kandid ts* > Priekšs d t ja kungs, god tie Eiropas Parlamenta deput ti, god tie kol i!

Vispirms es grib tu pateikties par šo iesp ju uzrun t j s k demokr tiski iev l tus Eiropas iedz vot ju p rst vjus.

emot v r , ka es pats esmu divas reizes iev l ts k Eiropas Parlamenta deput ts, mani nav j p rliecina par Eiropas Parlamenta noz m go lom u Eiropas Savien bas l mumu pie emšan un ikdienas dialoga ar Eiropas iedz vot jiem nodrošin šan .

Gad jum , ja tikšu apstiprin ts Eiropas Komisijas viceprezidenta amat , es str d šu cieš sadarb b ar Eiropas Parlamentu, t d j di stiprinot m su politikas iniciat vu un priekšlikumu demokr tisko le itimit ti.

Man uztic t s atbild bas jomas ir eiro un soci lais dialogs. K galvenos darba uzdevumus šaj s jom s es redzu:

- eirozonas un visas Eiropas Savien bas ekonomisk s izaugsmes veicin šana un jaunu darba vietu rad šana;
- eiro stabilit tes nodrošin šana;
- ekonomisk s un soci l s politikas koordin cija, lai ekonomisk s izaugsmes aug us izjustu visi Eiropas iedz vot ji;
- soci lo partneru cieš ka iesaiste l mumu pie emšan .

1-008

Honourable Members, I was born and grew up behind the Iron Curtain. For 50 years Latvia was forbidden to be part of Europe. For 50 years we were forbidden to have basic democratic rights and freedoms. 25 years ago the Iron Curtain fell, paving the way for peaceful, democratic change transforming our continent. The very perspective for countries like Latvia to join the EU has underpinned the democratic, economic and social transformation. This is why I firmly believe in the power of the European idea. I believe in the core European values of democracy, social market economy and equal opportunity for all. Only together will we be able to face the challenges of the fast-changing world, globalisation, ageing and climate change.

I had the honour to serve as Prime Minister of Latvia in three consecutive governments, from March 2009 to January of this year. I took office when my country was going through the deepest economic crisis in the EU. The priority was to restore economic growth and job creation as quickly and as convincingly as possible. As a result of structural reforms and the return to sound public finances, Latvia steered out of the deep economic and social crisis to become one of the fastest growing economies in Europe. Other important factors contributed to this turn-around. They included the use of economic stimulus, most notably by accelerating the use of EU funds. We created an additional social safety network to deal with the social consequences of the crisis. Latvia also successfully fulfilled the Maastricht criteria and joined the euro area this year. These processes could not have been successful without a functioning dialogue with social partners and other stakeholders on very sensitive economic and social policy decisions.

In preparing for euro adoption during the euro area crisis, we have demonstrated our trust to the future of the European project and the euro currency, at a time when many others were calling it into question.

I previously served as a Member of the European Parliament, Member of Parliament in Latvia, Minister of Finance of Latvia and chief economist at the Bank of Latvia. I believe this long-standing experience provides me with detailed knowledge of the way the EU functions. It gives me the necessary experience to contribute to social, economic and monetary policy on an equal footing, to tackle the challenges facing the Economic and Monetary Union and preserve the stability of the euro, and to work towards the convergence of economic and fiscal policies with social and labour market policies.

If approved by the European Parliament, I will work hard to ensure that the objectives of stability of the single currency and macroeconomic governance are coherent with social fairness and inclusion.

Europe has managed to tackle the worst crisis in its history and to safeguard the single currency. Yet the European recovery is fragile and uneven. The current projection is for the EU to grow at an annual average rate of about 1.5% over the next ten years. This is a full percentage point lower than in the pre-crisis decade. The impact of the crisis continues to weigh on our society. Unemployment in the euro area is still above 11%. Youth unemployment is well above 20%, and nearly 16% of Europeans

of age between 15 and 29 are neither employed nor in education or training. Europe cannot afford to lose a generation.

We all know that this crisis has been no ordinary downturn. It was rooted in long-standing weaknesses in our economic structures. Therefore, the return to growth crucially depends on our ability to address these weaknesses. We are facing the risk that with an ageing population, with high debt levels, with very low inflation, Europe may enter into a period of sluggish growth or even stagnation. We have to address this risk head-on and to return Europe to a path of a sustainable growth. Therefore, we need coordinated action, both on demand and supply side, at both national and European level. Investment, growth and jobs – this triad priority of the upcoming Commission – needs to be swiftly translated into policy action.

The starting point will be the investment package of up to EUR 300 billion of additional public and private investment over the next three years, where the Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness will take the lead. We need high-quality investment to contribute to sustainable economic growth and the creation of jobs in Europe. This also applies to existing EU funding. European structural funds need to be invested wisely and initiatives like the Youth Guarantee backed by EU funding must be implemented swiftly and effectively.

The crisis exposed important, significant weaknesses in the initial design of the European institutional framework. Over the past few years, major steps have been taken to address them. Fiscal and economic governance has been strengthened, a crisis management framework has been created and progressively reinforced, European financial supervisory authorities have been set up and, in general, ex-ante coordination of national policy-making has been strengthened under the European Semester. Robust firewalls have been created and reinforced over recent years. The banking union is under way. It is an essential pre-condition for the euro area to resume healthy growth. The weaknesses of banks' balances are one factor preventing them from resuming lending to the real economy. A rigorous asset-quality review and stress tests will be vital to unlock bank lending to the real economy.

Today's Economic and Monetary Union is much more robust to withstand financial and economic shocks, but further effort is needed to make it more cohesive, competitive and socially inclusive. We now have a comprehensive cycle of policy coordination – the European Semester – to ensure consistent policies throughout the EU. We need to make the most of it to advance the structural reforms, while paying due attention to the social and employment dimensions. For example, we need to make full use of the scoreboard of employment and social indicators. We should also apply the flexibility that currently exists in the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact, but we must do so in a transparent and uniform way, ensuring equal treatment of all Member States. The Economic Dialogue should be actively and fully used to discuss economic governance issues.

Major steps have been taken in recent years to strengthen the foundations of the euro area – not least with the reinforced Stability and Growth Pact, six-pack and two-pack legislation. If approved by this House, I would work closely together with Commissioners-designate Moscovici and Thyssen to review and streamline these instruments. In doing so, we need to preserve the stability and credibility they have provided for our framework while fully taking into account employment and social implications of our policies. At the same time, we have to improve the implementation of the country-specific recommendations. Our policies should help Europeans to reap the benefits of economic growth, to enhance productivity and thus sustain higher levels of economic and social welfare. Our policies should aim to reduce income inequality and poverty. At the end of the day, what matters is that our policies deliver tangible results that improve people's lives.

The overarching vision and options for future development of the Economic and Monetary Union in the short, medium and long run are set out in the Blueprint for a Deep and Genuine EMU. As underlined by the President-elect, the Blueprint – together with the 'Four Presidents Reports' and the

Commission's communication on the social dimension of EMU – will form the basis for bringing this work forward. Importantly, the European Union should always aim to evolve together as much as possible, meaning all 28 Member States. The euro area should remain open to new members, of course, if the Maastricht criteria have been fulfilled in a sustainable way. In this respect, I am very pleased that Lithuania will become the 19th member of the euro area in three months' time. As the EU evolves, it needs to do so based on the Community method. We need to carefully evaluate the various options, taking into account the scope under the existing Treaties and the prospects for an eventual Treaty change.

If confirmed as Vice-President, my mandate would include working towards re-balancing future conditional stability support to euro area countries in difficulty. I fully subscribe to the commitment of President-elect Juncker that 'in the future, any support and reform programme goes not only through a fiscal sustainability assessment but through a social impact assessment as well'. I do hope that none of our Member States will have to resort to such an instrument again. While the Troika format was set up under pressure to help prevent a financial and economic catastrophe, it should be gradually replaced with a more democratically legitimate and accountable structure.

If approved by this House, my position would be Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue. Both are equally important. Both sides of the euro coin should be developed equally – financial and social. Throughout the history of European integration, the social dialogue has been formative for the development of the European social and economic model. We need a real exchange with social partners, and this must be focused on substance. Social dialogue is absolutely essential to make the reforms possible, sustainable and effective. It is an essential element of the social dimension of EMU. I would work in close cooperation with the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility to strengthen the social dialogue at EU level and to ensure stronger engagement of social partners at national level.

The role of the Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue is an expression of the President-elect's ambition to put economic and social matters on an equal footing and to strengthen the role of social dialogue. This cannot be done without the active engagement of the European Parliament. I hope to count on your support in taking forward the economic and social policy agenda of the European Union.

1-009

Burkhard Balz (PPE). – Herr Vorsitzender! Herr Dombrovskis! Schön, Sie wieder einmal hier im Ausschuss zu haben! Sie haben in Ihrem Heimatland Lettland mit Ihrer Reformpolitik, wie ich finde, beachtliche Erfolge erzielt und Ihr Land am Ende fit für die Währungsunion gemacht. Ich konnte als Berichterstatter des Parlaments für den Euro-Beitritt Lettlands die positive Entwicklung selbst mitverfolgen. Innerhalb weniger Jahre haben Sie es geschafft, Lettland von einer Wirtschaftskrise hin zu wirtschaftlicher Erholung mit einem sanierten Haushalt, einem Defizit von unter 3 % und auch wieder deutlich besseren Arbeitsmarktdaten zu führen. Wir setzen darauf, dass Sie diesen Einsatz auch in Zukunft für den Euro fortsetzen. Deswegen meine Fragen:

Wie sieht für Sie eine erfolgreiche Reformpolitik auf europäischer Ebene aus?

Wie kann das Rahmenwerk für unsere Gemeinschaftswährung weiter gestärkt werden, sodass die richtigen wirtschaftspolitischen Anreize für solide Haushalte und mehr Wettbewerbsfähigkeit gesetzt werden?

Welche Rolle sehen Sie hier für die EZB?

1-010

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > As regards the further economic development of the EU and EMU, I think that we are now gradually moving from the fiscal adjustment stage which –

not everywhere and not to the full extent, but by and large – has been done, to the stage where we need to ensure sustainable economic growth.

In order to do so, we need to look at a number of factors – probably at three main directions. One is structural reform to strengthen the competitiveness of both the EU and its Member States, to strengthen the EU internal market, especially in areas like services, energy and the digital single market, to invest in innovation and to invest in knowledge, because research and innovation is one of the very few public policy areas where other advanced economies are outperforming us, and to deal with administrative burdens and red tape, especially for SMEs – and we know that the new Commission is working to do this, also in the framework of the REFIT programme.

We need investment – and I have already mentioned that one of the key priorities of the new Commission is to prepare an ambitious EUR 300 billion investment package for the next three years.

We also need to strengthen the confidence of our citizens and to strengthen the demand side of the economy because all those things are interlinked – financial stability, investment, demand – and by addressing all three aspects we are able to ensure economic growth.

1-011

Elisa Ferreira (S&D). – Mr Dombrovskis, as you know, the eurozone, and particularly its Southern members, face an unprecedented crisis of which they cannot come out alone in the present context of recession, deflation and very high unemployment. This is the result of several years of blind austerity policies of the kind that you, as Prime Minister of Latvia, have applied in your own country – albeit in a very different and much more favourable context than the present one. How can you convince us that you have changed and that you are today a genuine and committed interpreter of the changed economic agenda promised by President Juncker? What kind of concrete commitments are you ready to take for the future that show us that you will not, if confirmed, go back to your austerity stance? Also, how do you interpret the sharing of competences between yourself and the Commissioner-candidate Pierre Moscovici?

1-012

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > In fact I counted three questions, so I will be very brief on all three aspects.

As underlines the general direction of the Commission's work and commitments, I tried to stress them pretty much in my introductory remarks. I fully subscribe to President-elect Juncker's approach that we need to strengthen the social dimension of the EU and that, while dealing with the financial and economic policies, we need to fully take into account its social and employment consequences. I am ready to work along those lines and I see this as my task. In doing so, I intend to work in very close cooperation with both Commissioner-designate Moscovici and Commissioner-designate Thyssen to put economic and social matters in close coordination.

