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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

*Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
The Chair*

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Jerzy BUZEK
Chair
Conference of Committee Chairs

Dear Mr Buzek,

In accordance with Rule 118 and Annex XVI of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, the Committee on the Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), and, as associated committees, the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM), held a public hearing on Wednesday 1 October 2014 with Ms Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner-designate, who, subject to the positive outcome of the nomination procedure, will be responsible for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility.

Prior to the hearing, Parliament sent the Commissioner-designate a list of written questions. Written answers to those questions were received on 26 September 2014 and served as a basis for further oral questions.

Ms Thyssen opened the hearing by making a statement in which she referred to the following priorities:

- fighting for more jobs and for a better social protection, fighting against poverty and social exclusion as her goals for the next five years;
- competitiveness and social equity should be tackled together, as basis of a social market economy;
- develop workers skills and talents, as competitiveness depends also on the right skills;
- contribution to the establishment of best conditions to return to work for the unemployed, and the fight against exclusion and poverty;

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- job creation; access to jobs among other measures by promoting workers' mobility;
- promote proportionate common rules to protect workers in the single market, without creating excessive burden on their addressees;
- get the most out of the instruments and the partnerships already existing at EU level, and build with the European Parliament, with the Council, and the Commission and the Social Partners a Europe that is more fair and more sustainable.

Members from the EMPL, CULT and FEMM then asked 45 questions in total, *inter alia* on the following subjects:

- measures to create job opportunities, including green transition agenda;
- matching skills and jobs;
- the current status of the Posting of Workers Directive and the need to revise it; to evaluate weaknesses in applying the directive; to deal with wage competition and stop social dumping;
- re-shoring jobs, returning production and services to Europe; creating a hospitable environment for enterprises to create jobs;
- social indicators in the European semester, in view of pursuing the social objectives of the EU2020 strategy, especially the poverty reduction including child poverty;
- fight abuses in the labour market, such as bogus self-employment and zero-hour contracts;
- people with disabilities, initiatives for their integration in the labour market and to improve their access to training, products and services;
- adverse effects of mobility of workers;
- the Youth Employment Initiative; improving the utilisation of the Youth Guarantee by the Member States;
- work-life balance, family supporting policies and the maternity leave directive;
- issues related to the ageing population and care for the elderly;
- sustainability of pensions;
- screening economic policies for any possible social impact, especially the risk to increase poverty;
- support for minimum income in the Member States;
- people living amongst precarious conditions, supporting the homeless in the EU;
- equal treatment and discrimination on the workplace;
- gender pay gap and pension gap;
- adult education;
- the promotion of the dual system in education.

A verbatim transcript of all questions and answers is annexed to the present letter (Annex III).

During the debate, Ms Thyssen made a number of specific statements regarding action in her future Commission portfolio:

- to take into account, at all levels, the social impact of measures proposed by the Commission (see transcript, position 3-005, last paragraph);
- to give social indicators more weight (3-016, 3-037, 3-065, 3-095, 3-099);

- to consider Green jobs as essential in a society in transition, with courage to invest in innovative projects (3-020, 3-061);
- to be personally in favour of a minimum income and that Europe should stimulate it while respecting EU and Member States' powers (3-022);
- defending free movement as core right and a fundamental principle in the EU (3-024, 3-047, 3-055, 3-071).

The EMPL committee received reassurance from Ms Thyssen that she will cooperate with all relevant Commissioners (3-037).

The Committee requests early clarification on responsibilities with regard to files falling under EMPL remit, such as the maternity leave directive.

Specific remarks by the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT)

The Committee on Culture and Education assessed the replies of the Commissioner-designate to the relevant policy issues as constituting adequate proof of her aptitude to be a member of the College of Commissioners and to carry out the specific tasks assigned to her. The complete evaluation text of the Committee on Culture and Education is annexed to the present letter (Annex I).

Specific remarks by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM)

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality found that the Commissioner-designate was suitable for the mandate proposed by President Juncker and supported her call for all future commissioners to include gender equality in their portfolios. The evaluation letter from the Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality is annexed to the present letter (Annex II).

Overall assessment

Pursuant to Annex XVI of the Rules of Procedure *"the coordinators shall be invited to state whether, in their opinion, the Commissioners-designate are qualified both to be members of the College and to carry out the particular duties they have been assigned."*

On the basis of the responses of the Members present at the hearing, as well as the comments made by my committee's coordinators, and the representatives of the associated committees, who met after the hearing under my chairmanship, I hereby give the following assessment:

The Commissioner-designate:

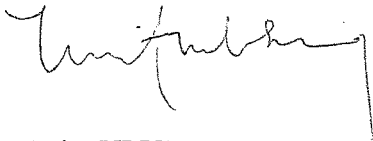
- was well prepared for the hearing and proved her personal competences;
- showed a good general knowledge in the fields of employment and social affairs and identified clear priority issues; however, there is room for improvement with regard to concrete initiatives.
- in her answers clearly proved her European commitment;
- has good communication skills;
- has the advantage of understanding the role of the European Parliament in the institutional framework;

- is considered as an appropriate candidate, whom the committee expects to deliver concrete results in her portfolio.

The general outcome of this hearing is that in the view of the Coordinators of the Employment Committee the Commissioner-designate is well-qualified to be a member of the College of Commissioners and has the aptitude to carry out the specific tasks assigned to her.

