



ANSWER TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE
Andrus ANSIP
Digital Single Market
Vice-President of the Commission

1. General competence, European commitment and personal independence

What aspects of your personal qualifications and experience are particularly relevant for becoming Commissioner and promoting the European general interest, particularly in the area you would be responsible for? What motivates you? How will you contribute to putting forward the strategic agenda of the Commission?

What guarantees of independence are you able to give the European Parliament, and how would you make sure that any past, current or future activities you carry out could not cast doubt on the performance of your duties within the Commission?

I have been now active in politics for 16 years, of which nine years I have served as Prime Minister. This experience has given me confidence to accept the President-elect's offer to set up my candidacy to the role of Vice-President. As Prime Minister, I was trusted to lead three different coalition governments consisting of both centre-right and centre-left parties. I have led all my cabinets with the understanding that one needs to find consensus, act as a bridge-builder, in order to achieve common goals. I intend to continue this practice, should I be appointed as Vice-President.

As a citizen and as a politician I have always been a supporter of the European project which is based on democratic values. I took it as self-evident that in order to set up my candidacy for the post of commissioner, I had to seek a democratic mandate during the European Parliament's election in May 2014. I'm deeply honoured that I received the trust of the electorate. I have always believed that European and national goals are mutually reinforcing – I have never 'blamed Brussels' and never tolerated if my ministers inclined to do so. I'm immensely proud that the country I know best joined the EMU as 17th full member in January 2011, at the peak of the financial crises, thus giving a signal of trust to the European project. By the time I stepped down as PM, 80% of Estonians supported the Euro (highest in the EU) - see endnote 1 I also believe that Europe should value solidarity and my government defended this principle in negotiations for two financial frameworks, in the Constitutional Court hearing over the legality of ESM and applied it vis-à-vis the countries that suffered most during the global financial crises.

If confirmed, I hope I can give a contribution to the European project by serving as Vice-President for Digital Single Market. I have had the opportunity to be at the forefront of a digital transformation of a country, which today excels in multiple areas of e-government, safe and secure private and public digital solutions, and which takes cyber security and data protection seriously. Just a few examples - during the last EP elections, 33% of the votes cast in Estonia were given via Internet through e-voting system, used for the very first time in the world for general elections in 2005. It is also estimated, that the wide uptake of digital-signature in public and private transactions (with a population of 1,3 million more than 175 million signatures has been given) saves the Estonian economy a whole working-week every year. As Prime Minister I also initiated, together with my Finnish, Danish and Dutch colleagues, a letter addressed to the June European Council in 2010, which called for the establishment of a 'digital single market for the EU' by 2015. I've been a fervent

supporter of this goal through all the European Council meetings up until the topic was last discussed in October 2013.

I'm not myself good at coding, though I have learned it, I fully know how increasingly important good IT skills will be for Europe. I know what services citizens and consumers expect and what businesses need. I want to see an operational digital single market where consumers are protected and free to choose goods and services cross-border. Where their preferences drive the market; where innovative companies have a true chance to succeed, instead of running into outdated borders and vested interests. I believe in a society where governments and municipalities have to make efforts so that citizens can communicate with them, in a seamless, easy and, if citizens so prefer, digitally safe and secure manner.

Europe is full of good digital solutions and digital opportunities, which offer benefits for consumers and enterprises, and would foster job creation and growth, if we manage to remove the obstacles, break down national silos and build bridges between our regulatory environments. I intend to do just that on the basis of the political guidelines given by President-elect Juncker.

To best serve the interests of European citizens, I will act independently and with integrity. In my work I will show the degree of impartiality and availability that is expected of me in accordance with paragraph 3 of Article 17 of the Treaty on the European Union and with Article 245 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. I will abide by the ethical standards expected of any Member of the European Commission, as clearly detailed in the Treaties and the Code of Conduct for Commissioners. In this respect, I will refuse any instructions from any government or other bodies. My allegiance is to the European Commission and the President-elect's vision of the European Commission as a modern, efficient and transparent public administration.

If confirmed, I will fully commit to the new transparency requirements set out by the President-elect in his political guidelines.

