

ANSWERS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE

Olivér VÁRHELYI

Neighbourhood and Enlargement

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? How will you implement gender mainstreaming and integrate a gender perspective into all policy areas of your portfolio?

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 spent my entire professional career as a civil servant working for advancing European integration. I started working in the Hungarian public administration in 1995 right at the beginning of the process that led to Hungary's accession to the European Union. I was part of the team that coordinated the accession process, first in the capital and then in Brussels working in Hungary's Delegation to the EU. I acquired a deep understanding and knowledge of all the elements of the accession process. The unique experience of taking part in this historic process will remain with me and will continue to drive me throughout my life.

I continued to serve my country and the European Union ever since in various positions in the Hungarian administration and in the European Commission. My role since 2011 as Coreper I ambassador and since 2015 as Coreper II ambassador of Hungary has brought me into the highest circles of political decision-making in the European Union.

I have also proven my skills to promote the general interest of the European Union, serving as head of the responsible unit at the European Commission when we created the European unitary patent in the framework of the second enhanced cooperation in the EU.

When building the European Union, we shall not have to choose between national and European interests but we shall find their synthesis and work for the common good. I intend to continue my work along this principle towards the common good.

Being responsible for the Neighbourhood and Enlargement portfolio in the European Commission would be a dream come true for which I am well prepared. I have a deep sympathy and understanding of the aspirations of our neighbours to be either part of or be closely associated to the European family. At the same time, I understand that we need to reconcile their aspirations with the political dynamics that are driving the European Union forward. This beautiful, but highly challenging task, which is key for the future of the EU, deeply motivates me.

I will ensure that the Political Guidelines of the President-elect are duly implemented in our relations with our neighbours, taking fully into account the differences between them. I fully support the Commission's commitment to strengthen the links between people, nations and institutions. I am also fully committed to the geopolitical nature of the new Commission. Openness, fairness but also sense of reality in the common interest in a world that became less stable and secure.

In line with President-elect von der Leyen's guidelines, I am fully committed to and will work for the geopolitical nature of the new Commission.

The letter of the Treaties has always been and will remain my guide: rights and obligations go hand in hand; small and big, wealthy and modest, men and women have to be treated equally.

Equality between women and men is indeed a fundamental European value enshrined in the EU Treaties. I am strongly committed to strengthening gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment in the Neighbourhood and Enlargement regions, in line with the EU Gender Action Plan II Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020. Many neighbouring countries face serious problems in this area, such as gender-based violence, exclusion of women from the labour market and from property rights to name just a few. I am committed to raising these issues in our policy dialogue and to strongly supporting gender equality through our financial assistance. I also want to strengthen gender equality within the European Commission, including in the services under my responsibility, and fully support the goal of the President-elect to ensure full equality at all levels of Commission management by the end of the mandate. I will work in close cooperation with the Commissioner for Equality.

My obligation will be to comply with the highest ethical standards and the obligations set out in Articles 17(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Articles 245 and 339 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and the Code of Conduct for Commissioners. My declaration of interest is complete and accessible to the public and I will amend it should there ever be changes.

I will also always avoid any situation where my impartiality and independence could be put in question and will inform the President of the Commission of any situation, which might involve a conflict of interest.

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?

Role and co-operation with the European Parliament and its committees

If confirmed as Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, I will take full political responsibility for the activities in my area of competence, as set out in the Mission letter sent to me by President-elect von der Leyen on 7 November. I fully subscribe to the principle of collegiality and I

will work constructively with all other Members of the College to ensure effective development and implementation of policy initiatives, in particular the external dimension of internal policies.

I will also ensure that I have an excellent working relation with the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission, working as one strong team.

An open, transparent and constructive dialogue with the European Parliament is essential. I will work with the Parliament and the relevant committees throughout the policy-making processes and the political dialogues in a spirit of mutual trust.

