



ANSWERS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE
Tibor NAVRACSICS
Education, Culture, Youth and Citizenship

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?

Coming from a family of teachers and being a university professor myself I am particularly pleased that I have been assigned the portfolio of education, culture, youth and citizenship. I strongly believe that young people are the future and education is the main pillar to build on in order to create the European demos based on mutual understanding; a society in which everyone can recognize himself/herself.

I have a long-term commitment to this portfolio and I have planned and initiated several actions in this field. One of them in the framework of the European Year of Citizens 2013, which was an international competition called "Competing through Rights". This competition focused on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, with the aim of making European teenagers aware of how the EU works, what it means to be European and what kind of rights European citizens have. The initiative involved around 600 students from more than 100 schools in four Central European countries: Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia and Slovenia. The four-round competition lasted throughout a school year and presented 15- to 17-year-old students with creative and challenging tasks; these tasks not only inspired them to use their previous knowledge of the EU, but also gave them an insight into what it means to be true EU citizens: to be aware of their rights, to be integrative and to be open to different cultures and people.

I had first-hand experience on how culture can contribute to public diplomacy by overseeing the network of the Hungarian cultural institutes. I oversaw the network as a whole, opened new cultural institutes in Istanbul, Beijing, Zagreb and Belgrade and launched preparation work for others in Ljubljana and Baku. In addition to this I opened in person several international book fairs including in Belgrade, Sofia, Warsaw and Moscow.

To promote citizenship I oversaw the programme of the Hungarian presidency of the EU in the field of justice that focused on the human factor and the citizens of the EU, with the view to creating a people-friendly European Union, close to its own citizens. To mention one particular initiative which I supported, the Europe-wide hotline 116 is one of the European tools used to combat disappearance and sexual exploitation of children; this telephone hotline enables the report of missing children, offers guidance to children and parents and enhances investigation and cross-border cooperation. I sought to enforce this highly important initiative by calling upon Member States where the 116 hotline was not yet operational to commit to the activation of this number without further delay.

In a particular sensitive area of social and cultural integration I helped to secure the adoption of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. This was an accomplishment of historic significance, being the first time that EU Member States have agreed on a strategic framework which aims to improve the situation of the Roma population. The Framework is the basis on which Member States draw up their own national Roma integration strategies – essentially focusing on improving education, employment, healthcare provision and housing.

I am especially motivated by this portfolio because every one of its policies and programmes has direct and positive impact on the lives of European citizens. I see no challenge more urgent than that of equipping our young people with the skills they need to reach their full potential in today's world.

My aim is to contribute to the strategic agenda of the Commission by strengthening education's role and its contribution to Jobs, Growth and Competitiveness agenda of the President-elect. Culture remains one of Europe's greatest strengths as our artists, creators and designers produce the outstanding content that reaches audiences worldwide. Our challenge now is to ensure that this sector can take full advantage of the digital revolution. Our young people have suffered more than any other group the impact of the economic crisis; our duty is to give them the tools so that their voice can be heard in all parts of public life.

Creating better regulation, encouraging better spending, maximising EU impact and breaking policy silos requires not only strong political commitment, but also a robust evidence base, therefore, under my responsibility, the Joint Research Centre will make a significant contribution to the Commission's agenda by helping to ensure that EU policies are based on sound scientific evidence. I want to develop this role by contributing to the work of the project teams led by the Vice Presidents, as well as by pro-actively engaging with my fellow Commissioners.

I have resigned from my post of Minister in order to concentrate fully and wholeheartedly on my preparations for the job of European Commissioner. If confirmed, I will commit as Commissioner to my role of ensuring that Member States fully respect the values of the EU and its acquis.

I fully support the new commitment to transparency set out in the political guidelines by the President-elect. I therefore commit to making public all the contacts and meetings I hold with non-institutional stakeholders.

I am fully aware of the obligations set out in the Treaty regarding the independence of Commissioners. I am fully committed to comply with the highest ethical standards as set out in Articles 17.3 TEU and 245 TFEU and the Code of Conduct for Commissioners. I have completed the Declaration of interest and will update it if necessary throughout my mandate. I would underline that no source of potential conflict of interest exists as regards the new policy areas conferred on me. I intend to strictly respect all requirements included in the Code of Conduct for Commissioners.