I have completed my Declaration of interests as stipulated in the Code of Conduct of Commissioners, and it is publicly available. I will immediately inform the President-elect and update my Declaration should there be any changes. I will also inform the President-elect of any situation that might jeopardise my independence, impartiality and availability to the Commission. I will not engage in any other professional activities beyond the tasks I am expected to perform.

2. Management of the portfolio and cooperation with the European Parliament

How would you assess your role as a Member of the College of Commissioners? In what respect would you consider yourself responsible and accountable to the Parliament for your actions and for those of your departments?

What specific commitments are you prepared to make in terms of enhanced transparency, increased cooperation and effective follow-up to Parliament's positions and requests for legislative initiatives? In relation to planned initiatives or ongoing procedures, are you ready to provide Parliament with information and documents on an equal footing with the Council?

If confirmed I will steer and coordinate one of the ten priorities of the Juncker Commission – the Connected Digital Single Market. As Vice-President, I see my role as a team-leader, who will guide actions in different fields and bring together all necessary policy initiatives needed to achieve the ambitious task that President-elect Juncker would like to entrust me with. By its nature, implementing such a priority project will see me interacting with a great number of other Members of the Commission, with the aim of drawing from the expertise of the Commission as a whole.

To bring forward a connected continent we ourselves more than ever need to work in a connected fashion, moving out of a narrow sector perspective that in so many organisations, public but also private, still prevails. The proposed co-operative re-design of the new Commission is a logical step in this direction and I intend to make full use of it with my fellow Commissioners. Not least, I think smarter use of collaborative IT tools helps us in that.

I am conscious that to succeed I will need to carefully listen to civil society, consumers, business and researchers, and address their needs and concerns. I value the European Parliament as a prime conveyor of our societies' voices. I intend to rapidly and thoroughly engage with the whole range of stakeholders during the first months of my mandate, if confirmed.

I have been given the challenging task of drawing up ambitious steps towards achieving the Digital Single Market, within the first six months of the mandate. Together with the help of my fellow Commissioners, I look forward to presenting these legislative steps to the Honourable Members of the European Parliament. I value the role that the European Parliament plays in delivering results that are akin to what the people expect. I will therefore maintain, and where possible enhance, a constructive and open dialogue with the European Parliament. I believe in a frank and open discussion with the European Parliament, where our working relationship is based on mutual trust. I look forward to my participation in the Parliament's plenary sessions and relevant Committee meetings, and will personally ensure that adequate representation of the Commission is present in the case of some unforeseen absence.

Without prejudice to the principle of collegiality, which I believe will be strengthened with the set-up as proposed by President-elect Juncker, I hold myself responsible for my actions in front of the representatives of the European Unions' citizens, in line with the Framework Agreement between the European Parliament and the Commission.

The European Commission depends on the political support of the European Parliament. In this respect, the positions of the Parliament need to be considered carefully and followed up appropriately, and I will ensure that this is the case within the areas of my responsibility, including paying particular attention to those requests made by the Parliament under Article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. I will also ensure that Resolutions of the Parliament falling within my area of responsibility will be responded to within the timeframe foreseen in the Framework Agreement. As to proposals that are still pending, I will examine the state of their progress and engage in a collegial discussion within the Commission, while respecting the obligations stemming from the Framework Agreement. I share and will ensure the need for broad stakeholder consultation and rigorous impact assessment, reflecting our common emphasis on the quality of legislation and the right regulatory environment, and will work closely with the First Vice-President designate to achieve this.

The European Parliament can count on my support and commitment to fully implement the principle of equal treatment for the European Parliament and the Council regarding access to meetings or the flow of information in accordance with the provisions of the Framework Agreement.

Questions from the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection:

3. Growth, competitiveness and job creation

What measures will you take to help improve growth, competitiveness and job creation in the Single Market? Which holistic strategy do you envisage for a balanced Single Market development capable to deliver concrete benefits to business, consumers and employees? What steps will you take to enable businesses, in particular SMEs, to have access to and reap the benefits of the Single Market?

How do you envisage continuing the policy process started with the Single Market Act? Would you envisage linking the SMAs exercise to the Single Market Governance and the role of the Single Market integration within the European Semester?

