



**ANSWERS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE
Elżbieta BIENKOWSKA
Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs**

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?

Throughout my professional career, I have been committed to supporting and developing the European project. I was involved in the local application of the EU's Phare Programme. As Minister of Regional Development I gained further experience in handling the EU's policies, in particular through the implementation of EU structural funds. I am determined, in my future role as Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, to establish close relations with the European Parliament so that we can build a partnership in order to deliver concrete benefits to our citizens.

The fields of Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs were the backbone of my daily work, given that structural funds help underpin the internal market and serve to increase the competitiveness of industry, including SMEs. As Minister and Deputy Prime Minister I have had the opportunity to work with several key sectors of the economy, notably transport, construction and the maritime sector for which I was directly responsible.

We have to strengthen the economic recovery and build a Europe that delivers jobs and growth for its citizens. This will be my overarching objective in a field as vast and important as that of the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs which plays such a vital role in today's socio-economic context.

I am fully aware of my new role and the responsibilities that come with it in terms of independence, not least with respect to my previous functions. I undertake, as Commissioner, to comply fully with the obligations set out in Articles 17.3 TEU and Article 245 TFEU, along with the Code of Conduct for Commissioners, laying down the guarantees of independence and the ethical principles by which members of the Commission must abide. To safeguard the independence of the Commission, I also undertake not to take any instruction from any government, other institution, body or entity and to act in view of serving the European general interest. I will refrain from any action incompatible with my duties or the performance of my tasks. During my term of office, I will not engage in any other occupation, whether gainful or not. I have filled in my declaration of interests, which has been made public and which I will update in the event of any changes.

I fully support our new commitment to transparency set out in the political guidelines by the President-elect. I commit to making public all the contacts and meetings I hold with professional organisations or self-employed individuals on any matter relating to EU policy making and implementation.

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?

As a member of the Commission, I will fully endorse the principle of collegiality and I intend to work in close and full cooperation with the Vice-Presidents and other Commissioners, under the guidance of the President. With respect to the work carried out by my own services, I will assume the political responsibility for their actions under my areas of responsibility without prejudice to the principle of collegiality. The relations between my Cabinet, the services and myself will be based on loyalty, trust, transparency and a mutual flow of information and assistance.

I am fully aware of my responsibilities towards Parliament. I therefore undertake to report regularly and fully on my work to the Parliament so that it can exercise its democratic control effectively. I fully support the President-elect intention of reinforcing the special relationship between the European Parliament and the Commission.

Inter-institutional cooperation is vital to guarantee the effectiveness, legitimacy and good governance of the EU's decision-making. It should be based on three key elements: transparency, mutual trust and a spirit of cooperation. To this end, I undertake to fully respect the Framework Agreement on Relations between the European Parliament and the Commission.

Concerning the follow-up to European Parliament's positions and requests, I will apply the provisions of the Framework Agreement and, in my areas of responsibility, make sure that the Commission responds to parliamentary resolutions or requests made on the basis of Article 225 TFEU, within 3 months after their adoption. In this context, I support and fully endorse the commitment made by President-elect Juncker that the future Commission will be particularly attentive to legislative initiative reports.

I will make sure that Parliament is kept fully informed at the same time as the Council on all legal and political initiatives falling under my responsibility, so that the Parliament can exercise an effective democratic control, and I will do everything in my power to ensure transparency and a proper flow of information.

Meetings of the Parliamentary committees and the plenary sessions as well as any other relevant Parliamentary activity are unique occasions to build and strengthen the political dialogue between the two institutions. Should my nomination be confirmed, I intend to make full use of this opportunity from the start of, and throughout my mandate. I believe that a close relationship between Members of the European Parliament and Commissioners is essential to guarantee open and fair inter-institutional cooperation and a constructive political dialogue.

Questions from the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy:

3. Priorities

What are the main priorities you intend to pursue as part of your proposed portfolio, taking into account the emphasis on jobs, growth, competitiveness and sustainable development? What timetable do you envisage for achieving those priorities? What are the specific legislative and non-legislative initiatives you intend to put forward, and according to what timetable?