This view is shared by all the political groups in the Employment Committee, with the exception of the GUE/NGL Group who said they would not endorse Ms Thyssen. GUE/NGL raised concerns *"regarding Ms Thyssen's wish to continue the same economic policies as the outgoing Commission, which have had adverse consequences for unemployment and poverty."* However, GUE/NGL will not oppose the consensus reached by the other groups.

Yours sincerely,



Marita ULVSKOG

1st Vice-Chair of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs,
Acting Chair

Copy:

Mr Thomas HÄNDEL, Chairman of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

Annexes:

- Annex I - Remarks by the CULT Committee
- Annex II - Remarks by the FEMM Committee
- Annex III - Verbatim transcript of the proceedings

Annex – evaluation of Commissioner-designate Marianne Thyssen by the Committee on Culture and Education

Members of the Committee on Culture and Education asked the Commissioner-designate questions about:

- Investment in educational systems in order to generate economic growth in Europe
- Mobility and skills development of young people
- Initiatives to promote dual education systems and the link between education and businesses; cooperation between DG EAC and DG EMPL in this field
- Youth Guarantee Scheme and inefficient usage of the available funds by the Member States
- Promotion of adult education and development of soft skills, as the formal skills programmes are supported mainly by ESF
- Grundtvig sub-programme and non-formal education
- Coordination between the Commissioners, as regards discrimination in employment and in employment-related areas (such as professional training, retraining and additional training) that may have an adverse effect on employment rates, labour mobility and return on education

The Committee on Culture and Education noted that the Commissioner-designate indicated the skills development as one of her priorities: according to her, the EU is lagging behind in the field of the acquisition and improvement of skills and competences for employees and workers of all age groups. In this context, she underlined the need to deploy serious efforts to catch up in this field.

The Commissioner-designate also emphasised the importance of investing in lifelong learning at all ages as a means of enhancing employability and preventing social exclusion.

As regards dual education and the matching of skills and jobs, the Commissioner-designate referred to the fact that Mr Juncker has transferred the policy areas of vocational training and adult education from DG EAC to DG EMPL. She considered this a clear signal for the need to create a closer link between labour market and education. However, her reply to the question on concrete initiatives to promote dual education systems remained vague.

As for the Youth Guarantee Scheme, the Commissioner-designate acknowledged that there is no one model that would fit all Member States; however, there is flexibility for the Member States to adapt the scheme to their respective systems and needs. The Commissioner-designate also committed to work to ensure that the funds are properly utilised and invested. For this, inter-institutional cooperation is needed.

The Commissioner-designate referred to Erasmus+ programme and its importance in promoting adult education and vocational training.

She regretted the fact that there is lack of demand for the funds for adult education and committed herself to find out how to increase the participation in adult education in the Member States.

The Committee on Culture and Education assesses the replies of the Commissioner-designate to the relevant policy issues as adequate proof of her aptitude to be a member of the College of Commissioners and to carry out the specific tasks assigned to her.



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**COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY
THE CHAIR**

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To the attention of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

Dear Chair,
Dear Coordinators,

In accordance with Rule 118 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, your Committee, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, on Wednesday 1 October, held a public hearing with Ms Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner-designate, who, subject to the positive outcome of the nomination procedure, will be responsible for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility.

My committee, the Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Rights has been associated to this hearing. As foreseen under the Rules of Procedure in Annex XVI, please herewith find the opinion of my Committee for inclusion in your evaluation statement.

Written questions

The Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Rights takes notes of the attention attributed to the gender pay gap in the written questions prepared by your Committee. It has taken due note of the Commissioner-designates commitment to enhance the monitoring of Member States' actions towards a greater participation of women on the labour market and to improve wage transparency.

The course of the hearing

As for topics addressed by the Commissioner-designate in her opening statement, whilst in full appreciation of comments made by Ms Thyssen with regards to boosting European labour markets and lifting citizens out of poverty and exclusion, my Committee notes that attention to the situation of women in specific was given in proportion to her portfolio, whereas it is widely accepted that women are still behind on men in terms of employment figures and are at a greater risk of poverty.

During the hearing, Members and Substitutes of the Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Rights addressed questions on the following subjects in particular and we have taken note of further commitments taken by Ms Thyssen with regards to; policies to enhance work-life balance (such as child-care facilities), efforts to reduce the gender pay gap in general (including a collaboration with the Member States in terms of the application of legislation in place, the improvement of wage transparency and facilities for child and elderly care) and comprehensive policies to address the gender pension gap in specific (ranging from the inclusion in pension legislation, addressing discrimination in women's pension age and to boosting women's labour market participation).

We also took note of her commitment to collaborate with Commissioner-designate Ms Jourova and would particularly like to draw attention to the Maternity leave Directive, on which we note Ms Thyssen affirmed to be ready to put the proposal on the table, given its importance for work-life balance, and to reopen the discussion with all parties concerned.

Evaluation

On this basis of the commitments taken in the written questions and in the course of the hearing, as well as comments made by my committee's coordinators, I would like to inform you that, as far as we are concerned, and in the conviction that Ms Thyssen will put force to her personal commitments by actively enforcing gender equality on labour markets and in social affairs in the course of her mandate, the Commissioner-designate is suitable for the mandate proposed by President Juncker. We also support her call for all future commissioners to include gender equality in their portfolios.

Yours sincerely,

Iratxe GARCÍA PÉREZ