The global economy is transforming into a digital one. Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) is not only one sector of the economy but equally the foundation of a modern innovative society, spanning almost all of its parts. Digital introduces new ways of producing goods and delivering services from cars and chemicals to health, retail distribution and energy. The roll-out of ICT has made possible the digitization of increasing amounts of knowledge, goods, services and processes. The digital economy therefore is at the heart of the EU's efforts to restore growth, to foster innovation and to create new jobs. The single market, the heart of European integration and prosperity must be progressively transformed and extended into a digital one. Unless we overcome the challenges from fragmentation and short term vested interests, there is a risk of surrendering positions in global markets that Europe has always led (automobile and machinery, pharmaceuticals and biotech, retail, logistics and other service industries).

Creating the right framework conditions for growth and job creation are THE objectives pursued by the initiatives which the Commission will put on the table, I am convinced that we can and must do more. Building on steps already taken, I will, with all colleagues involved, develop a holistic strategy to guide us on this endeavour of removing obstacles, particularly for SMEs, to unleash the potential of digital single market. So far only 14% of SMEs use the Internet to sell online. The market is fragmented. Consumers are frustrated when they are unable to access digital services in another Member State because of restrictive business practices or legal impediments or because of the complexity and lack of transparency of applicable rules. We have an opportunity and an obligation to make a real difference in terms of creating the conditions for investment, stimulating both supply and demand – helping to build a dynamic digital economy whilst maximising the potential for digital take-up.

My intention is to make sure that our key policies and frameworks reinforce each other. That together with targeted research and innovation, they deliver concrete benefits to consumers, businesses and public administrations. Reinforced competitiveness will not come from one single action or from one single area alone. It will be the result of directing all our efforts at EU and national levels, to strengthen the single market, to boost its digital dimension, support digital entrepreneurship, stimulate investment in digital infrastructures and new technologies, promote the creation of content and ensure the attractiveness of the EU as a production and investment location. We need to help enterprises make the most of cross-border opportunities, both within the Single Market and outside the EU. A key priority for my Digital Single Market strategy will be to create the right incentives for both public and private investment in infrastructure, particularly broadband, technologies and innovative services.

There is a wide variety of policies, initiatives and programmes which contribute to creating a Connected Digital Single Market – digital infrastructures ensuring high speed connectivity (broadband), copyright, security, ICT standardisation, cloud Computing, the digital service infrastructures, digital manufacturing, digital transport, digital cities, the Smart grids, digital media, (more detail on this is provided in the response to Question 4). If confirmed, I will strive to ensure that the digital angle of policies is not simply added onto initiatives as an afterthought, but is hard-wired into their evolution. We need to take a fresh, cross-cutting approach looking at the whole value chain from the supply-side as well as from a consumer perspective.

Over the last years, the annual Country-Specific Recommendations proposed by the Commission in the context of the European Semester have been used to stimulate major reform efforts in many Member States. These efforts have started to bear fruit. I also believe that incorporating the Single Market integration dimension within the European Semester is the right approach. The annual report on the functioning of the Single Market and the identification of policy orientations under the

Annual Growth Survey should remain a key tool for assessing progress and remaining bottlenecks.

4. Boosting the Digital Single Market for consumers and businesses

What concrete actions do you propose to take towards completing the Digital Single Market for consumers and businesses? Which sectors of the Digital Single Market would you focus on to reduce barriers for consumers and businesses, and why?

How do you plan to work with other Commissioners to ensure that enhancing the use of digital technologies and online services will be a horizontal policy covering all sectors of the economy?

New market developments in the digital sphere have raised important further challenges for consumer protection. How do you intend to address those?

How do you plan to reduce the barriers hindering consumers and businesses from taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technologies? How do you intend to improve security as well as awareness of consumers' and retailers' rights and obligations online?

If confirmed, my first task will be to formulate a clear long-term strategy which brings together the different powers of the Commission and expresses a coherent vision for the Digital Single Market, economy and society. I will steer and coordinate a programme of priority actions that can unlock the scale of a single digital economy. We need a clear assessment of the main obstacles still to be removed. Within the first 6 months I will build support amongst EU institutions, stakeholders and public opinion and ensure the design of an ambitious programme and clear delivery dates. I will focus on removing the obstacles and unlocking the potential of the single digital economic space. Many of the challenges are already known: Regulatory fragmentation, legal uncertainty and high compliance costs, a lack of trust and insufficient security in the online environment as well as lack of adequately digitally skilled workforce and consumers.