President-elect Juncker made it clear: strengthening Europe's competitiveness and stimulating jobs, growth and investment will be key Commission's priorities. My ambition and overreaching goal is to use the full potential of the different policies in my portfolio to boost the real economy and turn it into a competitive growth engine to the benefit of European citizens. I see at this stage four priorities through which I would want to focus my action, if confirmed as a Commissioner:

The deepening of the internal market will be a top priority of my mandate. It is not only a basic pillar of the European Union, it is also Europe's main driver for growth and competitiveness. I want a single market that is fair, that supports trade, investments and productivity, and that promotes freedom of choice, hence creating new opportunities for citizens and businesses alike.

However, achievements of the internal market are being questioned as a result of the on-going economic crisis. We therefore need to face this challenge and not only preserve the internal market but also strengthen it. In order to do so we will have to explain to the people of Europe the benefits they get from the single market and we will also need to address some of its failures (remaining obstacles, overregulation, subsidiarity concerns etc.).

The single market must serve as a platform for further integration and convergence across all 28 Member States. In this we must constantly strive to make sure that single market rules remain an enabling and future-proof framework for private and public initiatives. Better regulation necessitates defining priorities, cutting red tape / administrative burden and working with Member States on the implementation of existing rules.

In partnership with the European Parliament, the Member States and stakeholders, I want to propose a renewed strategy for the internal market setting priorities for legislative and non-legislative actions based on thorough economic analysis. I believe such a strategy should look in particular at the sectors or areas that carry the greatest economic potential or can deliver clear benefits for consumers and businesses.

Economic activity is increasingly characterised by cross-border value chains, combining trade in goods and in services, encompassing several Member States and stretching into international markets. I believe we should not consider services or goods in isolation but as an integral part of a more competitive European economy. My action will aim at enabling our enterprises to reap the full benefits of truly integrated European markets, taking into account the close links between manufacturing and services and the need to create a growth and innovation-friendly business environment, including the right framework for intellectual property rights to incentivise and protect creation and innovation. Due account needs to be taken to address social aspects of the abovementioned processes.

My second priority will be to strengthen the EU's industrial base. Europe cannot prosper without industry, and must therefore preserve and strengthen its industrial base. My ambition is to work hard towards the Commission's aspiration of bringing industry's weight in the EU's GDP back to 20% by 2020 from less than 16% today.

Reinforced competitiveness of our industry will not come from one single action or from one single area. It will be the outcome of pooling and directing all our efforts and initiatives towards this goal, both at EU and national levels, encompassing a range of areas, from energy and climate to competition and trade, to employment, regional policies and innovation. It is therefore essential to effectively mainstream competitiveness across all EU policies. A partnership approach is also needed between the Commission and Member States, including at regional and local levels. From my experience, I can tell that there is a huge potential in leveraging European Structural and Investment Funds to support an industrial renaissance, particularly by building on smart specialisation strategies.

Early in the mandate, I intend to prepare a set of measures to make the EU's industrial base fit for a globalised economy and for technological, demographical and ecological changes. They could focus on four key areas: (1) access to key resources for industry, including finance, raw materials, affordable energy, and a skilled labour force; (2) access to markets; (3) investment in new technologies; (4) and the business environment.

The manufacturing sector is made of a range of strategic sectors with high-value jobs such as the automotive, aeronautics, engineering, construction, chemicals, cosmetics, medical devices and pharmaceutical sectors. Their strong linkages with the services sector and their decisive contribution to innovation and exports make manufacturing a key engine for growth and investment and a key player in the transformation of the European economy towards a future sustainable and competitive one. I will strive to ensure that the right conditions are in place to ensure Europe maintains its global leadership in these sectors, building on a structured dialogue with stakeholders. This will include making sure that the regulatory framework remains fit for purpose from competitiveness and internal market angles, while ensuring a high level of human safety, environmental and consumer protection.

I will also pay attention to other promising sectors such as consumer goods. I will ensure the implementation of the Commission's part of the European Council conclusions on defence industries and markets and of the Roadmap put forward by the Commission for this sector. The defence sector is of great strategic importance for Europe's security and has a great potential to benefit from stronger cooperation among Member States, and greater EU-wide market openness.