As regards the manner of work, we know that this is a new proposal by President-elect Juncker to provide Vice-Presidents with a coordinated role, but it is quite clear that we see this as collegial work. We do not see this as some kind of subordinate structure. We have also been talking with Commissioner-designate Moscovici, and I think we will be able to find a way of working together. By no means would it imply trying to micromanage the Commissioners' work or tell the Commissioners how to do their work. The Vice-President's role is to coordinate those economic and social aspects to see that they go hand in hand.

1-013

Kay Swinburne (ECR). – Welcome, Commissioner-designate. Your CV suggests you are very well qualified for the Vice-President position you are being considered for at this hearing today. As the Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, you are going to have a very broad mandate, so my

question is therefore equally as broad. As the representative of the EU at various international fora like the IMF and the FSB, what will you be communicating to your international counterparts as to the EU's priorities in the near term and medium term?

1-014

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > As regards the EU's work in international fora like the IMF, like the Financial Stability Board, there are a number of issues which the EU has made a priority in terms of global economic governance. One example of a priority which the EU has set is the fight against tax havens and tax evasion, which is something we should strongly emphasise with our international partners. We know there are a lot of discussions also on the reform of IMF governance. I believe that also from the EU side we need to coordinate strongly the positions of different Member States represented in the IMF, because after all it is EU Member States which are sitting on the IMF Board of Governors, participating in governors' meetings.

As regards the Financial Stability Board (FSB), I think one of the important tasks we need to carry out is to streamline this economic governance legislation. What we see currently is that different countries, different regions, are often taking the approach of making legislation which has an extraterritorial application, which has application beyond its own territory, and as such may lead to overlapping and inconsistencies. So what we need to do is to ensure that there are clear principles of how economic governance is conveyed, that different regions, different countries do not try to do it in a way which conflicts with each other.

1-015

Sylvie Goulard (ALDE). – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, je vous remercie d'avoir mentionné expressément l'objectif de la lutte contre la pauvreté. C'est heureux, on n'a pas toujours entendu cela ces dernières années.

Maintenant, en pensant justement aux personnes démunies, très concrètement, expliquez-moi comment vous allez travailler avec Pierre Moscovici. Je suis désolée, à ce stade, je n'ai pas compris.

Vous devez prendre des décisions conjointes en matière de mise en œuvre des règles mais vous venez de deux sphères politiques complètement différentes. Vous allez peut-être me dire, comme lui, que vous allez travailler en équipe. On aime bien les équipes, on aime bien les gens qui s'aiment beaucoup, mais il vient un moment où j'aimerais savoir quelle va être l'orientation.

Envisagez-vous, par exemple, d'autoriser certains pays qui ne respectent pas les règles à tenir compte, entre autres, des dépenses d'investissement?

Deuxièmement, je ne sais toujours pas qui sera le représentant de la zone euro dans les forums internationaux. La lettre de M. Juncker nous a parlé d'arrangements pragmatiques. Pouvez-vous nous en dire un peu plus?

1-016

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > Once again there were several questions in one. As regards working together with Commissioner-designate Moscovici, as I myself have already stated and, in fact, as Commissioner-designate Moscovici also stated in his hearing several times, we are willing and able to work in close and good cooperation. It is quite clear that the Commission consists of Commissioners, Vice-Presidents and a President from different political groups, and yet the Commission needs to work as a team so we must really set our differences aside and work for a common goal. That is exactly the way we are going to do things with Commissioner-designate Moscovici, and it is something we both agree with.

On the external representation of the EU, as you rightly stated President-elect Juncker has a task to come up with pragmatic arrangements as to external representation. As a guiding principle, I have

already stated that the Commissioners in charge should, of course, be doing their job including the task of the external representation of the EU. We have already discussed this external representation aspect with Commissioner-designate Moscovici and agreed on the broad principles. Right now our Cabinets are working in order to come up with pragmatic arrangements to be presented by the beginning or within the first weeks of our mandate, as demanded by President-elect Juncker.

1-017

Miguel Viegas (GUE/NGL). – Uma pergunta simples: olhando para a história do euro dos últimos catorze, quinze anos, verificamos que, dos 28 Estados-Membros, 23 furaram as regras do défice e da dívida. Olhamos para os indicadores do *Balance Scoreboard* que identificam possíveis desequilíbrios macroeconómicos e verificamos que nenhum país preenche aqueles requisitos. Olhamos para o desempenho macroeconómico dos Estados-Membros e verificamos que os países fora do euro crescem mais e têm dívidas menores relativamente aos países que estão dentro do euro. Poderíamos também realizar comparações internacionais e verificar que outras regiões do globo crescem três vezes a média da União Europeia sem os constrangimentos do défice. E, portanto, a pergunta é muito simples: qual é o comentário sobre esta realidade, sobre essas regras que colocam os países fora da legalidade e como é que isso poderá influenciar alguma revisão das regras e do dossiê Governança?

1-018

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > Mr Viegas, firstly, as regards countries being in the excessive deficit procedure, we must know that the number of countries in the excessive deficit procedure has reduced significantly from the peak of 23. So in terms of budgetary positions, countries certainly are in a much better shape than they were three or four years ago.

But you rightly mentioned that, compared to other advanced economies, other advanced economies are recovering faster from this crisis. So we need really to look at our policies and to see what are the differences, what are the reasons.

I can give you one example on investment, for example. Between 2009 and 2008 investment in equipment, both in the US and the EU, fell by around 19%. So we started with similar starting points. In 2013, compared with 2009, investment in the US had grown by 34%, investment in the EU had grown by 3% so, quite clearly, if we want to return to economic growth we need to facilitate investment and we need to stimulate demand. Financial stability is a precondition for economic growth but it is not sufficient. There is more that we need to do and that is exactly what our new Commission should concentrate on.

As regards your question on governance of the countries outside the euro area: we know that the European Semester, macroeconomic imbalance procedures and a number of procedures are applicable to all, the excessive deficit procedure and so on are applicable to all EU Member States, and generally we should also be gradually overcoming this difference in macroeconomic governance between the EU's 'ins' and 'outs'.

1-019

Sven Giegold (Verts/ALE). – Herr Kollege Dombrovskis! Es hat mich gefreut, Sie so viel über das Soziale in der sozialen Marktwirtschaft sagen zu hören.

In den letzten Jahren haben wir einen Verfall demokratischer Rechte in Europa gesehen: im Rahmen der Troika, aber auch im Hinblick auf die gestiegene Bedeutung des Wirtschafts- und Finanzausschusses in Vorbereitung der Tagungen der Wirtschafts- und Finanzminister, die Eurogruppe. All diese Institutionen sind wenig transparent und uns als Europäischem Parlament gegenüber nicht rechenschaftspflichtig. Sie haben das Problem angesprochen, was die Troika angeht. Welche Maßnahmen möchten Sie ganz konkret auf den Weg bringen, um Transparenz in all den genannten Institutionen voranzubringen und um demokratische Verantwortlichkeit in diesen Institutionen voranzubringen?

Wären Sie bereit, eine interinstitutionelle Vereinbarung zwischen dem Europäischen Parlament und den verschiedenen Teilen dieser im Entstehen begriffenen Wirtschaftsregierung auf den Weg zu bringen, um unsere demokratischen Rechte zu stärken?

1-020

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > Firstly, on the democratic legitimacy of the Troika, I have already outlined that the first step which needs to be taken is that, when putting forward policy advice to the programme countries, we not only do a fiscal impact assessment but also social and employment impact assessments so that we see not only how it is changing a country's fiscal position but also how it is affecting its social indicators and how it is affecting employment. That is the first step.

On the next matter, we clearly need to bring in more accountability, and this is something I am also very much willing to discuss with the European Parliament, and with other stakeholders, to see how we can make this set up more accountable. This is a clear commitment of President-elect Juncker and I fully agree with this commitment.

On the Euro Group's role and decision-making, it is certainly difficult for the Commission to discuss the internal organisation of the work of other EU institutions – and in this case we are discussing the internal organisation of the work of the Council – but as a general rule, something which I have stated, is that it is clear that we should be aiming at the EU developing as a whole, all 28 countries, which means that the role of the Euro Group should be to deal really with matters exclusively to do with euro, whereas broader macroeconomic questions, internal market questions, should be dealt with by Ecofin. There will probably be a follow up for the third question as – I am sorry – I ran out of time for the interinstitutional agreement.

1-021

Patrick O'Flynn (EFDD). – Mr Dombrovskis, your written submission frequently mentions the need for strengthened economic governance across the eurozone. You say economic and monetary union must become more cohesive, there must be more overall convergence, overall convergence needs to be strengthened in the EU as a whole even. You lay out a list of requirements for national governments to make the euro work better, and this is clearly very sympathetic to the agenda of Mr Draghi set out before this committee. But can we have some detail on how you think this policy convergence can be enforced without undermining national democracies or limiting the issues that can be determined in elections at the national level?

And, alternatively, what makes the opposite path intolerable to you – I mean putting together a plan to dismantle the euro and restore to Member States their old national currencies and central banks? And given the very poor performance of the euro to date, do you ever wonder whether this alternative would be both better for democratic legitimacy and also for economic performance in many euro area countries? And finally, is it just the pride of

(The Chair cut off the speaker)

1-023

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > As regards your first question on policy convergence and the euro area's economic governance: we are primarily doing this through the European Semester when we set out the main directions for the EU's development for the next 12 to 18 months in an annual growth survey and, based on this, the Commission prepares country-specific recommendations for the Member States. That is basically how this governance works, but it is of course a very complex exercise involving many other aspects.

Then clearly I do not share the kind of views you hold on the benefits of dismantling the euro. I think the euro has been a huge success despite the previous crisis. Indeed, for example, Latvia experienced a huge financial and economic crisis back in 2008-2009 without having the euro and some other countries outside the euro area have also gone through deep crisis, so the euro is probably not the problem here.

And if you look at the euro as a currency, the euro as a currency is doing just fine. Its exchange rates are closer to the historical maximums than to historical minimums. Its share as a global reserve currency is stable – around a quarter of global reserves are being held in euros – so really when we are dealing with financial and economic problems in certain EU or euro area Member States, we should not always be trying to blame it on the euro.

1-024

Bernard Monot (NI). – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur Dombrovskis, douze ans après la création de la monnaie unique, nous ne pouvons que constater l'"eurodivergence" de tous les taux et surtout une zone euro devenue une zone zéro. Normal, puisque, dans l'histoire, aucune union monétaire n'a survécu, car il s'agit d'une création contre nature.

Depuis plus de quatre ans, l'euro, monnaie unique, est en soins palliatifs et son sauvetage représente un coût hallucinant pour les États membres. Rien que pour la France – deuxième économie de la zone euro –, l'engagement financier global s'élève à environ 525 milliards d'euros, un quart de son PIB annuel, dont 70 milliards d'euros ont déjà été décaissés. Dans ces conditions, il ne faut pas s'étonner que le déficit public français dérape d'année en année et, in fine, pèse sur la compétitivité économique.

Vous refusez tout principe de dévaluation monétaire mais, dans votre pays, vous avez effectué des baisses de 20 % des salaires publics et de 10 % des retraites pour adhérer à l'Union économique et monétaire.

Mes questions seront simples: lors de l'inéluctable nouveau choc exogène qui viendra du système bancaire privé, comme en 2008 ou à Chypre en 2013, comment pourrez-vous faire face à cette situation de banqueroute sans sacrifier la protection sociale des citoyens, car même les rachats de dettes par la BCE n'y suffiront pas?

Imaginez-vous, M. Dombrovskis, face à des peuples en colère et à des gouvernements européens devenus illégitimes. À ce moment-là, quel sera votre dialogue social?

1-025

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > As I have already stated in my introductory remarks, the EU and the euro area have recently gone through the deepest crisis in their history, but in fact both the EU and the euro area managed to tackle this crisis and I think they managed to emerge stronger from this crisis than they used to be.

