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*Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
The Chairwoman*

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Mr Jerzy BUZEK
President of the European Parliament
PHS 11B011

Dear Mr President,

In accordance with Rule 106 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs held a public hearing on Wednesday 13 January 2010 with Mr László Andor, Commissioner-designate, who, subject to the positive outcome of the nomination procedure, will be responsible for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

Prior to the hearing, Parliament had sent the Commissioner-designate a list of written questions, including priorities and requests listed by the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs. In his written reply, Mr Andor answered the questions satisfactorily.

Mr Andor opened the hearing by setting out his vision to strengthen, in cooperation with the European Parliament, the social dimension of Europe's political agenda, and his ideas on how European policy in the field of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion should evolve over the next few years. The Commissioner-designate stressed his belief that the impact of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression on employment and society puts the long-term sustainability of the social model in question. He considers therefore as his first priority to find a balanced way out of the social crisis in today's economic context by stopping the rise in unemployment and by helping the jobless return to work, hence preventing poverty and social exclusion.

Furthermore, the Commissioner-designate detailed his approach for a fairer, sustainable, participative Europe. With a view to creating an inclusive labour market, promoting new skills for new jobs, encouraging socially responsible management of industrial change, etc., he will collaborate with Commissioners on economic and monetary policy, industrial and education policy. New sources of growth, such as the green economy and healthcare and social services need to be considered. He

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underlined that the EU 2020 strategy is the right framework to build a stronger social dimension of the European model.

Finally, the Commissioner-designate affirmed his firm willingness to engage in an open dialogue on the basis of regular contacts with the committee and with the Parliament as a whole.

Members addressed questions on the following subjects in particular, and Mr Andor gave the following comments and made certain commitments regarding his future Commission portfolio:

- **The mainstreaming of employment and social inclusion issues in the EU 2020 post-Lisbon agenda:** Mr Andor promised to involve the European Parliament proactively in the process as he recognised that the conditions for the association of the EP in the development of the strategy were not satisfactory so far. He maintains the idea of full employment, despite the crisis, and insists on the need to boost investment and cooperating across different policy areas. He stressed the opportunities to develop environment friendly and low carbon jobs, for instance in energy, construction, heavy industry sectors.
- **Flexicurity and active labour market policies:** the former for Mr Andor balances the objectives of flexibility for enterprises with security for workers simultaneously. Lifelong learning to ensure employment security, rather than job security, is key. He announced a Communication on future EU cooperation in the area of vocational training (Copenhagen process) for Spring 2010. Job quality is an obvious concern.
- **Youth unemployment:** Mr Andor indicated that beyond the crisis, some countries struggle with structural problems, stressed the importance of education and training in this relation, and declared his willingness to examine suggestions made by the EP, for instance, an 'Erasmus-type' first job programme, a taskforce on youth unemployment and ear-marking financial aid in the framework of the ESF. Several MEPs have invited the Commissioner-designate to make concrete commitments.
- **Active inclusion strategies, non-discrimination:** to improve employability of people with disabilities, he intends to support SMEs. Roma people face multiple discrimination (stigmatisation, lack of access to jobs, housing, health care, and education), requiring a multidisciplinary approach. Tackling child poverty is another crucial issue.
- **Alleged contradiction between social legislation and the interests of enterprises:** a simplification of regulation and a reduction of administrative burden is needed, but Mr Andor stressed that labour is not a commodity.
- **Effect of immigration on the labour markets:** Mr Andor will pay special attention to social integration and inclusion issues, and will cooperate to that effect with Mrs MALMSTRÖM and Mrs REDING.