In boosting the competitiveness of EU industry, the framework conditions for innovation will remain essential. We must create an innovation-friendly environment where ideas are supported from their inception all the way to the market. I will make use of policy tools ranging from IPR infrastructure (patent, trademark, design, GIs, trade secret) and enforcement, to supporting the uptake of innovation and technologies through financing and public procurement policy. Together with the Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, I want to use the Horizon 2020 Programme and other EU policy instruments in order to support close-to-market industrial innovation and key enabling technologies.

3) My third priority will be to deliver a growth- and innovation-friendly business climate in Europe, supporting entrepreneurship and SMEs. In this respect, I look forward to the review of the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs. I think that we need to re-ignite the entrepreneurship culture in Europe and fully exploit the huge potential of SMEs, which are the backbone of our economy. In this domain, my intention is to ensure thorough implementation of the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan and to renew the vision of the Small Business Act for Europe. More specifically, I would like to see all Member States committing to deep regulatory simplification for SMEs. I also intend to tap fully the potential of the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Programme. Although financial stability has been restored, the lending conditions from financial institutions remain tight, in particular for SMEs. In cooperation with the European Investment Bank, we need to facilitate access to alternative sources of finance to allow enterprises to make the investments they need, by strengthening the venture capital market in Europe. In addition, by 2020, the COSME programme is expected to leverage between EUR 14 and 21 billion for loan guarantees and more than EUR 3 billion for venture capital.

4) A fourth area of great importance for industry and SMEs alike is the external dimension of the internal market and access to non-EU markets. I want to work closely with my colleague in charge of trade to ensure that trade policy supports the creation of a global level playing field and contributes to making the European industrial base stronger.

This also requires substantial progress in regulatory convergence, not least in the TTIP with the US. I regard 'economic diplomacy' as very necessary, to secure access to critical inputs for European industry, in particular critical raw materials, and to open up business opportunities for European enterprises, in particular SMEs I want to work on an integrated European strategy for SME internationalisation which adds value above and beyond national trade promotion activities.

How will you personally ensure the good quality of legislative proposals, full transparency of lobbying activities (directed at you and your services), and consistent and balanced consultation of all stakeholders taking also into account the need to carry out thorough impact assessments?

I regard engagement with stakeholders as an essential part of smart regulation and a 'must' to deliver high-quality legislative proposals. The purpose of EU legislation is to deliver results for

citizens and business. I want to carefully consider their feedback and requests.

During my mandate, I will deal with lobbyists in full transparency and will request my services to do the same, including full use of the Transparency Register. My services and I will engage with all stakeholders including representatives of business, consumers, patients, workers, NGOs and academics, including in expert groups. I will make sure that the composition of these expert groups is balanced and adequately reflects the diversity of positions and interests at stake.

I will request my services to step up systematic information to stakeholders about any upcoming consultation, evaluation and impact assessment, so that they can prepare and contribute. In my area of competence, I will systematically ensure that sufficient data has been gathered through stakeholder consultations in order to assess possible impacts of legislation on growth, employment, innovation and competitiveness, in full compliance with the Commission consultation standards.

Since SMEs, consumers and non-industry stakeholders often have difficulties in getting their views across to policy-makers, I want to find alternative ways of ensuring their participation. I will work with Member States and regions to promote better representation of SME interests in EU policy-making. For example, SME feedback will be the focus of future activities of the Enterprise Europe Network, made up of around 600 business organisations, with resources and actions specifically dedicated to reviving the involvement of European companies in EU policy shaping.

I intend to build on direct relations with national administrations and other EU bodies such as the European Economic and Social Committee and Committee of Regions who can collect and pass on feedback from a wide range of stakeholders.

Last but not least, I will also be delighted to undertake one of the major tasks President-elect Juncker has mandated us to do: reaching out regularly to citizens and informing them what the EU does for them.

4. Cooperation/scrutiny

As Commissioner responsible for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, how will you ensure coordination with the Vice-Presidents in whose teams your policy area falls and with the other Commissioners in your teams and how will you ensure enhanced cooperation with the Committee on Industry, Energy and Research? In particular, what steps will you take to facilitate scrutiny by the Committee of legislative and non-legislative procedures (including preparation of legislative acts and delegated and implementing acts) and scrutiny of their implementation? How do you intend to ensure that the Committee is kept appropriately informed in relation to any international agreements in your policy area, bearing in mind the experience gained in connection with the TTIP negotiations?