Many of the missing links or initial weaknesses in the design of economic and monetary union have been addressed and, indeed, we can also see that the policies which have been applied have been bearing fruit in restoring financial stability and economic growth. This year the euro area as a whole is returning to economic growth. Next year, according to a number of international forecasts, for the first time since the crisis all EU Member States will be registering positive growth.

While we still need to deal with a number of difficult issues within the euro area and within the EU, I think we are stronger dealing with those issues together rather than trying to dismantle it and then trying to deal with it separately. So, in this regard, I certainly cannot agree with the way in which you envisage the work going.

1-026

David Casa (PPE). – Sur Kummissarju nnominat, jien ili issa s-snin nafek f'dan il-Parlament, naf kemm int bniedem kompetenti, kemm int politiku illi inti leali lejn il-valuri Ewropej u nafek ukoll b'ala bniedem li tista' ta' dem mieg ek, fa' li' afna ta' dem mieg ek.

Issa f'tit qabel kont qed issemmi li l-President elett Juncker idde ieda li je amina l-possibilita' li t-Trojka ti i mibdula fi struttura dida bba' ata fuq l-istituzzjonijiet tal-Unjoni Ewropea u li jkollha twie eb g' all-Parlament Ewropew. Qal ukoll li jixtieq li r-riformi ri' enti jkollhom aktar le' ittimita' so jali u li jippromwovu aktar djalogu mal-imsie ba' so jali. G' andek xi proposti ta' kif jistg' u jintu aw' impact assessments so jali biex jg' inu f'dawn il-programmi ta' riformi u diskussjoni mal-pubbliku fuq l-effetti so jali ta' riformi strutturali? U x' metodi ta' evalwazzjoni ta' impatti so jali bi siebek tippromwovi?

1-027

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > There were two questions here. On the first, it is basically a question of bringing these Troika arrangements under the Community framework. This is something with which the Commission fully agrees and which it is very much willing to work towards – actually taking a number of macroeconomic governance arrangements, which were created during the crisis, into the Community method. We know, however, that, for that, we need a Treaty change.

While the need to react was immediate during the crisis, apparently at that stage the EU did not have time to go for a proper Treaty change to incorporate all the relevant aspects. It was a crisis and the EU needed to act quickly, so quite a few things have been done in an intergovernmental way, but certainly our aim should be to bring them within the Community framework. I fully agree.

Then, with regard to the inclusion of the social partners in economic governance, during the past few weeks I have been meeting the social partners for initial exchanges of ideas, and certainly there is a scope for involving them more closely in the European Semester. In the case of the social partners at EU level, this probably means discussing everything with the social partners at specific points in the preparation of the annual growth survey because this is when the main directions are indicated; for the social partners at national level, it applies during the preparation of the in-depth review and country-specific recommendations. Those are probably the points where we should be involving the social partners more closely.

1-028

Peter Simon (S&D). – Herr Dombrovskis! Sie sind in der kommenden Kommission vorgesehen als Vizepräsident für die Erhaltung unserer Währung wie auch für den sozialen Dialog. Im Zuge der Krise haben wir allerdings feststellen müssen, dass es in allen Mitgliedstaaten, die der Troika unterstehen oder – wie Ihr eigenes Land – auch ohne Einsatz der Troika eine vergleichbare Austeritätspolitik durchgeführt haben, zu verheerenden sozialen Verwerfungen und zu Massenarbeitslosigkeit kam. Um Ihre Eignung für das für Sie vorgesehene Dossier beurteilen zu können, ist die Klärung folgender Frage für meine Fraktion daher elementar wichtig:

Teilen Sie die Auffassung, dass die Austeritätspolitik und die Strukturprogramme, die unter der Troika in den Programmländern durchgeführt wurden, wesentliche Ursachen für die verheerenden sozialen Umstände in den betroffenen Ländern sind? Im Hinblick auf die Bedeutung dieser Frage für meine Fraktion bitte ich Sie um eine klare Antwort, welche keine Zweifel an einem Ja oder einem Nein lässt.

In meiner zweiten Frage bitte ich Sie dementsprechend darzulegen, welchen Einfluss diese persönliche Bewertung auf die von Ihnen bei Beantwortung unseres Fragenkatalogs schriftlich angekündigte Ausarbeitung sozialer Folgenabschätzungen für Strukturprogramme hat.

1-029

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > This is, of course, quite a complex question. There is no question that the financial and economic crisis has also created deep social problems and has increased unemployment substantially. There is, though, scope for discussion about the causes and consequences because you know that the austerity policy was, in a sense, a consequence of the crisis. It was not a case of countries doing just fine – with access to markets and everything – then, out of the blue, deciding to do some kind of fiscal adjustment. The fact was that countries, including my own country, Latvia, were running deep macroeconomic imbalances and were cut off from financial markets. They then had to react to this situation in a very immediate way.

You can, of course, always question whether all the decisions taken during the crisis, including in Latvia, were the right ones. And certainly, retrospectively, we can find quite a few policy mistakes. We need to look now at how to address those policy mistakes, to avoid this scenario – which, as I was saying, we face – of very sluggish economic growth or even stagnation, and to turn it into a scenario of sustainable growth.

1-030

Roberts Zīle (ECR). –

Neapstrādā, Valdi Dombrovski, Jūs esat ienesis Latvijas sabiedrībā, politikā tik nopietnu attieksmi pret izaicinājumiem reformu laikā, ka nupat Latvijā notikušajās vēlēšanās ar faktiski Jūs veidotajai koalīcijai ir guvusi uzvaru. Bet mans jautājums ir par Jūs ambiciozajiem sociālajiem dialogiem attiecībā uz bieži vien izmantoto universālo rīku — sociālās dempinga.

Tas tiek lietots gan gadījumos, kad pakalpojumu tirgus segmenti netiek atvērta Eiropas Savienības tirgus kontekstā, gan arī tiek noklusēti šīs argumentācija, ka kļūda Eiropas institūcijai nemaz neaizsūtīt par vienotu darbu un vienoti sociāli nodrošināt darbiniekus dažādās Eiropas Savienības dalībvalstīs.

Tad mans jautājums šajā grūtajā dialogā: piecu gadu laikā — vai Jūs redzāt, vai būs izmaiņas Pakalpojumu direktīvā, vai būs Viesstrādnieku direktīvas kontekstā izmaiņas, kas autu tieši nodrošināt pakalpojumu jomā — kā minimums — vienotu Eiropas Savienības tirgu. Vai arī Jūs redzāt, ka būs vairāk sociāls sadrumstalotības ietekmējošais — tirgus sadrumstalotība.

Paldies!

1-031

Valdis Dombrovskis, komisāra amata kandidāts > Jā, paldies, Zīles kungs, par šo jautājumu!

Tad — par sociālo dialogu un sociālo dempingu. Pirmā — jā, mēs runājam par to, kā stiprināt sociālo dialogu, es jau iezīmēju veselumu virkni prioritāšu, kas to var izdarīt Eiropas semestra ietvaros un kas to var izdarīt nacionālajās dalībvalstīs, diskutējot jautājumus, kas saistīti tieši ar šo Eiropas Savienības un eirozonas makroekonomisko pārvērtību.

Attiecībā uz Jūs konkrētajiem uzdotajiem jautājumiem, tad attiecībā uz Eiropas Savienības iekšjo tirgu pakalpojumu jomā — tā ir viena no jomām, ko es pieminēju ar savos ievadrīdījumos, proti, iekšējais tirgus tādā jomā, kā pakalpojumi, kā enerģija, kā digitālais vienotais tirgus būtībā joprojām stiprina, un arī nākamajai Eiropas Komisijai, protams, pilnībā jāstiprina.

Attiecībā uz Viesstrādnieku direktīvu — tā faktiski ir viena no direktīvām, par kuru bieži vien izskan šīs bažas par sociālo dempingu, un Eiropas Komisijai pilnībā jāveikt mērķtiecīgas direktīvas pārskatīšanu, lai izskatītu atsevišķus jautājumus, kuri var būtiski ietekmēt bažas par sociālo dempingu, piemēram, uzņēmumu valsts minimālās algas interpretāciju un atsevišķus aspektus, kas pieaug varbūt kaut kādas izvēles šāns iespējams.

Un v l v i e n a b t i s k a p r i o r i t e i r p i e e m t j a u n u d i r e k t v u — V i e s t r d n i e k u d i r e k t v a s i e v i e š a n a s d i r e k t v u, k u r a p a š r e i z d a l b v a l s t s i r j p r e m u n j i e v i e š p r a k s, u n t a m a r E i r o p a s K o m i s i j a o t i c i e š i s e k o s.

Paldies!

1-032

Cora van Nieuwenhuizen (ALDE). – I would like to ask you two questions. The ECB President Mr Draghi stated in his speech to the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs on 22 September of this year that no monetary policy whatsoever is meaningful without strict fiscal policy and courageous structural reforms in the economy. Do you agree with this statement? If so, what is your opinion on quantitative easing?

My second question concerns the European Semester. In your written answers you state that you would like to increase ownership at national level. I think that is extremely difficult, because when we had a meeting with other parliaments on the European Semester a few weeks ago a lot of countries were not even present, for example Germany and Greece were not present at all. What are your concrete plans on increasing ownership at national level?

1-033

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > First, on the role of the ECB and what monetary policy can do and what fiscal policy can do: in this sense, of course we need sensible policies, both fiscal and monetary, and it is not possible to have only monetary policy or only fiscal policy. So it is a question that in fact different branches of decision-making in the EU and national states have to do their job.

More specifically on quantitative easing, whatever the terminology, but what the ECB is doing now: the ECB is now having a really accommodative monetary policy. Its base interest rates are at a record low, there is this ‘whatever it takes’ pledge and Outright Monetary Transaction programme. Sometimes there is a joke that quantitative easing means limited and unconditional bond buyback programme, whereas this ‘whatever it takes’ is unlimited but conditional. So it is not exactly quantitative easing, but certainly it is a very accommodative monetary policy.

Also just last week, the ECB has also been moving towards buying of securitised assets. So once again this is to help banks to clear their balance sheets. Then, oversight of the European Semester at national level: I think we need to provide more framework and time for Member States and social partners of the Member States and provide input vis-à-vis in-depth review and prior to the formulation of country-specific recommendations by the Commission. That is the basic idea.

1-034

Paloma López (GUE/NGL). – Señor Dombrovskis, su país es una de las sociedades más desiguales de Europa y la atonía en las cifras del empleo ha empujado a muchos de sus conciudadanos a la emigración, entre otras cuestiones por las políticas de austeridad llevadas a cabo.

Usted manifiesta su voluntad de democratizar los mecanismos de control europeo y reforzarlos con estudios de impacto social, pero ambos objetivos carecerán de eficacia, cuando decreta que deben profundizarse las reformas estructurales y la austeridad fiscal.

Tengo tres preguntas.

Primera: ¿cómo va a abordar el diálogo social que ha sido interrumpido unilateralmente por la presente Comisión? No basta con incluir a los sindicatos en los debates, hay que atender a sus demandas: más y mejores salarios y condiciones laborales dignas que eliminen la pobreza y la precariedad.

Dos: Europa necesita inversión. ¿Los 300 000 millones son una partida nueva o serán una redistribución de los fondos existentes?

Por último, ¿cómo va a asegurar que la reforma del *six pack* incluya como prioritaria la convergencia social —al alza, por supuesto— de la eurozona frente a la estrechez de los objetivos económicos planteados hasta ahora?

1-035

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > Once again this is almost three questions. First, on the priorities, I can emphasise once again that what the new Commission sees as a priority is exactly to facilitate economic growth and job creation by providing additional investment – and I would not downplay this EUR 300 billion, in both private and public investment packages, as just recycling old money. That is certainly not the Commission’s intention. The Commission’s intention is certainly to come up with an ambitious proposal which will have real impact on growth and jobs.

I said earlier that by and large, in the EU, we are done with fiscal adjustment. We need to concentrate on the demand side of the economy, including by increasing wages – in line with productivity developments, of course, if we do not want to lose competitiveness – increasing demand by changing taxation, moving taxation from labour, especially low-paid labour, to capital, to property, to environmental taxes, to other areas which are less detrimental to jobs.