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?

President-elect Juncker has set out ambitious new principles for the functioning of the European Commission, in which Commissioners will work more closely together to achieve clearly defined, shared objectives based on the principle of collegiality. I will do my utmost to support this process.

As President-elect Juncker has also underlined, the European Commission derives its political legitimacy from the European Parliament. If confirmed, I will have a special responsibility towards members of the European Parliament and its Committees. The scarcity of European legislation under my portfolio in no way diminishes this responsibility.

I welcome the President-elect's intention of reinforcing the special relationship with the European Parliament and I am ready to work closely with the European Parliament on the basis of the Framework Agreement.

I am also committed to a constructive political dialogue, in person, with the European Parliament and all Committees carried out under my portfolio, based on openness and transparency, and including regular reporting and exchange of information I will ensure that all interested members of the European Parliament directly receive relevant publications and reports on our work.

In his political guidelines, President-elect Juncker emphasises the need for enhanced transparency towards citizens and the European Parliament. I can assure the European Parliament that I fully agree with this approach.

Questions from the Committee on Culture and Education:

3. Your portfolio

How would you define the scope of your proposed portfolio?

How would you personally ensure that the different components of this portfolio are duly taken into account at horizontal level in all relevant EU policies as clearly foreseen by article 167 paragraph 4 TFEU? Which guarantees could you give that the cultural policies would not be subordinate to economic and commercial interests?

How would you endeavour to ensure consistency and synergy between the policies implemented in the different areas covered by your portfolio? How would you achieve a high level of cooperation with the Commissioners responsible for issues closely linked to your portfolio in order to ensure a coordinated and holistic approach, especially in the fields of education & training? Also, in the new distribution of portfolios, the Creative Europe Programme has been split, so that the MEDIA and the Culture sub-programmes now fall in the remits of two different Commissioners. How would you achieve a high level of cooperation with Commissioner-designate Oettinger in general and more specifically as far as the cross-sectoral strand of this Programme is concerned?

What added value do you think the EU can bring in these particular areas of activity?

President-elect Juncker's mission letter of 10 September placed my work on Education, Culture, Youth and Citizenship in the context of the economic and financial crisis and its profound impact on society, in particular, on young people. I have noted with satisfaction the strong emphasis on education and innovation throughout the Commission's political agenda.

In fulfilling this mandate I will work with my fellow Commissioners, the European Parliament, policymakers, stakeholders and citizens to ensure that policies for education, culture, youth, citizenship and sport strengthen people's competences, capacity for creativity, entrepreneurship and self-expression; that they boost participation in society and the capacity to embrace change, thus strengthening Europe's social cohesion, dynamism and ability to compete globally.

Within the Commission, I will contribute to the work of the Vice-Presidents for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness; the Digital Single Market; and the Euro and Social Dialogue. By helping to define the Vice-Presidents' objectives, I will ensure that all parts of my portfolio play a horizontal role across the Commission, shaping our most urgent work in the years to come.

I believe culture is essential to Europe's sense of identity and cohesion; it reminds us that the EU always was and remains, above all, a community of shared values. Therefore, we must never trade it against other policy goals. And culture is now taking on even greater significance as we begin to understand its unique ability to project Europe's values and creativity around the world. I see it as a personal priority to work closely with fellow Commissioners to ensure that culture retains this unique role.

The synergies between the different policies within my portfolio are well-reflected in my mission letter, which stresses their strong "people-centred" dimension. In all of our programmes we are striving to give citizens the skills they need for a society that is increasingly fast-changing, multicultural and mobile. In all of our programmes we promote innovative, cross-border projects that spread knowledge and new ideas, and help to develop a sense of European identity. And we can see clear interactions between our policies. For example, youth policy on non-formal learning will support my education and vice-versa; similarly, my mission to promote innovation will bring together higher-education institutions across Europe, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, while also drawing on the creative capacities of the culture sector and the input of the Joint Research Centre. The fact that one programme alone, Erasmus+, supports actions across three policy fields - education, youth and sport - highlights the joined-up and coherent nature of my portfolio.