A wide range of policies have an impact on industry and SMEs. As Commissioner in charge of the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, I consider that I have an important role to play to support the Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness in implementing effectively a mainstreaming of competitiveness concerns across all policy areas. I will support him in putting together and mobilising the ambitious jobs, growth and investment package to be presented within the first three months of the mandate.

I also intend to contribute to the implementation of the climate and energy package, in close cooperation with the Vice-President for the Energy Union, to ensure that decarbonisation and reindustrialisation remain mutually reinforcing objectives, in particular by stimulating energy efficiency and investment in low carbon technologies in industry. It will be essential to act on these levers in order to reduce the energy price differential with our main competitors and remain competitive, specifically with regard to energy intensive industries, while creating a strong and sustainable industrial base for the future

I believe the expertise of my services on the internal market, industry, entrepreneurship, SMEs, better regulation and modern public administration should be fully exploited within the European Semester. I want to contribute to deepen the country-specific knowledge within the Commission and my services, and I will therefore engage with a broader range of national stakeholders, in close cooperation with the Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue.

The digital transformation of the economy will have huge implications for entire industries and for SMEs, as well as for citizens and consumers. Digital technologies deeply transform the way

products and services are delivered and they have an impact on industrial value chains across Europe. I therefore want to contribute considerably to the work of the Vice-President for the Digital Single Market and my colleague in charge of the digital economy and society. I want to promote digital entrepreneurship and support the take-up and exploitation of digital technologies by industry and SMEs, with a focus both on advanced manufacturing and on the services sector.

The external dimension of the internal market and access to markets outside the EU are of great importance to me. In close cooperation with my colleague in charge of Trade, I intend to promote business opportunities for enterprises abroad and makes our industrial base stronger by ensuring a global level playing field. Last but not least, better regulation will be one of my priorities with a view to delivering a growth-friendly business climate for enterprises in Europe, and I will contribute to the delivery of an ambitious Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme, under the leadership of the responsible Vice-President.

I would be delighted to regularly attend meetings of your Committee, to discuss on-going or forthcoming legislative initiatives as well as implementation of existing rules. I will be at your disposal also for bilateral contacts as well as any other Parliamentary activity where my presence is required. I stand ready to regularly inform you on progress made in international negotiations in my area of competence. The TTIP negotiations have demonstrated the need for more transparency. I am convinced that by establishing such a strong relationship we will become “partners” in delivering an industrial change and enhancing a business friendly environment in Europe.

Questions from the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection:

5. 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 SM 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 and reap the benefits of the Single Market? What concrete actions will you take to build on the existing strength of the Single Market in products and services? Which service sectors will your activities and policies focus on and why?

As President-elect Juncker rightly highlighted, the internal market is Europe's best asset to create jobs and growth; we must build on the strength of the internal market and fully exploit its potential in all its dimensions.

Our capacity to create a growth- and innovation-friendly business environment will be key for the achievement of these goals. We must aim at cutting red tape, offer new opportunities for businesses to innovate and prosper and for consumers to take full advantage of the internal market. I want an internal market which benefits all citizens, be it as entrepreneurs, consumers or workers. I will pursue this work in keeping with the following guiding principles:

- European regulation should come in only where it can have an added value.
- Our action should concentrate on sectors and measures that will make the greatest difference.
- What we do must be based on stronger economic evidence and knowledge of markets in Member States.
- We need effective tools to deliver and follow-up on our policies in a close partnership with the Member States.
- Reforms we propose need to be socially responsible.

In terms of policy action, I see the following areas of further work:

1) Better integrated services markets – to foster cross-border opportunities

My immediate priority is the efficient implementation of the Services Directive and the correct implementation of the modernised Professional Qualifications Directive. I intend to present, early in the mandate, a report on the remaining barriers to a fully-functioning internal market for services. A renewed strategy would set out ways to address remaining barriers for service providers (potentially improving the use of the mutual recognition principle), to further simplify administrative procedures (building on the Points of Single Contact) and to ensure consumers can make better use of their internal market rights when it comes to purchasing services cross-border.

Any measures we take to further integrate services markets need to recognise that there can be social consequences, which will have to be properly addressed. Co-operation between Member States is important to avoid abuse of existing rules, including the Posting of Workers Directive.