Lastly, as regards the review of the six-pack and two-pack I have already mentioned that one of the options for how to ensure more social convergence is also to take into full account the social and employment indicators which are within this legislation and which are currently serving as auxiliary indicators.

1-036

Tatjana Ždanoka (Verts/ALE). – Dombrovskas kundze, es šeit esmu, šeit. J ! Vismaz trīs kolā jau uzdeva Jums jautājumus par trijotnes pārvēidošanu vai troikas pārvēidošanu par caurspīdīgu institūciju, kas bija prezidenta Junkera ideja. Bet mēs nesaklausījām konkrētus Jūs piedāvājumus. Varbūt Jūs nosauksiet vismaz trīs soļus, kas ir izdarāmi. Jums ir ļoti liela pieredze šajā jomā, jo 2009. gada jūnijā Jūs vadījāt valdību pie ma drastiskās publiskās izdevumu samazināšanas pasākumiem sociālajās sfērās un darba algās, lai nodrošinātu nosacījumus, ko līdzīga institūcija bija izvirzījusi. Varbūt Jūs mums atklāsiet, vai tā bija vieta, kur vajadzēja Jūs pieņemt, kas tas tika izdarīts un kā nodrošināt to cilvēku rīcībā, un ko Jūs darīsiet, lai tas tālāk nebūtu?

1-037

Valdis Dombrovskis, komisāra amata kandidāts. > Ždanokas kundze, paldies par šo jautājumu! Tātad atkal divi jautājumi par šo troikas lomu. Kā jau es minēju — pirmais solis, kas ir sterms izdarāms jau tagad esošajās programmās, ir nodrošināt, ka jebkuri priekšlikumi, ko izsaka troika, tiek vārtīti ne tikai no fiskālā, bet arī no sociālā un nodarbinātības viedokļa. Tā ir pirmā lieta, ko ir iespējams izdarīt, un tālāk Komisija ir gatava strādāt. Ar es esmu gatavs strādāt, piesaistot arī sociālo lietu komisārus, citus iesaistot komisārus, lai sagatavotu jaunu priekšlikumu, kādā veidā šo sistēmu pārskatīt un, kā jau iepriekš tika uzdots arī jautājums, kādā veidā šo sistēmu iekārtot Eiropas Savienības, teiksim, kopējietvarā, jo pašreiz tas lielā mērā darbojas kā tās *ad hoc* starpvaldību ietvars. Tad, runājot par manu pieredzi, te es gribtu uzsvērt, ka arī kā ministru prezidents, es biju šo politiku sāmošajam nevis diktējot, ja vien latīes. Bet jebkur gadījumā mēs zinām, ka Latvijā šis krīzes pārvaršanas stratēģija sastāv jāno trim būtiskām daļām. Pirmā, protams, bija finansiālā stabilizācija. Otrā bija ekonomikas stimulēšana, pamatā tad patrinot mums pieejamo Eiropas Savienības fondu apguvi, ieviešot eksportkredītu garantiju sistēmu, samazinot administratīvo slogu maziem un vidējiem uzņēmumiem utt. Bet trešais — lai mēs kļūtu krīzes sociālās sekas, mēs speciāli ieviešam papildu sociālās drošības tīklu — tieši vērstu uz sociāli mazāk aizsargātu grupu aizsardzību. Paldies!

intend to do, and there is potential for stability in terms of both prevention and correction, both ex-ante and ex-post. Basically we need to implement this flexibility.

As regards the workers' right to take strike action, nobody is questioning this right. It is quite clear that this is an integral part of the European social model and it should stay that way.

1-043

Krišjānis Kariš (PPE). – Priekšsēdētāja kungs! Dombrovska kungs! Šī gada janvārī Latvija pievienojās eurozonai, un ir gaidāms, ka pēc pāris mēnešiem arī Lietuva pievienosies eurozonai. Tajā pašā laikā es oti daudz dzirdam, ka līdz ar Lietuvas pievienošanos eurozonai vajadzētu tuvākajos gados apturēt jebkuru paplašināšanos. Man Jums šajās sakarās ir divi jautājumi.

1) Kā jūs vērtējat Latvijas pievienošanos un gaidāmo Lietuvas pievienošanos eurozonai? 2) Vai, Jūs prot, eurozonai vajadzētu apturēt vai nevajadzētu apturēt savu paplašināšanos un kāpēc?

1-044

Valdis Dombrovskis, komisāra amatā kandidāts. > Kariša kungs, paldies par šo jautājumu! Tādā attiecībā uz Lietuvas pievienošanos un ar kopumā šo vērtējumu šīs analīzes ziņojumā ir līdzīga gan attiecībā uz Latvijas pievienošanos, gan uz Lietuvas es uzskatu, ka Eiropas Savienības valstīm ar mūsu, atvērto ekonomiku un ar valūtu, kuru kurss ir piesaistīts euro, kāds bija Latvijas lats, kāds bija Lietuvas lits, protams, ir vērts pievienoties eurozonai. Tas nodrošina lielāku valūtas stabilitāti, jo mūsu nacionālās valūtas var jābūt tikai labākajam gadījumā tik stabilas kā euro (bet mēs zinām, kas notiek tad, kad nav labākais gadījums), tas samazina valūtas konvertācijas izmaksas, tas palielina mūsu valūtu pievilcību investoru acīs, līdz ar to tas samazina procentu likmju izmaksas. Tam ir vesela virkne priekšrocību, un Latvija, kā redzams, šīs priekšrocības jau ir izbaudījusi. Gribtu teikt, ka arī šajā eopolitiskajā kontekstā, kad mēs redzam Krievijas agresiju Ukrainā, agresīvu retoriku pret citām kaimiņvalstīm, es uzskatu, ka arī eopolitiski ciešākā integrācija Eiropas Savienībā ir mūsu valūtas interesēs.

Attiecībā uz tādām eurozonas paplašināšanos kā jau es minēju, eurozonai ir jāpaliek atvērta, eurozonai ir jāturpina paplašināties. Bet ir taisnība, ka pašreiz bez Lietuvas un Dānijas, kurai ir *opt-out*, neviena cita valsts nav Valūtas kursa mehānismā II, kas ir tādā kā eurozonas uzgaidāmā telpa, un tas nozīmē, ka tuvākajos gados neviena valsts eurozonai pievienoties nevarēs tieši šī gada laikā. Bet no eurozonas puses mums ir jābūt atvērta. Tādā, ja valstis ir gatavas pievienoties Valūtas kursa mehānismam II, valstīm ir jāvirzās uz priekšu, un mums ir jābūt gataviem šīs valstis potenciāli uzemt eurozonā. Paldies!

1-045

Renato Soru (S&D). – Signor Commissario designato, la ascoltavo prima utilizzare le parole giuste circa la necessità che nell'eurozona ci si impegni non solamente alla convergenza delle politiche fiscali e monetarie ma anche alla convergenza delle politiche sociali, e affermare inoltre che non ci può essere un futuro per l'eurozona senza che si riesca a far convergere anche le dinamiche sociali dei differenti paesi.

Però contemporaneamente l'ho sentita anche riportare in maniera orgogliosa quanto avvenuto nel suo paese, che nei prossimi mesi entrerà finalmente nella zona euro, senza però dirci nulla di quello che è accaduto ai livelli di povertà del suo paese, ai livelli di privazione materiale severa che è cresciuta di oltre il 60% nel periodo in cui lei ha governato. Non ci ha detto nulla di quello che è successo ai livelli di disoccupazione, che sono cresciuti in maniera così severa per migliorare solo leggermente di recente.

Al mio collega, l'on. Simon, poco fa ha detto che effettivamente avete fatto degli errori. Mi potrebbe dire quali sono gli errori che pensa di aver fatto? E quali sono gli errori che non ripeterebbe più nella sua nuova posizione, eventualmente? Mi potrebbe anche dire che cosa... (*Il Presidente interrompe l'oratore*)

1-046

Valdis Dombrovskis, *komisara amata kandidāts* > J, kas attiecas uz šo jautājumu par Latvijas pieredzi un par tām problēmām, tad es gribtu uzsvērt, ka es prāmu valsts vadību, kad Latvija jau gāja cauri dziļai finanšu un ekonomiskajai krīzei, kad šīs krīzes dziļums jau bija pilnībā zināms, kad Latvija jau bija starptautiskā aizdevuma programmā, un līdz ar to faktiski, pirms tam laikvaldības vadība nopietnā, mūsu uzdevums bija lielā mērā atrisināt šīs valsts problēmas, kuras diemžēl bija radušās iepriekšējās valdības. Un, kā jau es minēju savos ievadrunos, galvenais uzdevums bija pārciest šīs krīzes atjaunot ekonomisko izaugsmi un jaunu darba vietu radīšanu. Un tas lielā mērā ir izdarīts, un, protams, tad, kad valsts iet cauri tik dziļai krīzei, kad 2009. gadā mums bija 14% recesija, tad, protams, iziet no šīs krīzes bez jebkāda mēģinājuma, līdz ar to jautājums tajā brīdī, kā no šīs krīzes iziet maksimāli tri, lai šīs problēmas oti ilgi neturpinātos.

Un es jau šos trīs aspektus pieminēju, bet, runājot konkrēti par sociālo aspektu, ne jau velti, neraugoties uz visiem taupības pasākumiem, ko mēs veicām, mēs vienlaicīgi ieviešam arī sociālo drošības tīklu, papildu sociālo drošības tīklu — tieši, lai risinātu šīs sociālās problēmas valstī, kas neapšaubami krīzes rezultātā bija radušās. Kā galvenais pasākums — oti liela pagaidu darba programma, bet tāpat arī uzlabota medikamentu un veselības aprūpes pakalpojumu pieejamība, trāc gājieniem iedzīvotājiem, veselības virkne mērātu pabalstu paaugstināšana vai šo pabalstu labā mērāšana tieši uz trāc gājieniem iedzīvotājiem, un veselības virkne citu pasākumu, ko mēs stenojam.

Paldies!

1-047

Bernd Lucke (ECR). – Herr Dombrovskis! Sie haben gesagt, der Euro sei eine Erfolgsgeschichte und nicht schuld an der Arbeitslosigkeit in der Eurozone. Nun hat es vor wenigen Wochen ein Treffen von Nobelpreisträgern der Wirtschaftswissenschaften in Lindau gegeben, wo andere Auffassungen vertreten wurden. Die Nobelpreisträger Christopher Sims, James Mirrlees, auch Peter Diamond haben gesagt: Die Eurozone wird sich nicht erholen können, wenn der Euro fortbesteht. Sie werden wahrscheinlich sagen, Sie wissen es besser, und man soll die Kompetenz von Nobelpreisträgern auch nicht überschätzen. Aber was wäre, wenn die Nobelpreisträger Recht hätten? Dann könnte es ja dazu kommen, dass ein Land nach einer langen Phase von Stagnation und Arbeitslosigkeit aus dem Euro ausscheiden möchte. Werden Sie sich als Kommissar dafür einsetzen, dass die Verträge so geändert werden, dass es legal möglich ist, dass ein Land ausscheidet, wenn es das selbst möchte?

Falls Ihre Antwort Nein lautet und Sie sich dafür nicht einsetzen wollen, dann frage ich Sie: Mit welcher Berechtigung wollen Sie ein Land, das aus dem Euro ausscheiden möchte, daran hindern, das zu tun?

1-048

Valdis Dombrovskis, *Commissioner-designate*. > First, on the euro and the tendency to blame the euro for everything, starting with the global financial and economic crisis, I have answered this question already several times. OK, let us go to this second part: to the Treaty. We know that when the Lisbon Treaty was debated, there was a similar debate as regards the right of the EU Member States to quit the EU, which was also previously not foreseen. Eventually that right is now foreseen in the Treaty, and you are right: currently there is no foreseen right for the euro Member States to quit the euro as long as they do not use another procedure of quitting the EU first.