Some actions will involve giving a fresh impetus to proposals already on the table. Europe's telecoms sector, which provides the basic infrastructure of the digital economy remains fragmented along national lines and there is a lack of a consistent EU-wide approach. This represents a significant missed opportunity. Building on the work already done, I will collaborate with my colleagues to add more ambition to the ongoing reform of our telecom rules.

I want also to achieve a successful European media and content sector responding to the needs of consumers and pluralistic and respecting fundamental values such as freedom of speech and cultural diversity, and create the right environment for cross-border services. I also aim at concluding negotiations on common European data protection rules and concluding the review on Safe Harbour. I will also point to the need for new initiatives to be tabled quickly – modernising copyright rules in the light of the digital revolution and simplifying consumer rules for online and digital purchases.

The Digital Single Market is not just about a few sectors. The Digital Single Market should be an area where individuals and businesses can, in a trusted environment, seamlessly access and exercise online activities under conditions of fair competition and a high level of consumer and data protection, irrespective of their nationality or place of residence. Hence, the overall objective should be a “single market ready for the digital age”, where the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is enhanced by digital technologies. The online world is global and there are no boundaries in a traditional sense. Many issues can only be properly addressed in a more global context, such as the open internet or indeed Internet Governance. I am ready to coordinate the Commission's global efforts in this area.

If confirmed, as Vice President my primary role will be to steer and coordinate the Commission's work on DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET, drawing on input from other Commissioners and services. The focus will be on collective delivery on the basis of mutually shared strategic objectives. ICT is not a stand-alone focal sector, it is a cross-cutting modality with critical applications in all sectors of our economy. In order to ensure that the digital angle is hard-wired into the evolution of relevant initiatives from the beginning, we need to make sure that digital is fully embedded in the Commission's smart regulation tools such as Impact Assessment.

I will ensure effective coordination in this area, aiming at joining up data, expertise and infrastructures to create synergies and reinforced action within the Commission. I want to ensure that we make the transformational impacts of digital technologies a horizontal theme for the college and put in place mechanisms to overcome the silo effects. In this scenario, cross-DG project-based task-forces would be the norm, not the exception, and the work of each of the teams would rely around modern project-based IT tools to facilitate collaboration and the attainment of specific objectives. It will also include spearheading the Commission's use of digital technologies for its own work.

Security underpins trust in the Internet and the digital economy. We have witnessed increasing instances of major security flaws and cyber-attacks and unprecedented focus on cyber security and surveillance. In addition, new technological developments, such as cloud computing and big data, are likely to create new security challenges. I believe we can conclude the Network and Information Security Directive negotiations and promote its speedy implementation. This will be a cornerstone in our cyber-security strategy.

Cybercrime is a threat that no Member State can tackle on its own, and it has a significant economic and fundamental rights impact that we cannot afford to neglect. Therefore, coordination and cooperation between Member States are essential. EU action can create the necessary conditions to facilitate and foster both. I will strive to make the internet a safer place for EU citizens where they can confidently exercise their fundamental rights and pursue activities of a social or commercial nature, and also for businesses.

Consumer trust is fundamental to the Digital Single Market. I want the consumer to easily shop online without borders. Consumers should not find it any more difficult to access a digital service (whether public or private) or digital content from another Member State than from their own. I want consumers to trust websites and digital services wherever they originate in the EU. I want them to feel secure online knowing that their private data is highly protected. At present there are many challenges posed by regulatory fragmentation and conflicts of laws and jurisdictions. The newly appearing business models must respect existing consumer rights. A key element of my Digital Single Market strategy will be to modernise and simplify consumer rules for online and digital purchases.

Working with other Commissioners, one of my immediate goals is to swiftly conclude negotiations on common European data protection rules which is vital for the functioning and completion of the Digital Single Market. I will therefore strive for the adoption of the reform package within the first six months of the mandate. In contracts between cloud providers and consumers all too often, the risk is on the consumer while the providers have most of the benefits I will also work together with other Commissioners to propose rules which allow consumers and SMEs to trust the cloud and which are not so burdensome for cloud providers.