Evidence shows that the economic benefit from a reduction in barriers in the internal market for services is particularly large in some sectors. Business services and construction are among those sectors. Although services in these two sectors can be provided across national borders, the level of trade and cross-border investment remains below potential, indicating significant scope for growth. I would want to take a serious look at these sectors to see what can be done to exploit this potential.

The retail sector is also of great economic importance (11% of EU GDP, 15% of EU employment). I believe it is crucial to improve the functioning of the internal market in this area to foster the viability of SMEs and ensure the sustainability of the business-to-business supply chain. Traditional retailers must be able to take full advantage of the opportunities that e-commerce creates.

I will also work to ensure that regulation of professional services in the Member States is fit for purpose. I will support modernisation and structural reform efforts by Member States through the

ongoing peer review process (on the basis of the Professional Qualifications Directive).

2) Making access to public procurement markets – fair and open

The European legislative framework for growth-enhancing public procurement is there. I now want to focus on making it work on the ground, making public procurement markets function properly, to give enterprises, particularly SMEs, full access to these markets on a European scale. There is far too much localism, bureaucracy and red tape, sometimes even corruption, and all in all there is not enough integration, opportunities for EU businesses. I will work in close cooperation with Member States to modernise public procurement systems, focussing joint efforts on the most important systemic issues and most relevant sectors.

I also want to pursue the work on opening procurement markets world-wide – many of our trading partners' procurement markets are in effect closed while our markets are open.

3) Developing intellectual and industrial property to incentivise and disseminate innovation

Intellectual property rights are a crucial tool to foster innovation and growth. 40% of total economic activity in the EU is generated by IPR-intensive industries; approximately 35% of all employment in the EU stems from such industries. I will make it my priority to create the right infrastructure for industrial IPR, so as to spur innovation, encourage investment and help our industry to fully capitalise on their inventions.

In this vein, we must quickly complete the implementation of the patent package, finalise the ongoing reform of European Trade Mark Law and the negotiations on the Trade Secrets proposal.

4) Make sure the Internal Market for Goods works properly

The internal market for goods has been a frontrunner in European integration and has considerably contributed to the prosperity of European citizens. Though much has been achieved to date, remaining obstacles to a fully functioning internal market must be lifted, for example through more mutual recognition and standardisation.

I will consider improving the functioning of the mutual recognition principle. An evaluation is currently under way, and I will keep the European Parliament informed of the developments on this important front. I view European standardisation as a cornerstone of the functioning of the internal market and as a powerful tool in support of sectorial products and services. The Commission is now conducting an independent review of the standardisation system. I intend to present a Report on the implementation of the Standardisation Regulation to the European Parliament and the Council by end 2015.

I believe that rules in product sectors generally function well in their existing framework but that we need to put emphasis on raising awareness of the existing rules, their enforcement and further simplification. Better enforcement is a priority. We will engage in a closer dialogue with businesses to better identify enforcement bottlenecks. In this context, I will consider a further legislative initiative on the enforcement of product legislation, to encourage businesses to comply with the internal market legislation on products and to reduce the burden of routine inspections. Streamlining administrative sanctions for non-compliance should be part of our policy to improve the enforcement of product legislation.

More specifically, I will provide my full support for a rapid adoption of the revision of the medical device legislation, which is important for the protection of public health, innovation and competitiveness.

Enabling citizens and businesses, and SMEs in particular to reap the benefits of the internal market will be a horizontal priority in all these four areas. If confirmed as a Commissioner, I would notably like to explore new ways of better communicating the opportunities offered by the internal market to SMEs. In addition to upgrading the Enterprise Europe Network, I will consider enhancing the role of product Contact Points and better using the existing communication channels between the European Commission and Member States.

Do you envisage strengthening the role of the Single Market Governance within the European Semester exercise? How do you envisage proceeding concretely in this direction? How do you envisage continuing the policy process started by 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 governance of the internal market has always been present in the Commission's assessment of the performance of Member States, notably in the context of the European Semester.

With the most urgent risks behind us, focus could shift more to national reforms which mid- and long-term will enhance competitiveness and regain the jobs and growth lost in the past years. To meet that end, a better functioning internal market in Member States does indeed hold a significant potential – in some Member States more than others. The Internal Market Integration Report issued as part of the Annual Growth Survey in recent years reflects this need to focus on the internal market – a focus I would want to keep and reinforce.