Certainly, the Commission's intention is not to come up with this kind of policy proposals but, should there be a Treaty change and should there be a demand by EU Member States for those provisions, this is something EU Member States can discuss. After all it is the EU Member States that ratify the Treaty. Should they wish to do so, they can introduce items. If there were to be a demand from Member States, I think the European Commission would provide the necessary technical support. But it is certainly not the policy intention of the Commission.

1-049

Bernd Lucke (ECR). – Do you personally support that?

1-050

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > As I said, should there be a demand of EU Member States to move in this direction, the Commission would be able to provide technical support.

1-050-500

Chair. > In any case, unanimity is required to amend the Treaties.

1-051

Nils Torvalds (ALDE). – Welcome, Mr Dombrovskis, to this jolly society. In your introductory statement you underlined the importance of structural reform, as in the case of Latvia. You mentioned the Fiscal Compact, the Stability and Growth Pact, the six-pack and two-pack. But then in one answer you spoke about the necessity to review and streamline these instruments. Streamlining could go either way; it could be bad streamlining, it could be good streamlining. So, saying streamlining does not actually say very much. This is an important question. Could you elaborate on this and say in which way you are going to streamline these instruments?

1-052

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > On this question, we know that the European Commission is required by legislation to provide a review of the six-pack and two-pack by the end of this year – by mid-December if I am not mistaken. So it means that this process is already undergoing. It seems we will be able to provide more like a backward-looking review – so to take analysis of the first years of the work of six-pack and of two-pack – and then from this review to build up on some policy-change proposals. So this as the next step after the first review where we should really analyse the existing situation.

What I meant with streamlining is more or less that currently we have a number of procedures, and this whole macroeconomic governance has been really complex and really difficult to explain to Member States' citizens. We have the Stability and Growth Pact with its corrective and preventive arms. We have the European Semester. Within this we have the macroeconomic imbalances procedure, once again with preventive and corrective arms. We have an excessive deficit procedure within the Stability and Growth Pact, and once again it has been changed also to take into account not only excessive deficit but excessive debt.

Member States face quite a few reporting requirements for all those supervisory mechanisms. And probably we should look at them as a system, and maybe some of the elements could be put in one place, reducing the burden on the Member States of reporting everything within different procedures and also avoiding some confusion sometimes between those different procedures.

1-053

Patrick Le Hyaric (GUE/NGL). – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, tout le monde a reconnu que la stratégie de Lisbonne avait été un échec, et que la stratégie Europe 2020 ne permettait pas la réduction du chômage et de la pauvreté et ne stimulait pas non plus l'innovation.

Nous ne voyons pas non plus les résultats du prétendu plan de relance de fin juin 2012. Ne faut-il pas en tirer toutes les conclusions et changer radicalement de politique en sortant de l'austérité pour rebâtir un plan de sortie de crise à partir de critères de développement social, humain et environnemental?

D'autre part, au lieu d'être un outil dans le cadre de la concurrence monétaire internationale, l'euro ne devrait-il pas plutôt devenir un outil pour la coopération, afin de favoriser l'investissement et l'emploi?

1-054

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > As regards this question on the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020, we know that just now we are basically preparing from the review of Europe 2020, because when Europe 2020 was drafted, it was actually before the eurozone crisis and it is quite clear in this review of Europe 2020 that we should take into account lessons from the crisis, including the lessons for the need for better balance between economic and financial and social and employment policies. That is quite clear, and that is something we should do within the review of Europe 2020.

You also mentioned environmental measures. In fact if you look at Europe 2020, precisely with the environmental targets, we seem to be closest to achieving those targets with the results. But certainly we should also be building on this beyond Europe 2020. If we talk about environmental targets, the rest of the targets in Europe 2020 are more or less indicative targets, whereas environmental or emission-reduction energy – the so-called 20/20/20 targets – are actually legally binding targets for the Member States, and we see that Member States are also working towards implementing them.

As regards use of the eurozone as an instrument for investment, I can only refer back to the proposal of the EUR 300 billion investment package within the next three years.

1-055

Chair. > We are now half way through the hearing and I will pass the chair to my colleague Marita Ulvskog, on behalf of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.

1-056

IN THE CHAIR: MARITA ULVSKOG

Vice-Chair of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

1-057

Monika Vana (Verts/ALE). – Frau Vorsitzende, sehr geehrter Herr designierter Kommissar! Ich möchte auf die Frage der demokratischen Legitimation des Europäischen Semesters und auf die Frage nach der interinstitutionellen Vereinbarung zurückkommen. Derzeit hat das Europäische Parlament keine legislative Funktion in der Überwachung und Gestaltung des Europäischen Semesters, und auch die Stellungnahmen des Europäischen Parlaments in Initiativberichten werden vom Europäischen Rat, gelinde gesagt, ignoriert. Werden Sie sich dafür aussprechen, dass eine solche interinstitutionelle Vereinbarung vorgeschlagen wird, damit das Parlament seine gesetzgeberische Funktion bei Entwurf und Annahme des Jahreswachstumsberichts sowie der wirtschafts- und beschäftigungspolitischen Leitlinien erhält?

Meine zweite Frage betrifft die Einbindung der Zivilgesellschaft in das Europäische Semester. Schon die frühere Kommission hat hier Leitlinien versprochen, wie man speziell die Zivilgesellschaft besser in das Europäische Semester einbeziehen könnte. Auch Kommissionspräsident Juncker hat Ihnen vorgeschlagen, dies in der nächsten Periode verstärkt zu tun. Wann genau werden Sie diese Leitlinien zur Einbeziehung der Zivilgesellschaft in das Europäische Semester vorlegen? Welche konkreten Maßnahmen werden Sie dazu vorschlagen, insbesondere im Rahmen der wirtschaftspolitischen Prioritäten?

1-058

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > On the interinstitutional agreement, first I think that we should concentrate on the substance, in other words look at what substantially we need to do to improve the dialogue between the Commission and Parliament, as well as among other EU institutions and national parliaments and governments, and really to concentrate on a substance which we are willing to achieve. As a Member of the European Parliament myself, I am very willing to engage in this and to work towards real results and meaningful consultation and cooperation which will then really have an impact on decision-making.

On the framework agreement, should we do it within the existing framework agreement between Parliament and the Commission or should we create a new framework agreement specifically for the European Semester? I think this is something we need to discuss once we have agreed on a substance – where and how we want to ensure input in decision-making within the European Semester.

On the involvement of the social partners, I have already mentioned a couple of ideas. I believe this will need to be developed further with the social partners but I see scope for the closer involvement of the social partners at EU level within preparations for the Annual Growth Survey, and at national level during the in-depth review for preparation of country-specific recommendations.

1-059

Marco Zanni (EFDD). – Signor Commissario, vorrei tornare un attimo sul tema che ha tirato fuori l'on. Lucke, quindi sul vuoto legislativo riguardante la possibilità di un paese di uscire dall'euro.

Vorrei concentrarmi su due temi in particolare: il primo concerne, anche per quanto riguarda l'ingresso nell'euro, le divergenze di legislazione che esistono tra diversi paesi. Per esempio, il Regno Unito e la Danimarca hanno degli accordi che permettono loro di non entrare nella moneta unica, mentre tutti gli altri paesi che non sono nell'euro, se raggiungono tutti i criteri di convergenza, devono entrare. Le chiedo un primo parere su questo punto.

Il secondo parere che le chiedo è: lei ha detto, per quanto riguarda una legislazione sull'uscita dall'euro, che se ne deve occupare il Consiglio. Però il 25 maggio i cittadini europei hanno dato un mandato chiaro: decine di milioni di cittadini europei hanno votato partiti che avevano nel programma "uscita dell'euro" o "referendum sull'euro". Lei deciderà di ignorare questa voce e di passare la palla al Consiglio o farà qualcosa per fare pressione sul Consiglio affinché si arrivi a questo tipo di legislazione?

Le ricordo anche che la riforma dell'UEM è tra le dieci priorità che ha espresso il Presidente Juncker, quindi è una priorità per tutti. Volevo sapere la sua opinione.

1-060

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > As regards different settings for different Member States, we know that Denmark and the UK have opt-outs, something which they took when the eurozone was being created. But in the case of the new Member States, which joined as of 2004, no opt-outs were offered, so it is not an option but rather an obligation for new Member States to join the eurozone once the Maastricht criteria are fulfilled.

Of course, we know that different new Member States have different approaches to this. Most have already joined the eurozone. Some countries, especially those with floating exchange rates, are not joining Exchange Rate Mechanism II, probably because it would mean major changes in monetary policy for them. They need to fix their exchange rates, and thus basically give up one instrument for influencing their economies, and if countries have been relying on this instrument, that is certainly a major policy change.

As regards Treaty change and the possibility of eurozone countries leaving the eurozone, as I already mentioned, this is something first and foremost for the EU Member States to discuss and to demand within the framework of Treaty change. The position is similar with regard to the Lisbon Treaty and the possibility of leaving the EU, but that is certainly not a direction that the Commission would actively support or encourage.

1-061

Markus Ferber (PPE). – Herr designierter Kommissar! Ich habe zwei kurze Fragen. Zum einen im Bereich der Umsetzung des Europäischen Semesters: Was sind Ihre Vorschläge und Ideen, wie man die Verbindlichkeit der länderspezifischen Empfehlungen erhöhen kann?

Zum Zweiten sind Sie auch zuständig für Unternehmertum und kleine und mittlere Unternehmen. Welche Maßnahmen planen Sie, um dem Leitsatz des *Small Business Acts*, nämlich Vorfahrt für kleine und mittlere Unternehmen, in Europa endlich Geltung zu verschaffen?

1-062

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > So, Mr Ferber, first of all on the country-specific recommendations. It must indeed be noted that implementation of the country-specific recommendations is probably not as high as one could expect. Different estimates put it at between 10 and 14. Parliament's assessment is 18. But it is clear that there are no, so to speak, sanctions attached to the country-specific recommendations nor is this its intention.

So the idea here would be to strengthen ownership of the country-specific recommendations, meaning going deeper in discussions with both Member States and their social partners on those country-specific recommendations. Also when we discuss, for example, EU funding, operational programmes, to make sure too that EU funding is put or applied in line with the country-specific recommendations. We know that there is also macro-conditionality of EU funding which can also be used in a context of country-specific recommendations.

The Commission can of course, after the first round, be more specific and prescriptive with important country-specific recommendations in the second round and can also provide for certain targets. Should non-compliance with those country-specific recommendations lead to some excessive imbalances there are certainly excessive deficit procedures, macroeconomic imbalances procedures which can be utilised.

Terribly sorry, I ran out of time. Or if there is a follow-up ...

1-064

Jonás Fernández (S&D). – Bienvenido, señor Dombrovskis. Todos compartimos la noción de que una moneda común, compartida por varios países, puede generar comportamientos *free-rider* entre aquellos países emisores de deuda. Para evitarlo, tenemos el Pacto de Estabilidad y Crecimiento.

Sin embargo, existen otros comportamientos *free-rider* en una unión monetaria cuando países con saldos positivos en la cuenta corriente de la balanza de pagos los llevan a niveles insostenibles y evitan la apreciación de su moneda gracias a la pertenencia a esa unión monetaria, generando ahorros a su vez insostenibles y con efectos perjudiciales para el conjunto de la Unión.

Estos efectos externos, que son profundamente desequilibrantes, nacen de los superávits por cuenta corriente y también de los déficits pero, hasta ahora, el Semestre Europeo no ha otorgado la misma gravedad a los déficits que a los superávits.

¿Comparte usted esta preocupación por los desequilibrios de la cuenta corriente? ¿Considera usted que la zona del euro adolece de una visión global en sus recomendaciones de política nacional? ¿Tomará usted alguna medida concreta sobre los países desestabilizadores en la Unión por su superávit por cuenta corriente dentro del Semestre Europeo?

1-065

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > Your question is basically about balances, about current account deficit versus current account surplus. Large current account deficits certainly indicate problems within the country – competitiveness problems, export problems. This is certainly something which needs to be addressed and it is certainly one of the indicators which are a cause of concern for any given country.