With the expertise of the Joint Research Centre I want to put scientific evidence at the service of policy-making across the European Union, and ensure that all new Commission proposals are founded on a coherent and objective set of assumptions.

President-elect Juncker has placed the need to cooperate across portfolios at the heart of the mission he set out for me and for all colleagues. I wholeheartedly support his approach and look forward to ensuring complementarity and mutual support, notably with Commissioner-designate Marianne Thyssen on youth unemployment and skills; and Commissioner-designate Günther Oettinger on copyright, the cultural and creative industries and implementation of Creative Europe. Regarding Creative Europe's cross-sectorial strand, our two services are already putting in place the necessary arrangements for its effective delivery. Let me underline that I would have considered these colleagues as essential partners for my own work, with or without changes to our internal structure. Our human cooperation will always be more important than our organigrams.

The EU added value in my policy domains is to develop good solutions to common challenges together with Member States and to present a more people-centred EU, one which recognises the importance that citizens attach to education, culture, citizenship, sport and the wellbeing of young people; and which reaches out directly to them.

4. Your priorities

What are the main priorities you intend to pursue as part of your proposed portfolio, taking into account the upcoming revision of the EU 2020 strategy?

It is essential that the multi annual programmes which have been adopted in the previous legislature (Erasmus+, the sub-programme 'Culture' of Creative Europe, Europe for Citizens) are implemented under optimum conditions, in particular at budgetary level. What are the concrete measures you intend to take in order to ensure the correct functioning of these programmes and how would you guarantee an integrated approach on education policies in particular? What consequences will you be prepared to draw from the mid-term evaluation of these programmes foreseen in 2017, and from the EP's position in this regard?

What are the specific legislative and non-legislative initiatives and their respective timeframes you intend to propose? Within which areas of your portfolio would these initiatives fall?

I want to ensure that education remains at the heart of the future Europe 2020 strategy. Inclusive and sustainable growth demands that we modernise our education and training systems. This requires, in turn, that Member States invest wisely, even as they consolidate public finances. My mission letter from President-elect Juncker states that "the European Semester should be the vehicle for pursuing the modernisation of education systems" and has also invited me to progress "towards the targets set in the Europe 2020 strategy in the fields of education".

My input to the work on Europe 2020, as part of a project team steered by Vice-President-designate Katainen, will involve focusing on how to modernise educational systems to improve both their quality and access, throughout the education continuum. The educational headline target which reflects both these dimensions - the access and inclusion dimension related to reducing early school leaving; and the need for excellence in the target to expand higher educational attainment – will continue to drive this work. This will require structural reform to achieve better outcomes within tight budgets, emphasising education as a growth-friendly investment and ensuring sufficient and sustainable education funding as the necessary basis for growth, innovation and competitiveness. The Education and Training 2020 framework for cooperation, benchmarking and mutual learning will continue to be the main forum for identifying educational challenges with the Member States: I plan to review and update it early in my mandate in order to ensure that it contributes effectively to Europe 2020.

I will continue in delivering well-target country specific recommendations to Member States on the need to address structural weaknesses in their educational policies. I will work closely with all relevant colleague Commissioners to achieve the necessary integrated approach towards education policies.

I will work on how to maximise the contribution of the cultural and creative sectors to Europe's strategies for jobs and growth.

Sport is a vital part of European society. With the support of ERASMUS+ I intend to bring together policy-makers and stakeholders to tackle trans-national challenges and share best practice. For the first time in the European Union's history, grassroots sport will now receive funding from the

Union's budget. My priorities will be to promote a number of objectives through sport, including public health, social inclusion, and gender equality. I will also aim to address transnational problems such as doping and match-fixing, and help to improve governance. I will continue to promote the European Week of Sport, which will take place for the first time in 2015.

Effective implementation of the new programmes in my portfolio is an urgent task: they represent our most powerful tools to achieve our political objectives. Each of these programmes has now been effectively launched. The most immediate challenge now relates to the issue of budgets - both the issue of a potential shortage of payment credits at end-2014 and the related question of possible budget cuts for 2015, as proposed by the Council. These issues are well known to Parliament and I fully support Parliament's position that we must ensure that the programmes can indeed be implemented in the way envisaged when they were created.