Concretely this means that in the dialogue with Member States on national economic reforms priority should be given to internal market measures, in particular where those measures would contribute to a more competitive national market and a more efficient national administration. For example, if we were to strengthen the Points of Single Contact, make public procurement systems more transparent and effective then this would benefit not only businesses from other Member States but also local businesses and even taxpayers. And where justified, recommendations for actions should be included in European Semester.

Moreover, in order to provide additional input to the European Semester, we need to identify actionable indicators of the performance of the internal market in the different sectors and in each of the Member States. The regulatory and procedural side of the internal market is already well covered in the Internal Market Scoreboard with facts and figures about transposition, infringements and administrative capacity for cross-border cooperation and problem solving. However, more needs to be done to complement this information with indicators about the economic realities resulting from internal market law. A recent study commissioned by the IMCO committee suggests that we should consider developing or re-using indicators that reflect how easy or difficult it is to do business in any given sector and within each of the Member States. I am very interested in exploring this road with the aim to provide a solid contribution on the internal market to the European Semester.

The internal market is one of Europe's greatest accomplishments, what should give Europe its competitive edge. It is a common good for all Europeans and has a bearing on almost all economic- and consumer-related policies. But exactly because it is so wide, there is a risk of lack of direction if we do not focus. This is why I agree with the basic approach represented by the Single Market Acts; give political focus on what matters for businesses and citizens, ensure that the internal market is there for everybody and be pragmatic as to which tools you apply – legislation is not always the best way to govern the internal market. I would like to pursue internal market policy in this spirit.

How do you intend to ensure the correct and full implementation of the Services Directive, guaranteeing a level playing field for all relevant actors concerned?

The implementation of the Services Directive has been the services policy priority of the outgoing Commission, given the Directive was to be applied as of end-2009. As considerable economic benefits can still be reaped, the efficient implementation of the Services Directive remains a top priority.

As to national measures prohibited by the Directive, I will reinforce the efforts under the ongoing zero-tolerance campaign and fight against clear legal infringements of the Directive. There will be no tolerance for Member States acting against the Directive. Agreed rules must be respected. As to restrictions allowed by the Directive, I intend to continue working with Member States to ensure such barriers are proportionate and do not unnecessarily restrict the free movement of services in the internal market.

The implementation of the Services Directive has to go hand in hand with deepening reforms in certain sectors to be envisaged in the strategy I mentioned earlier.

How will you help maximise the opportunities for smart and inclusive growth, innovation, competitiveness, sustainability and jobs brought about by new changes to public procurement in Europe?

With a share of 19% of GDP, public procurement is simply too big to fail. It is also directly linked to some of the key policy challenges we need to address: growth and jobs, fiscal discipline, modernisation of public administration, innovation, trust of EU citizens in their public authorities, or green and inclusive growth.

We need open markets in public procurement. This means first a real internal market with less localism in public purchases, more transparency and a fairer treatment of non-national operators. I will engage Member States to remove practices leading to lack of transparency and unfair treatment of non-national businesses, starting with the sectors that raise the most concern. I will also work with my colleague in charge of Competition to make sure businesses play their part too. We should not allow companies to artificially segment the EU procurement market.

Markets need to be open on the international front as well. With the rest of the world growing at a faster pace than Europe, these markets cannot remain closed to trade while Europe's are open. We need to finalise China's accession to the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) and reach an ambitious agreement in the public procurement chapters of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Free Trade Agreement with Japan. In this context I also intend to work for an agreement to be found on the International Procurement Instrument (IPI), which should allow us to bring third countries with closed markets to the negotiating table. I will work closely with my Colleague responsible for Trade to this end.

Faced with significant security threats and budgetary constraints, Europe cannot afford inefficient defence spending and duplication of capabilities. I will work to achieve a well-functioning internal market for defence that reconciles openness and competition with legitimate security concerns. To this end, ensuring a full and correct application of the Defence Procurement Directive is key. This is not just about the internal market; this is essential to maintain a competitive European defence industry able to provide, at affordable prices, the defence capabilities that our Member States need.