But of course I understand that deficit in one country means surplus in another country, because at the end of the day I think the global trade balance should be balanced. In this sense it is quite clear that there is scope – and this is being discussed, including by the ECB, including by economists – for more stimulus of demand in surplus countries. It is certainly part of the equation, and certainly when we see the eurozone's development we will need to look at both sides. We need to look at the deficit countries and what needs to reduce deficit. But we also need to look at the surplus countries, what can be done to stimulate the demand in surplus countries. Those are clearly linked.

1-066

Ulrike Trebesius (ECR). – Sehr geehrter Herr Dombrovskis! Sie gelten als ehemaliger Premierminister Lettlands als eine Person, die im eigenen Land wichtige Strukturreformen durchgeführt hat. In diesem Zusammenhang möchte ich gerne von Ihnen wissen, ob Sie das Konzept einer gemeinsamen europäischen Arbeitslosenversicherung unterstützen. Werden durch die Einrichtung dauerhafter Transferleistungen nicht die ursächlichen Probleme innerhalb der Eurozone, nämlich verfehlte Wirtschafts-, Arbeitsmarkt- und Finanzpolitik mancher Mitgliedstaaten, einfach nur in die Zukunft verlagert und durch die Reformverschleppungen die Arbeitslosigkeit noch verfestigt? Werden nicht Länder wie beispielsweise Deutschland bestraft, die über flexible und robuste Arbeitsmärkte verfügen, oder Länder wie Lettland, die diese schwierigen Reformen bereits durchgeführt haben? Wie wollen Sie zukünftig die Umsetzung von Strukturreformen vorantreiben bzw. überwachen?

Meine zweite Frage: Welche weiteren Transfermechanismen innerhalb der EU wollen Sie stärken bzw. zukünftig einführen?

1-067

Valdis Dombrovskis, designiertes Mitglied der Kommission. > Vielen Dank für diese Frage, was die gemeinsame Arbeitslosenversicherung angeht! Ja, das ist eine Idee, die eigentlich im Zusammenhang mit einer fiskalen Kapazität des Euro-Währungsgebiets diskutiert wird. Aber zurzeit muss man auch klar sagen: Es gibt keinen deutlichen Konsensus dafür, auch nicht im Rat. In jedem Fall brauchen wir, wenn wir in diese Richtung gehen wollen, auch eine Vertragsänderung. Ohne Vertragsänderung geht es nicht. Es ist ja auch klar: Mehr Solidarität heißt auch mehr Kontrolle und mehr Verantwortung. Beides gehört eng zusammen. Das ist zurzeit keine Frage der nahen Zukunft. Vielleicht können wir es mit einer Vertragsänderung diskutieren.

Aber was die neue Kommission eigentlich machen will, ist, sicherzustellen, dass die Arbeitslosenversicherungen in verschiedenen Mitgliedstaaten dann wirklich gezielt genutzt wird, vor allem für die Zielgruppen, die besonders problematisch sind, wie junge Leute – wir haben die Initiative zur Jugendarbeitslosigkeit, die wir wirklich fortsetzen sollen –, aber dann auch zum Beispiel ältere Leute, die das Pensionsalter noch nicht erreicht haben. Zurzeit müssen wir dann also gezielter mit den Mitgliedstaaten arbeiten.

1-069

Yana Toom (ALDE). – During her hearing, Commissioner-designate Marianne Thyssen on five different occasions referred to social indicators in the European Semester. She spoke of social indicators being the poor relation, and at a personal level she believed they needed to be strengthened. Jean-Claude Juncker has also spoken of the need to strengthen the social dimension in our policy-making and to look at the social implications of economic policy decisions.

Given your working relationship with both Mrs Thyssen and Jean Claude Juncker, what is your view on the need to strengthen social indicators in the European Semester?

Given recent comments from a number of Member States that it is unlikely they will be able to reach the economic targets set in the European Semester within the proposed time-frame, what is your view of how this should be managed?

corrective action when Member States are not fulfilling those indicators, for example when there is excessive inequality in a country? Do you also trigger corrective actions? That is the question.

Secondly, on the euro, I thought you were rather vague there, to be honest. You were opening up the possibility of leaving the euro, and you are creating a lack of clarity by your position. So we want to hear from you personally, do you stand by the euro, and will you make sure that all the parties to the euro remain part of the euro?

1-074

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > As regards the first question on the importance of social indicators, I fully agree with what Marianne Thyssen also said here in her hearing: that social indicators should be given full weight in decision-making as regards country-specific recommendations. I fully agree with Marianne Thyssen on this and I am very willing to support her initiatives in this regard.

Then, on triggering some sanctions: we know that country-specific recommendations are not triggering sanctions per se. We have answered this question already. So in this case: should there be excessive imbalances there are some other excessive imbalances procedures which can be used and in which social aspects should also be given much more prominent weight.

Then on the euro: I think I was quite clear in saying that this is something where the Commission will not encourage that kind of debate. If you ask me for my personal opinion, I stick fully with the euro.

I was campaigning very hard in Latvia, during the time of the euro area crisis, for Latvia to enter the euro area and explaining why, despite the very difficult background in the euro area, it was worthwhile for Latvia to join the euro area; why the euro was a stable currency; why the euro area had a good future and why it was still worth joining during the crisis and why it has a clear future and why it is a good idea for EU Member States to join the euro area. I have always been very clear on this and pushing forward.

(Applause)

1-075

Laura Agea (EFDD). – Signor Commissario designato Dombrovskis, proviamo a parlare un attimo di dialogo sociale, visto che la sua posizione sull'euro è fin troppo chiara.

Lei sa che il dialogo sociale deve coinvolgere necessariamente le parti sociali. Allora le faccio un piccolo esempio che riguarda la mia regione – io sono italiana, e in particolare dell'Umbria. In Umbria, a Terni, esiste uno stabilimento industriale da più di 130 anni. Questo stabilimento è di proprietà del gruppo Thyssen, che ha pianificato un taglio per circa 500 unità di lavoratori. Questo significa che circa 1 000 persone di qui a pochi mesi perderanno le loro garanzie. Allora io le chiedo, visto che parliamo di dialogo sociale, lei provvederà ad essere un interlocutore vero oppure continueremo a uno scambio – non so quanto utile – di vedute tra due diverse realtà che sono estremamente lontane? Oppure veramente vorrà fare qualcosa in termini di dialogo sociale?

1-076

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > Of course we know that the social dialogue is taking place at different levels, including at EU level and at national level. And as regards EU level, certainly there is scope for strengthening social dialogue between EU institutions and social partners and also between social partners. To give one example: in the last five years, EU social partners have not come up with a single autonomous proposal at EU level. There are a number of proposals at sectoral levels, but there is not a single proposal at the EU level which is a general autonomous proposal, not a sectoral proposal. So there is scope for really strengthening the social dialogue also between social partners, something I am also very much willing to facilitate.

Then on the national level: certainly, national social dialogue is first and foremost the competence of the Member States and social partners. But what the EU can do while doing the EU's decision-making is to fully involve also national social partners in areas which concern their competence. Of course if we discuss a specific enterprise in a specific country, it is for the national social partners and national governments, primarily, to discuss. From the EU it is really to ensure the framework which encourages social dialogue and which encourages job creation and economic growth. So there are actually less problematic issues like you described to be discussed.

1-077

Jeroen Lenaers (PPE). – Mr Dombrovskis, I find it very interesting to have you here as a highly successful former Prime Minister of Latvia, who led his country out of a severe economic crisis into economic growth and into the eurozone, and to hear some Members here suggesting that you did a bad job. I would recommend, rather, that those Members ask your advice and follow your example.

With regard to my question, one of the main challenges for economic and monetary union is to find a way to address asymmetric shocks in the eurozone Member States without creating a permanent transfer union. I would like to hear some of your ideas about this. The current Commission has focused only on ways to include European unemployment benefits, which I do not think is a good idea, so I would like to hear from you whether you have any other ideas in that regard.

1-078

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > Of course, we know that this issue of asymmetric shocks – eurozone fiscal capacity or transfer union as we are calling this – is a very controversial topic, and views are very much divided on this.

There are, though, some initiatives which I think can be taken at EU level and which can help especially those countries which are in difficulty. Some of those initiatives are already in place, such as the Youth Guarantee, backed by the Youth Employment Initiative. Here we really need to look at how to speed up its implementation and how to widen and enlarge this programme's scope and, potentially, also to prolong it. It is one of the most pressing social and potentially social-economic problems we are facing, and this is something which we need address at EU level. I think this initiative is a really good one and one we should continue.

On the facilitation of investment: once again, once we are discussing the EUR 300 billion investment package, we need again to look how this investment package is facilitating economic growth and development in all the EU but especially in programme countries. Then we have EU funds – which is the permanent transfer mechanism, as you put it – so we should use also those EU funds in a more targeted way to deal with EU 2020 targets, to deal with country-specific recommendations, and also to concentrate the use of EU funds towards growth and jobs.

1-079

Pervenche Berès (S&D). – Madame la Présidente, Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, vous avez dit que vous vouliez faire de l'euro un succès. Est-ce qu'un succès de l'euro serait sa dislocation, puisque vous êtes prêt à accompagner techniquement un pays membre qui voudrait en sortir? Est-ce que le succès de l'euro serait d'aggraver les déséquilibres macroéconomiques en considérant que le succès de la politique que nous avons menée conduit deux cent cinquante mille jeunes, environ, à quitter votre pays – non pas par libre choix dans le cadre de la libre circulation sur le marché intérieur – mais bien parce qu'ils votaient avec leurs pieds, puisqu'ils n'avaient pas de possibilités d'innovation ou d'emploi, dans le pays que vous aviez prétendument redressé?

Vous avez parlé de la flexibilité du pacte de stabilité. En dehors des réformes structurelles, pouvez-vous me donner un exemple de ce que sont ces marges de flexibilité qui auraient été mal utilisées ou pas du tout par vos prédécesseurs dans l'exercice de la responsabilité de commissaire?

Enfin, vous avez dit que des erreurs politiques avaient été commises dans votre pays, donc sous votre responsabilité – dont acte. Je voudrais que vous nous donniez un exemple d'une erreur politique que vous auriez souhaité ne pas faire.

1-080

Valdis Dombrovskis, *komisāra amata kandidāts*. > Jā, šeit atkal bija vismaz trīs jauni jautājumi.

Emotīvi, kā mēs atkal diskutējam par situāciju Latvijā, es uz šo sadaļu atbildēšu latviski.

Tad, runājot par krīzi Latvijā, es vēlētos uzsvērt, ka valsts vadība šajā laikā, kad krīzes dziļums jau bija pilnā mērķī, kad valsts ekonomika 2009. gadā krita par 14 %, kad valstij jau bija starptautiskais aizdevuma programma, Valsts fonda programma. Valsts vadība šajā laikā neopozīcijas, kā galveno mērķi uzstājot dot maksimāli trīs ekonomiskās izaugsmes atjaunošanu. Gada laikā Latvijai izdevās atgriezties pie izaugsmes gada griezumā, un caur ekonomisko izaugsmi — sākumā caur ražošanas un eksporta pieaugumu, bet tālāk caur investīciju pieaugumu — izdevās atjaunot un pat to, ka Latvija ir viena no straujāk augošajām ekonomikām. Līdz ar to, piemērot valstī raksturīgās sarežģītās situācijas, nevar teikt, ka ir iespējams atrisināt, neko nedarot.

1-081

Then on the second question on the Stability and Growth Pact. I have little time but if there were a follow-up question then I would be willing to spend a full two minutes on this. Otherwise I would be ready to bilaterally engage on this because I think it is a very important question, and there is a flexibility in the Stability and Growth Pact which can be used. If there is a follow-up question I will use two minutes only for that, or I will discuss it with you bilaterally. Sorry.

1-082

Anthea McIntyre (ECR). – Mr Dombrovskis, as you have indicated already, you are aware that social dialogue mechanisms at EU level can be quite different from social dialogue mechanisms at Member State level, in that social partners have the right to adopt Europe-wide collective agreements which can be given legal effect by the relevant Council of Ministers. Where such an agreement is concluded by the social partners, the Council can accept or reject a proposal but they cannot amend it.