I also want to make sure European citizens are equipped to fully benefit from the digital world. Forecasts suggest that almost all jobs in the future will require at least some basic digital skills. A large number of adults in Europe lack digital skills altogether. Although digital technologies are extensively used by children, young people still lack access, educational technologies and content that make for a more effective, engaging and personalized learning experience.

In my Digital Single Market strategy, using my role as Vice-President, I want to strengthen the policy debate amongst all stakeholders on the needs of the labour market, addressing the future of learning in the digital age, highlighting the short, mid-term and long-term implications for employment, skills, growth and jobs in Europe. We should also build on initiatives such as the "Grand Coalition for digital jobs", and mobilising all relevant funding programmes to that end.

Our Digital Single Market strategy must also include ways to make public administration more open and effective by championing the digital and eGovernment approaches across all Member States and within the Commission. In cooperation with the Vice-President for Budget and Human Resources I will look at how to improve the interaction with Member States' administrations, for example on reporting and exchanging information on systems needed to make the EU function, and facilitating cross-border interoperability between them.

5. Smart regulation

How will you improve impact assessments, both ex ante and ex post, in order to ensure a holistic and balanced assessment of new legislative proposals and existing legislation in the area of the Digital Single Market? In particular, how will you ensure that they are evidence-based and are based on enhanced and improved SME and internal market tests?

How would you propose to improve the pre-legislative involvement of parliamentary committees, in particular with regard to legislative initiatives taken under Article 225 TFEU? What measures will you take to ensure that full and proper stakeholder consultations in all official languages of the EU are carried out with a view to ensuring legislation is fit for growth, employment creation, innovation and competitiveness?

How will you ensure better enforcement and implementation of Digital Single Market legislation and make sure Member States fulfil their commitments?

The drive for Better Regulation is a priority of the new Commission and I am personally committed to apply it in my policy area. The Commission is improving and strengthening its Better Regulation tools – impact assessment, stakeholder consultation, evaluation – on an ongoing basis. These will be used in examining the economic, social and environmental impacts of Digital Single Market measures in an integrated manner on the basis of the best evidence available. I will make a concerted effort to ensure that the policies put forward or evaluated under my responsibility adhere to Better Regulation principles and practices.

The importance attached to Better Regulation is reflected in the appointment of the First Vice –President designate. I will work closely and proactively collaborate with him in his review of the current better regulation approach. I will support him identifying areas where improvements to existing legislation can be made and to ensure that new initiatives adhere to the principles of subsidiarity proportionality and deliver their results in the least burdensome way for business and SMEs in particular.

The Commission welcomes early input into its legislative preparatory processes as reflected in its regular transmission and publication of key programming documents to the European Parliament. This is particularly relevant for Art 225 initiatives to which the President elect is giving particular attention. The Commission has agreed with the European Parliament to respond to these requests within three months. When initiatives are taken forward, the Commission follows Better Regulation practices – impact assessment and stakeholder consultation – which should allow an early input of the European Parliament into the preparatory process.

Enhancing stakeholder consultation has for the last years been at the centre of the Commission's efforts to improve European governance and ensure better and smarter regulation, fit for growth, employment creation, innovation and competitiveness. I will be committed to ensure wide consultation before presenting new policy proposals and initiatives, including those which may result from the follow-up given to a legislative initiative resolution adopted by the European Parliament. I will also follow the preparation of the revision of the internal guidelines for stakeholder consultation and ensure that throughout the Commission's stakeholders consultations minimum standards and principles are consistently applied throughout the Commission.

The benefits of Union law for citizens, business, and wider society will not materialise unless those laws are applied effectively on the ground. Collective action is needed to make this happen. I will work with the first Vice President for Better Regulation to ensure that over time the Commission designs its proposals in ways that make implementation simpler and cheaper less burdensome in line with the principles of Smart Regulation.

I will also urge Member States to take more seriously their responsibility to implement Union law. The Commission can help by preparing guidance and implementation plans that explain the rules and anticipate problems. I will also make sure that in the policy areas falling under my responsibility, the Commission is ready to resolve problems early via the EU Pilot which is helping to find solutions sooner with the Member States – 70% of problems are now resolved this way. Ultimately, however, I will not hesitate to back or insist on formal infringement procedures to bring the Member States into compliance.

Endnote 1: Standard Eurobarometer No 81