We will identify where public procurement fails and we will address these failures. This means professionalising buyers, eliminating waste, minimising bureaucracy and red tape. Professionalization in the public sector is key – we need contracting authorities that have business skills and know which products and services to buy. This means also ensuring that public administrations catch up with the e-Revolution. eProcurement offers critical benefits – it is cheaper, faster, more transparent, and more accessible. I will agree with Member States ambitious national strategies to make public procurement more digital, more professional and more strategic e.g. used as a catalyst to enhance innovation in key industrial sectors of the European economy. The recently adopted procurement package is a driver for this. I will also work closely with my colleagues in charge of Economic and Financial affairs, Taxation and Customs, and of Regional policy and under the leadership of the Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue to make sure this is addressed both in the context of the European Semester and in the management of European Structural and Investment Funds.

With higher efficiency in public procurement can also come greater aggregation of demand. Joint cross-border procurement, for instance, needs to be incentivised.

Last but not least, in cooperation with my colleague in charge of Migration and Home affairs, I will analyse possibilities aiming at developing policies to fight corruption in public procurement and contribute to a culture of integrity across actors involved in public procurement. Corruption in public procurement leads to a waste of resources and reduces the quality of goods, works, and services purchased. Fraud, corruption and malpractice also undermine citizens' and companies' trust in public authorities.

How do you see the state of play regarding the market surveillance and product safety package?

Adopting the market surveillance and product safety package is an important step in strengthening consumer protection and creating a level playing field for businesses. I am delighted by the general support by the European Parliament in their first reading. In order to spur the discussions in the Council the Commission is launching a study to evaluate the effects of origin marking on businesses, consumers, competitiveness and growth. I believe that this in-depth assessment will allow the Council to resume its discussions on the substance of the file. I am convinced that, with

the support of the European Parliament and especially this Committee, it will be possible to broker a deal with the Council. For my part, I will do my utmost to help find a compromise.

How do you plan to work with the Vice-President for the Digital Single Market and the Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society to ensure that enhancing the use of digital technologies and online services become a horizontal policy covering all sectors of the economy?

I will work very closely with both Commissioners to ensure that we make the Digital Single Market an effective reality –, as the areas where our policies can mutually reinforce each other are numerous.

Today's consumers expect to shop across Europe from their home computers, making less and less distinction between the digital and physical single markets. This means that our policies must also aim to seamlessly integrate these markets. One obvious case is that of e-commerce: after the shopping has been done online, both the buyer and the seller want to be able to rely on efficient delivery services.

Fighting regulatory fragmentation in the internal market and reducing administrative burden, will both contribute to and be facilitated by a stronger and more integrated Digital Single market.

Fostering and incentivising innovation is another strand of action particularly crucial for the Digital Single Market. The framework for Intellectual Property rights will have an important role to play here. Our innovative enterprises need efficient and well calibrated patent, design and trademark systems. They also need the protection of trade secrets and knowledge assets, as well as cost effective and efficient redress means for companies that suffer from commercial scale intellectual property infringements inside and outside the EU.

As mentioned under question 4, we need to boost entrepreneurship and make sure that our industries, in particular SMEs, can make effective use of new technologies. We should use the recommendations that the Digital Entrepreneurship Forum is supposed to deliver by the end of 2014 and build on the e-Skills Initiative including the Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs.

Finally, a modern internal market also needs a modernised public administration. We must make full use of e-government tools at all levels of government. We should pursue and promote the transition to in e-procurement and e-invoicing, further build on the current Points of Single Contact and tools such as the Internal Market Information System.

Generally speaking, fighting regulatory fragmentation in the internal market and reducing administrative burden, will both contribute to and be facilitated by a stronger and more integrated Digital Single Market.

6. Better regulation

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

I consider delivering high quality "smart" legislation as one of my top priorities. Better regulation is absolutely essential in providing companies with a growth-friendly business environment and ensuring a high level of safety and environmental protection. In close cooperation with the Vice-President for Better Regulation, I will do my utmost to fulfil the high expectations of the European Parliament, Member States but also of all stakeholders and citizens.

My future area of competence, if confirmed as a Commissioner, is vital for the continued improvement of better regulation as it includes approximately 130 major pieces of legislation, which makes up the bulk of internal market legislation for goods and services. I will ask my services to make full use of existing tools to assess costs and benefits of legislation, including impact assessments, in particular the SME test and competitiveness proofing, as well as ex-post evaluations, in particular fitness checks and cumulative cost assessments.