- **EMF, EU stability pact, public finances discipline and impact on sustainability of pensions, social security systems:** Mr Andor proposes cooperation with Mr REHN and Mr TAJANI in that regard. With an eye on employment and pensions, support systems can only be withdrawn slowly. A new green paper on pensions is to be expected soon; issues of active ageing and portability of pensions will also be addressed.
- **Family carers:** Mr Andor agrees that these people often work in precarious conditions, without social security protection and will look into their situation more carefully.
- **Working Time Directive:** Mr Andor indicated that an "opt-out" from the EU legislation is never the best solution and that derogations and exceptions granted should not affect fundamental rights. Furthermore, he pledged to carry out a social impact assessment and to consult with the social partners before making a new proposal; a sectoral approach could be a possible solution.
- **Posting of workers directive:** the Commissioner-designate agreed to improve the implementation of the directive and to carry out a social impact assessment and to consult with social partners.
- **Works Council Directive:** the experience proved helpful to go through crisis, since social partners cooperated constructively in searching flexible solutions. To be encouraged.
- **Reconciliation of professional and family life:** on top of maternity leave, Mr Andor is in favour of also addressing paternity leave, but no commitments in terms of timing.
- **Gender mainstreaming:** he expressed willingness to examine the inequality of pay and possible critical situations existing in certain member states.
- **Social services:** Mr Andor refers to quality framework being drafted by the Commission, but this is rather a matter for the Commissioner on the internal market. Mr Andor, for his part, will cooperate on the social dimension, by guaranteeing their affordability, accessibility and quality aspects.
- **Social economy:** He expressed support for the social economy, both for its potential in term of job creation, and for its intrinsic social values.
- **ESF and microfinance:** he acknowledged the need for modernisation, while maintaining the role of ESF as an instrument of cohesion policy; new innovative solutions, like cooperation with the EIB, financial engineering should be studied. A link between public sources funding (redistribution) and market economy is needed. He also expressed his support for the microfinance initiative.
- **Free movement of workers:** Mr Andor indicated that the transitional measures restricting free movement for the citizens of the recent Member

States will come to an end soon, but so far free movement of workers of the new Member states has had a minor impact on the labour market. He pledged however, to carry out a social impact assessment for the necessary data concerning the issues of undeclared work and pressure on tax and social security systems.

- **Health and safety:** Mr Andor has the intention to accelerate work in this area by means of a new action programme; he will bring forward new legislation in the area of musculo-skeletal disorders within a short time-frame and also examine tobacco-smoke related risks at the work-place; for other risks (hazardous materials, electromagnetic fields and optical radiation), there is a need for more sound scientific evidence
- **Global dialogue on social issues:** Mr Andor will be committed to representing European values in the social area, to defend the ILO standards and to promote corporate social responsibility.

Before the end of the hearing, the Commissioner-designate made a closing statement in which he reaffirmed his commitment to the service of the European Union and to the European ideals, in particular to strengthen social cohesion in the context of the crisis. He also stressed his commitment in favour of the European social model and regarding the place of the social agenda in the EU 2020 strategy. He backs the objective of full employment and will use all means possible to ensure effective implementation of existing legislation. Mr Andor also reaffirmed that he attaches great importance to transparency and looks forward to close cooperation with the Parliament as a whole and with the Committee on Employment in particular. He hoped that on top of his general answers his commitment to a social Europe and the EU 2020 agenda are clear.

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

Mr Andor has given proof of integrity and independence and has demonstrated sufficient specific knowledge of the domain and his professional aptitude to assume the high office of Commissioner responsible for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. The coordinators noted that the Commissioner-designate was calm and responsive and welcomed his commitment to working closely with the European Parliament. However, some coordinators noted that a number of MEPs regretted that his answers were too general. Moreover, the coordinators consider that Mr Andor can put to good use his past professional experience and training as an economist, to establish a closer link between the macro-economic and employment policy. Finally, he has a precise vision of the challenges regarding the distribution of policy-tasks amongst the Commissioners' portfolios and the need of close cooperation within the college.

The coordinators of my committee expect the Commissioner-designate to forcefully deliver on his priorities and the above-mentioned commitments.

The general outcome of this hearing is that the Commissioner-designate gave an adequate impression of his aptitude to be a member of the College of Commissioners and to carry out the specific tasks assigned to him.

This represents the opinion of a majority of Members who attended the hearing, as represented by the coordinators.

Yours sincerely,



Pervenche Berès