In the last plenary session of the last Parliament we adopted a report by the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs entitled 'How can the European Union contribute to creating a hospitable environment for businesses and start-ups to create jobs?'. Among other things, the report called on the social partners to embrace smart regulation tools, to increase the use of impact assessments in their negotiations, and to refer agreements proposing legislative action to the Commission's impact assessment board. Would you be willing to look at how social partner agreements could embrace the smart regulation tools at EU level?

1-083

Valdis Dombrovskis, *Commissioner-designate*. > As regards social partners' autonomous agreements, it is certainly the right of the social partners to come up with an autonomous agreement, both horizontally at EU level and at sectoral level with autonomous agreements. And certainly once this autonomous agreement is in place and there is a request from the social partners to translate it into legislation, the Commission should be working towards this.

But clearly, the impact assessment of autonomous agreements, as with the impact assessment of any other legislative proposals, has to be done to cover different aspects of economic and social regulation, so that at the end of the day we arrive at a balanced proposal and a balanced result. And certainly I am very much willing to work together with Commissioner-designate Marianne Thyssen, to study the Committee on Employment report and to look how we can move this system of autonomous agreements and their impact assessment forward.

1-084

Ulla Tørnæs (ALDE). – I also have a question on social dialogue. So far I am very satisfied with your answers on the importance of the social dialogue, but I would like to refer to what happened at the plenary debate in July when President-elect Juncker said that he considers it necessary to have minimum wages in all Member States and that he will take action in this direction. But according to the Treaties, and as you have already referred to yourself, wages are the competence of the Member States. I would like to ask you, Mr Dombrovskis, which measures will you take to ensure social dialogue and the competences of the social partners if the Commission takes initiatives in relation to minimum wages?

1-085

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > As regards minimum wages in all Member States, this is certainly the proposal of President-elect Juncker, to which I also fully subscribe, that we should be encouraging all Member States to set minimum wages.

We can do it through country-specific recommendations and also through social dialogue with the Member States concerned. Of course we are fully aware that there are different social dialogue models, and in certain countries – especially in the Nordic countries, where there is a very strong tradition of social dialogue – there is a tendency for minimum wages to be set by the social partners.

Certainly we are not going to do so against the will of the social partners: if there is consensus between both social partners there is no need. But generally speaking the Commission would encourage Member States to have minimum wages.

1-086

Eduard Kukan (PPE). – Mr Commissioner-designate, I recall one of your written answers in which you wrote that you are going to encourage Member States to have their labour markets more responsive, open and inclusive. I want to say that we all know that the European population is ageing, and we need to guarantee to those who are more than 50 years old and socially and economically active that they are not being discriminated against on the labour market. So how would you ensure that this policy action is taken into account (the ageing of the population), and how can you ensure the effective cooperation with the social partners in this respect? Those are my questions, and I wish you all the best and success in your future work.

1-087

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > On labour markets and ageing: ageing is one of the main challenges the European social and economic model is facing because it is quite clear that it is easier to sustain a social model like this with growing populations, or at least populations with a stable age structure, than with ageing populations. So it is quite clear that we need to look at how we adopt our social and employment systems to the reality that Europe is ageing.

It is very important in this regard that we really encourage people to stay in the labour market if they can do so and also provide targeted support for those people who are of pre-retirement age and who often find it difficult to find jobs so as to give them the possibility to retrain based on the requirements of their age group and labour market possibilities, so that those people really can stay as active as possible and stay for as long as possible in the labour market.

This is a very serious challenge and one which will stay with us for years and even decades. We will all have to work together to seek a policy response to this challenge.

1-088

Jutta Steinruck (S&D). – Herr Dombrovskis! Ich habe zunächst eine Nachfrage zu Ihren Äußerungen zur Entsenderichtlinie. Was beabsichtigen Sie da zu tun? Möglicherweise war die Verdolmetschung ungenau.

Dann hat Frau Thyssen uns zugesagt, dass soziale und ökonomische Indikatoren im Europäischen Semester gleichberechtigt sein sollen. Sie haben in Ihrer Einführung von verstärkter Berücksichtigung gesprochen. Wer gibt den Ton an, Sie oder Frau Thyssen?

In der letzten Periode hat die Kommission das Rahmenabkommen der Sozialpartner zu Gesundheit und Sicherheit im Friseurhandwerk nicht an den Rat weitergeleitet, obwohl es von beiden Seiten unterschrieben war. Das stellt die Rolle des sozialen Dialogs auf der europäischen Ebene infrage. Wann werden Sie das eben genannte Abkommen an den Rat weiterleiten?

1-089

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > So, three questions. First, on Posting of Workers Directive. I agree with what was already said in a hearing of Marianne Thyssen, that the European Commission would perform a targeted review of the Posting of Workers Directive to address the risks of the social dumping. This includes, for example, areas of the definition or interpretation of the minimum wage of the host Member State. It implies certain loopholes which provide some possibilities for avoidance or excessive interpretation. In any case I am fully supported of Marianne Thyssen's initiative and will support her in this work.

Then, on social and economic indicators: I have been asked this question already once, and once again I fully agree with Marianne Thyssen's proposal, and I am fully willing to support it when she is coming up with this. If I did not say exactly the same wording as Marianne Thyssen, I am sorry for that.

Then, on hairdressers: this is now a relatively complicated issue. It is a sectoral autonomous agreement, and as such the European Commission, at the request of the social partners, has prepared the necessary legislation and is ready to put it forward. At the same time, we already had received a request from ten Member States not to put it forward, and also in European Parliament (not in all groups), and so it is universally accepted. So in this sense I think we need to work with the Member States to make sure that when we are moving forward this legislation, it also actually gets adopted, because now ten Member States have rejected, among them Member States which you typically do not suspect of social dumping or something like this.

1-090

Othmar Karas (PPE). – Herr designierter Vizepräsident! Herzlich willkommen! Danke auch dafür, dass Sie die Beschlüsse des Europäischen Parlaments zur Vergemeinschaftung aller Notkonstruktionen als Antwort auf die Krise unterstützen – inklusive der Troika. Die Vergemeinschaftung ist Ihr wichtigstes Instrument, weil überall, wo die Vergemeinschaftung stattfindet, die sozialen Grund-, Freiheits- und Bürgerrechte gelten und daher auch durchsetzbar sind.

In welchen weiteren Schritten benötigen Sie eine Vertiefung der Wirtschafts- und Währungsunion, damit Sie Ihre Verantwortung für den Euro wahrnehmen können? Sind Sie für die Erweiterung des ESM zu einem Europäischen Währungsfonds? Und können Sie sich vorstellen, dass die Folgenabschätzungen, die Sie angekündigt haben, auch die Grundlage jedes sozialen Dialogs sind?

1-091

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > There are quite a few questions. I will start in the middle with the question of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) becoming a European Monetary Fund. We know that initially there were some discussions about having a European Monetary Fund. I have not heard them in recent times, so the ESM is set in place.

What we should be concentrating on, as a kind of medium-term priority, is bringing the ESM within the Community framework. Right now it is in an intergovernmental framework. We should be working, through the corresponding Treaty change, to bring it within a Community framework. I see

this also as a general approach: something else I said in my introductory remarks was that we should be working as much as possible together within the Community framework. We should bring lots of these intergovernmental matters within this framework.

This is also of relevance to issues of macroeconomic governance. It is a very complex question but we now have different levels and different procedures for macroeconomic governance, and we really should seek to streamline them and to achieve a more universal, more comprehensive and easier-to-understand framework. That is what we need to do in the area of macroeconomic governance practice – in close cooperation with our social partners.

1-092

Agnes Jongerius (S&D). – Mijnheer Dombrovskis, u heeft al eerder gesproken over het balanceren van het economisch/financieel beleid en het sociaal beleid. Daar gaan mijn vragen eigenlijk ook over, omdat er de laatste tijd steeds meer uitspraken van het Europees Hof van Justitie in het voordeel van de economische vrijheden zijn en dus ten koste gaan van de sociale rechten en van de sociale vooruitgang, Dit soort uitspraken neemt steeds toe. Zeer recent is er een zeer verontrustende uitspraak van het Europese Hof waarin is bepaald dat het toekennen van nationale minimumlonen aan werknemers niet mag en in strijd is met de regels van de economische vrijheden, wanneer ze tewerkgesteld worden door onderaannemers van andere lidstaten. Tegelijkertijd zien we steeds meer onwenselijke werkgeverspraktijken zoals nul-urencontracten en schijnzelfstandigheid. Ook deze nemen alleen maar toe.

Mijn vraag aan u, mijnheer Dombrovskis is: wat is uw aanpak? Hoe gaat u die groeiende spanningen tussen fundamentele sociale rechten enerzijds en economische vrijheden anderzijds aanpakken? Hoe kijkt u in dit opzicht naar een protocol inzake sociale vooruitgang?

1-093

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > Basically, on the developments in the labour market, we see that really, over recent years and even decades, some kind of a two-tier labour market has been developed, and there are a number of new ideas you mentioned, with zero-hour contracts and with bogus self-employment actually to avoid working legislation. This is something we certainly need to address, so while working together with the Member States to improve the flexicurity – I will use this word – of the labour market, at the same time we are looking at various loopholes which are being used to actually avoid labour market legislation. This bogus self-employment is one of the real problems, and it is actually spreading. So certainly we are willing to work on this and to look how we can make labour markets more uniform and not such a two-tier labour market, with some people being well protected and others not being protected at all.

As regards decisions of the European Court of Justice, as a representative of the European Commission I would probably not engage in commenting on or questioning the decisions of the European Court of Justice. I think we have to respect the European Court of Justice and implement those decisions while at the same time looking at how we can make our framework better.

1-094

Ivana Maletić (PPE). – Gospodine Dombrovskis, drago mi je što ste baš vi kandidat za potpredsjednika Europske komisije za ekonomsku i socijalnu politiku. Imate potrebno znanje i iskustvo, a kao latvijski premijer pokazali ste da imate i potrebnu hrabrost i odlučnost.

Imala sam prilike raditi s dosta vaših stručnjaka koji su pomagali u Republici Hrvatskoj tijekom pregovora u provedbi reformi i priprema za EU fondove te sam se osobno uvjerila u profesionalnost i visoku razinu znanja te kvalitete latvijske administracije pa vam na tome estitam.

A sad 2 pitanja, I will ask you in English: how do you intend to achieve better connection between specific country recommendation and cohesion policy? Actually use of European funds. And second

one: do you have some ideas how to solve problems with payments from the EU budget to Member States, since this is one of the obstacles for investments and growth too?

1-096

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > On better connection of countries, specific recommendations and cohesion policy: in fact that is now very much being done. Member States are negotiating their partnership agreements and operational programmes with the European Commission. One of the priorities of the Commission in those negotiations is to make sure that cohesion financing goes along country-specific recommendations and is also targeted towards ensuring better economic development and job creation, and towards dealing with social problems. The European Commission always emphasises the role of the EU Social Fund and its possibilities for dealing with the social problems in a country.

As for the question on payments, that actually goes beyond my direct area of responsibility; it is more a question for Kristalina Georgieva. But in any case, it is quite clear that we are facing a serious problem, with the Council blocking the payments and trying, for both commitments and payments in annual budgets, to go below the amounts which were agreed by the multiannual financial framework. As the MFF is an interinstitutional agreement we, both the European Parliament and the European Commission, should be insisting that the Council actually respects the interinstitutional agreement and that we should not be creating this payment crisis. It is a very serious question.

1-097

Javi López (S&D). – Como usted bien sabe o debería de saber, los planes de reforma impuestos por la Troika durante los últimos años han comportado draconianos recortes presupuestarios y de los servicios públicos; en segundo lugar, desastrosos efectos sociales —ha dicho que hay algunos países que están mejor que hace cuatro años; cabría recordar que hay muchos que están mucho peor que hace cuatro años—; y, en tercer lugar, contraproducentes efectos económicos, y los datos de este verano son un claro ejemplo. Y todo ello aplicado con carencias claras de legitimidad democrática.