In recent years the Commission has launched a number of very significant and ambitious initiatives, which include the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, a new university ranking (U-Multirank) and the EU-China High-Level People-to-People Dialogue. These projects have already shown huge potential and early success, but I intend to redouble our efforts so that they continue to gain strength and visibility.

While it is clearly too early to anticipate what consequences might be drawn from the mid-term review of the programmes, this will certainly offer an opportunity to make improvements in efficiency and effectiveness in programme delivery which emerge over the years ahead.

The future Commission's work programme for the coming year will, as stated by President-elect Juncker, be a product of the College as a whole, based on the political guidelines. Legislative powers in Education, Culture, Youth and Citizenship all remain firmly in the hands of our Member States. I am convinced that the EU non-legislative instruments can also be powerful and effective tools.

5. Your contribution to the development of European Citizenship

On the basis of the responsibilities which would be granted to you, how do you intend to contribute to the development of European Citizenship, taking fully into account the Charter on Fundamental Rights? In particular, in order to effectively contribute to this development, which initiatives do you consider to take, in the fields of education, youth and sport as well as of the protection of cultural heritage and the promotion of cultural & linguistic diversity? What concrete measures would you take in order to promote democratic involvement and civic participation, as well as a better communication with citizens?

We have to be clear and honest about our starting point: the public's perception of the EU and its institutions has suffered greatly in recent years. Politically, this is not sustainable. It is true that the Commission, like the Parliament, can only do so much to improve this situation, and that our Member States have the most natural and direct relationship with their own citizens. Nonetheless, from Brussels, we can and must do better.

Therefore, I plan to explore new ways, using new technologies, to illustrate the daily benefits of citizens' EU citizenship. I will also try to identify people and organisations from civil society who are well placed to communicate about the EU to their own constituents. I will organise direct and open debates with citizens, listen to their ideas and concerns, and convey the outcome of these debates to colleagues in the Commission. To achieve all of this, I will work closely with the Commission's Communication services as well as our Representations in Member States.

European citizenship encompasses both a rights-based concept of citizenship of the European Union as introduced under the Treaty of Maastricht and a value-based dimension referring to democracy and the Charter on Fundamental Rights, which calls for greater involvement of citizens and the development of a sense of shared values. I will therefore work closely with Commissioner-designate Vera Jourová in charge of the Justice portfolio under the coordination of the first Vice-President-designate, Frans Timmermans, in charge of Better Regulation, Inter-Institutional Relations, the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights; and with colleagues across the Commission when the dialogue with citizens touches their portfolios.

If confirmed, I will continue to deliver the "Europe for Citizens" programme as an instrument to encourage civic participation and a sense of belonging to the EU. I will also pursue the regular dialogue with key European organisations and think-tanks under the programme. My work on

promoting linguistic diversity and multilingualism; the promotion of inter-cultural dialogue and cultural diversity; and my work on strengthening citizens' engagement with their cultural heritage - all of these are about dialogue between cultures, strengthening mutual understanding and European identity - in other words, the very essence of European citizenship.

Erasmus+ offers strong direct and indirect support to citizenship. Learning mobility, both in formal education for students and trainees and in non-formal contexts such as volunteering or youth exchanges, heightens participants' awareness and understanding of other cultures and helps them develop their sense of European citizenship and identity. The Jean Monnet action promotes academic understanding of the EU and the dialogue between people and cultures. The Sports Chapter of Erasmus+ is primarily focused on supporting the grassroots sport movement with its strong emphasis on voluntary participation and positive values. In the field of youth, Erasmus+ fosters empowerment of young people and their active participation in society, including in EU policy-making. I have the concrete ambition in this area that, by developing communication platforms with support from Erasmus+, the Commission will be able within five years to reach out to and interact with 1 million young people - a real step-change in participatory democracy.

Similarly, Creative Europe, by promoting the circulation across borders of cultural works and exchanges among creators and cultural professionals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, will promote dialogue, greater mutual understanding and a stronger sense of belonging to the culturally rich and diverse European cultural landscape.