My first principle is to further improve the quality of the impact assessment process for new legislation. The "Internal Market Test", "competitiveness proofing" and "SME Test" must take a

central place in the Commission's impact analysis. I plan to promote further use of all available instruments in order to ensure that consumers, relevant companies, SMEs but also our social partners, are reached and listened to.

My second principle is to make existing legislation lighter, simpler and less costly. The initiative of the Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT) should be continued and reinforced. A number of assessment exercises are currently in progress, evaluating the functioning of the internal market legislation and the impacts on stakeholders, the results of which will feed back into the decision-making process. For example, evaluations are ongoing of the chemical legislation, the Mutual Recognition Principle and a Fitness Check on the construction sector or an evaluation of the system for the protection of designs in the EU. I also expect relevant information to come from the new Cumulative Cost Assessment exercises that look into impacts of EU legislation on specific industrial sectors, like chemicals or forest-based industries.

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 are carried out with a view to ensuring legislation is fit for growth, employment creation, innovation and competitiveness?

As Vice-Prime Minister and Minister I was always listening attentively to the needs of the Parliament and I want to continue such a dialogue with the European Parliament in my new position. I consider that better preparation of EU policies and legislation is an essential part of smart regulation and Parliament has a key role to play in contributing to the preparation of Commission initiatives. I am looking forward to Parliament's positions either set out in non-legislative resolutions or to your input through the structured dialogue.

I regard engagement with stakeholders as an integral part of smart regulation. Please refer to my reply to the ITRE question 3 for more details.

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

I will be a determined defender of the internal market. We need to put the enforcement of the internal market rules on the top of our political agenda. Our enforcement activities should be given, on the one hand, more political visibility and weight at the very top, and, on the other hand, should be supported by a better communication policy towards the public and the civil society as to our aims, strategies and concrete deliverables. Our enforcement policy should aim at becoming more strategic, coherent and focused on the most serious problems arising in the internal market that are of concern for citizens and businesses.

To achieve this we need to establish a coherent approach involving different instruments and Member State authorities.

It all begins with the quality of the legislation we produce. It needs to be of a very high standard and already take account of the practical challenges ahead. Partly this is the role of the Commission: when we draft proposals they need to be fully enforcement and implementation proof. But of course the Council and the European Parliament also have a very important role to play by avoiding compromise solutions that are too ambiguous to implement.

But the cooperation with our Member States is essential as well. We are ready to assist them during the process of transposition and implementation of the agreed rules and to discuss the possible solutions when problems arise. Enforcement and implementation of internal market legislation stands or falls with the resources that national inspectors and market surveillance authorities have at their disposal. I intend to have a closer look on how to help Member States to devote more time and resources to the surveillance of the national markets for products and services. The Market Surveillance proposal currently being discussed in the Parliament is one step in the right direction.

Secondly, we need to empower citizens and businesses to effectively claim their rights by giving them much better, jargon-free information about rights, rules and procedures (such as the Your Europe portal) and to ensure that they have access to fast and efficient problem solving mechanisms.

Thirdly, if serious problems arise in the application of Internal Market rules I will not hesitate, where necessary, to initiate infringement procedures against Member States. This being said, I believe that many problems can be prevented or solved faster through other means. The informal problem-solving mechanism, SOLVIT, is one very successful tool in this respect which needs all the support it can get. The notification system under Directive 98/34 is an example of a very efficient means to pre-empt problems which should be used to its full extent.

Along the same lines we need to greatly improve the speed and ease of administrative procedures that are a big source of unnecessary obstacles. This is also true for cross-border cooperation between public authorities. Here I believe that a digital-by-default approach is the only way forward and I therefore plan to expand existing instruments that work well (such as the Internal Market Information system) and to take further initiatives in the area of e-government together with my colleagues.

Finally, we need to measure more systematically what is happening in reality in the internal market. We need to collect data from different sources, including directly from citizens, businesses and consumers. This feedback will enable us to set priorities for enforcement of legislation and for its further improvement. I am convinced that such a comprehensive approach, also including systematic monitoring via the Single Market Scoreboard, will be a powerful complement to the classic enforcement instrument of the infringement procedure.