El Presidente Juncker se comprometió durante su investidura a hacer evaluaciones de impacto social de los planes de reforma, en parte presionado por nuestro grupo.

Mis preguntas son: concrete en qué consistirán esos planes de evaluación social —pero concreto—. En segundo lugar, ¿usted puede asegurar hoy, aquí, que esto no va a quedar en papel mojado, esas evaluaciones? Y, en tercer lugar y último, ¿si alguna evaluación nos indica que una propuesta tiene impacto negativo socialmente, usted la retirará? ¿Sí o no?

1-098

Valdis Dombrovskis, komisāra amata kandidāts > Jā, paldies par Jūsu jautājumu!

Faktiski, mēs jau samērā daudz šīs noklausīšanās laikā esam diskutējuši jautājumu par krīzes pārvēršanos laikā pieņemto lēmumu — troikas ietvaros vai ārpus troikas — ietekmi uz nodarbinātību un šo pieņemto lēmumu sociālajām sekām.

Un jaunās Komisijas mērķis ir šo situāciju koriģēt un lēmumu pieņemšanā veikt ne tikai fiskālas, bet arī sociālas ietekmes izvērtējumu. Un tie ir arī skaidri apņemšanās gan no Eiropas Komisijas prezidenta puses, gan arī no nominātsociālo darba lietu komisāres Teisenas kundzes puses. Un no savas puses es varu pateikt, ka es pilnībā atbalstu un esmu gatavs strādāt, lai šāpņemšanās nepaliktu tikai uz papīra.

Paldies!

1-099

Heinz K. Becker (PPE). – Frau Vorsitzende, werter Kollege Dombrovskis! Als österreichisches Mitglied des Ausschusses für Beschäftigung und soziale Angelegenheiten begrüße ich es sehr, was Sie zu den Bereichen sozialer Dialog und auch zur Rolle der Sozialpartnerschaft in Zukunft im Rahmen der europäischen Politik gesagt haben. Aber viele Problemfelder in der Sozialpolitik der Europäischen Union liegen aufgrund der Subsidiarität in der Verantwortlichkeit der Mitgliedstaaten. Können Sie sich zur Stärkung einer europäischen Effizienz vorstellen, dass *Benchlearning* – das heißt, aus den nachweislich funktionierenden *Best-practice*-Modellen anderer EU-Staaten konkrete Konsequenzen für das eigene Land zu ziehen – als eine konkrete Konsequenz und verbindliche Regelung für die europäische Politik eingeführt wird? Sie haben das in Lettland praktiziert.

1-100

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > As regards subsidiarity, it is quite clear that it is an underlying principle of the functioning of the European Union that only those decisions and issues which can be best addressed at EU level, and where there is clear European added value, are addressed at EU level, and certainly it is the Commission's intention to fully stick with the subsidiarity principle.

Then, as regards exchange of best practices, and also taking over experience from other Member States, this is something which the Commission is actively encouraging. In a number of initiatives, for example on skills and on professional training, I think there is value in looking, for example, at the German and Austrian models of this system of dual education, and actually also for other Member States to look if there are elements applicable also to those Member States, because one of the clear problems which we are facing in our labour market is, among other things, also the skills mis-match – that the young specialists being prepared by our education system are not always the ones who are required by the labour market.

So we really need to look at a better connection between skills and labour market requirements.

1-101

Georgi Pirinski (S&D). – Vice-President designate, the directive on single-member private liability companies (part of the corporate governance package) clearly totally disregards guarantees for basic workers' rights: the right to information, to consultation and to board member participation. In this situation, do you undertake to withdraw this draft directive, to look very carefully and to come up with concrete proposals to ensure this very dangerous loophole in this draft directive is totally eliminated? And will you initiate a very involved round of consultation between social partners and not re-introduce such an act unless there is complete agreement that workers' rights are completely guaranteed?

1-102

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > As regards the guiding principle of the new Commission, it has been stated many times before: it is to strengthen the coherence between economic and social direction to ensure protection, among other things, of the workers. I must apologise: I cannot now comment to you on the specific directive, but I am very much willing to look into it; also to get guidance from the Economic and Social Affairs Commissioner-designate, Mrs Thyssen.

And, as you mentioned, should any dangerous loopholes be discovered, I think the Commission would be able to withdraw this initiative. We know that President-elect Juncker has stated while dealing with Better Regulation that he also sees a possibility within the framework of the REFIT programme to withdraw several legislative proposals. Certainly we should look into this specific one. I cannot – I apologise once again – comment right now on the specific directive, but together with Commissioner-designate Thyssen I am willing to look into this question.

I can provide you with additional answers on a bilateral basis.

1-103

Eva Paunova (PPE). – Mr Dombrovskis, I have met you a number of times during PPE summits, where you demonstrated very well the effectiveness of the policies and reforms which enabled your country to adopt the euro. I believe that my country, Bulgaria, is keen to follow this positive example. This was demonstrated yesterday in our national elections, when my party had a clear and convincing political victory over its main opponents.

Therefore, I would like to understand your position on one topic that is key not only for my country but also for the European project in general. The threat of a so-called two-speed Europe has been looming over the Union for quite some time, in particular since the financial crisis and the further integration of the euro Member States. How can you, as Vice-President, ensure that there will be no Europe in which further integration of the euro area leads to a disintegration of the Union as a whole, undermining the ability of all Member States to be on an equal footing in any decision-making process that affects their economies?

1-104

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > In my introductory remarks I mentioned too the need for the EU to evolve as much as possible as a whole, meaning all 28 Member States. I also mentioned the need for the euro area to remain open for new Member States to join. We also need to preserve the effective functioning of the EU's internal market, meaning the EU internal market of the EU 28, which means that there are, of course, policies and issues which affect the euro area because these countries are sharing the same currency.

But at the same time the euro area should not become something exclusive, something which would attempt to undermine the EU's internal market. So those decisions which concern the EU's internal market should be taken at the level of the EU 28. That is quite clear, and the new Commission will stick with this principle.

1-105

Maria João Rodrigues (S&D). – Mr Dombrovskis, I think that if you really want to overcome the crisis, we need to shift priorities, and I think that the top priority for the next period should be investment and job creation rather than quick fiscal consolidation. So my question is: can you commit on having this top priority – investment and job creation – for the next annual growth survey, for the next country-specific recommendations? And can you explain to us how you intend to use the in-built flexibility of the Stability and Growth Pact with this purpose?

1-106

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > As was also clearly stated in my introductory remarks, the priority of the new Commission, the triad priority as I mentioned, is investment, growth and jobs, and these are areas on which we are going to focus, including in the next annual growth survey. That is very clear and has been stated many times by President-elect Juncker, by myself and also by other Commissioners-designate.

Then on the flexibility within the Stability and Growth Pact: we know that there are a number of areas where you can use this flexibility. You can use the so-called waiver in the preventive arm in a situation when a country's real growth is below zero or the output gap is below -4%. There is a bad times clause when an output gap is between -1.5 and -4%, which implies either no adjustment at all or reduced adjustment paths. There is a structural reforms clause with certain safety margins but which is one you can use for structural reforms which have clear, positive fiscal outcomes in the coming periods.

In both arms there is a general escape clause – in a case of severe downturn in the EU or euro area – in which case you adapt your paths of fiscal adjustment, easing deadlines as in EDF or in a path of movement towards an MTO.

There are other areas of flexibility, but clearly there is flexibility within the Stability and Growth Pact and clearly the new Commission is willing to use it, but to use it in a uniform way equally with all Member States.

1-107

Werner Langen (PPE). – Herr Dombrovskis! Sie haben belegt, dass Sie durch Handeln im eigenen Land überzeugen konnten. Reformen und Haushaltseinsparungen haben zu Wachstum und Umkehr geführt. Die Rezepte, die hier zum Teil angekündigt werden – Eurobonds, weitere Verschuldung oder jetzt neuerdings, wie ich heute lese, den ESM, also unseren noch nicht vollendeten Währungsfonds, für Investitionen zu nutzen –, das sind alles Rezepte, die Versprechen machen, die aber nicht helfen werden.

Ich habe an Sie die gleiche Frage wie an Herrn Moscovici: Wie sehen Sie im Konfliktfall – die Regeln sind ja für den Konfliktfall – den Artikel 6 der Internen Anweisung der Kommission, wonach Moscovici und Dombrovskis nur gemeinsam Vorschläge machen können?

Zweitens: Sie sind gefragt worden, ob Sie sich für den Austritt aus dem Euro-Währungsgebiet einsetzen werden. Dafür muss man den Vertrag ändern, das ist richtig. Aber Mitglied des Euro-Währungsgebiets muss zum Beispiel – das ist eines meiner Lieblingsthemen – auch Schweden werden, weil Schweden alle Bedingungen erfüllt, sich aber politisch weigert. Wie wollen Sie dort dafür sorgen, dass das Euro-Währungsgebiet auch dort, wo die Verträge klar sind, wächst?

1-108

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > I think there were two questions: the first on the distribution of work between myself and Commissioner-designate Moscovici. As I mentioned, we certainly intend to work as a team. We intend to work very closely together and I see myself as a coordinator and not as a supervisor or someone trying to micromanage the Commissioner's work.

We have already had discussions with Commissioner-designate Moscovici on a number of aspects, including external representation, and also about jointly making policy proposals – where it is clear that the Commissioner is doing his job, but that, at the same time, it should be possible for the Vice-President to have input at an early stage in the decision-making process, so that we can really say 'this is a joint proposal'. We agreed on this as an underlying principle, and our teams are currently working towards more specific descriptions which, as the President-elect said, should be available in the first weeks of the Commission's new term of office.

As regards countries outside the eurozone, including Sweden – and, of course, we know the situation of Sweden and the negative result of the referendum – we know what the Treaty says in this regard, but it is clear that the Commission cannot force any country to join the eurozone. I think the eurozone should be open and willing to accept new Member States, but I hardly think that we can force anyone in who is not willing.

1-109

Chair. > As a Swede, I would like to say an extra thank you for that. Thank you to all the Members for their interesting questions and thank you, Mr Dombrovskis, for your answers. I shall now give you five minutes for a brief closing statement – five minutes before the conclusion of the meeting.

1-110

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner-designate. > Honourable Members of Parliament, dear colleagues, first of all I would like to thank you very much for this opportunity to have this exchange of views, and for the number of questions I have received and which I understand require further work and follow up. In any case I am very much willing to work closely with the European Parliament, and

to engage very closely, having been a European parliamentarian myself, and to look at how we can deal with the challenges we are all facing.

I believe that I still owe you one answer to a question asked – and I received some criticism for not having been able to answer in two minutes – on the mistakes made in Latvia and the experience of Latvia in dealing with the crisis. I think you can find some answers in the country-specific recommendations for Latvia. There are a number of policy areas where there are recommendations on strengthening energy independence, which is quite important in this geopolitical context, in dealing with income inequality, including through changes in taxation policy, in strengthening the judiciary, in dealing with insolvency problems and a number of other country-specific recommendations which we as a country have been receiving, and which indicated certain shortcomings which Latvia should address. I very much hope that the new government, which will be formed right now, since we had elections just two days ago, will be willing to take those recommendations and work to actually deal with those very serious challenges which Latvia is facing.

As regards the work of the new Commission – and I think I must emphasise this once again – it is a new structure so not everything is fine-tuned to the latest details yet, but we are clearly willing and ready, after consultations with the Commissioners-designate, to work in a spirit of cooperation, to work together as a team – and we have to work together as a team even though, of course, Commissioners are delegated from different political backgrounds. We need to deliver a result so that Europe is able to move forward and to deal with those questions which people are really concerned about. Those are questions of economic growth, those are questions of employment, those are questions of wage development and those are questions of the European economic and social model. Once again, thank you very much for this hearing. I look forward to close cooperation also in the future.

(Applause)

1-111

Chair. > There will be a joint evaluation meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and coordinators at 19.00 this evening.

Thank you, Mr Dombrovskis, and all members of both committees who have been asking intelligent and fascinating questions.

(The hearing closed at 17.30)