I am committed to ensuring appropriate parliamentary scrutiny and keeping you informed of my work in a timely and comprehensive manner. For example, we will have to work closely to finalise the future financing instruments (Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument and Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance III). I attach great importance to equal treatment of the Parliament and the Council in full respect of their institutional roles. This not just a requirement of the ordinary legislative procedure, it is also necessary for a Commissioner who, as a Member of the College, is accountable to directly elected Members of the European Parliament.

I will make sure that there is a regular flow of information to Chairs of relevant parliamentary committees and I will ensure to continue our exchanges with parliamentary delegations and working groups.

I will ensure that questions from Members of the European Parliament to the Commission that cover my portfolio are replied to promptly and accurately. I am ready to regularly appear before the European Parliament's plenary, as well as before committees and to participate in trilogue negotiations .

Transparency

President-elect von der Leyen's Political Guidelines stress that in order to regain citizens' faith in the Union, our institutions should be open and beyond reproach on transparency issues. I will work closely with the European Parliament and Council for more transparency throughout the legislative process. Citizens should know who we, as institutions that serve them, meet and discuss with and what positions we defend in the legislative process. I am fully committed to implementing the wide-ranging provisions on transparency and the flow of information in the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the Commission and the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making. I will ensure that these provisions are respected in my structured dialogues and any other contacts with Parliament committees.

Policy proposals under my responsibility will be based on proper consultations of experts and the public, in line with Better Regulation principles. As a Member of this Commission, I will also continue efforts to keep citizens informed about its role in the EU's institutional set-up.

Follow-up to Parliament's positions and requests for legislative initiatives

President-elect von der Leyen supports a right of initiative for the European Parliament. She committed that her Commission will follow-up on Parliamentary resolutions adopted by a majority of its members with a legislative act, in full respect of proportionality, subsidiarity and better law-making principles, a commitment to which I fully subscribe. I will work closely with the Parliament at every stage in debating resolutions under Article 225 TFEU. I will work hand in hand with the relevant parliamentary Committees, and be active and present during the preparation of Article 225 TFEU

resolutions. This will improve dialogue, boost confidence and a sense of working together towards a common objective.

The Commission will respond to Parliament's resolutions within three months of their adoption, in accordance with the Framework Agreement. The Commission will ensure political oversight over the process.

Provision of information and documents

The provision of information and documents is an essential aspect of deepening the partnership between the European Parliament and the Commission. I therefore commit to fully implementing the relevant provisions of the Framework Agreement between the two institutions, and of the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making. The equality of Parliament and Council as co-legislators is set out in the Treaties and I will ensure that this is respected in terms of how information in areas under my responsibility is shared.

Question 3

How do you intend to further improve inter-institutional dialogue and cooperation between the Commission and Parliament - notably the Committee on Foreign Affairs - building on the commitments and good practices of previous Commissioners, with particular regard to:

A better synchronisation of Commission and European Parliament's activities, for example through the systematic advance sharing of planned timelines of publications (strategies, communications), ministerial meetings and summits, proposals to open negotiations on international agreements, human rights dialogues;

Cooperation and information sharing with the Committee on Foreign Affairs, including in writing, as regards the negotiation of international agreements, notably through an immediate implementation of those parts of the text already pre-agreed in the framework of negotiations on Paragraph 40 of the inter-institutional agreement on Better Law-Making falling within the Commission's prerogatives;

The timely consultation of the Committee on Foreign Affairs EU foreign policy priorities and positions, notably ahead of the publication of new or updated EU communications, strategies and mandates, including the Enlargement package;

The assessment in writing of how Parliament's views have been taken into account following the adoption of resolutions or the consultations referred to above;

The cooperation and coordination of democracy support activities, especially as the European Parliament has a proven record in the implementation of democracy support activities (particularly in the four key pillars of election observation, capacity-building for parliaments, mediation and dialogue, human rights actions), as recognised in the 2019 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, which highlights the EP's mediation and dialogue initiatives.

In line with the Political Guidelines of President-elect von der Leyen, I fully support the intention to reinforce the special relationship between the European Parliament and the European Commission. I will work closely with the European Parliament to implement the provisions of the Framework Agree-

ment between the European Parliament and the Commission, and the 2016 Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making regarding transparency and the flow of information between the two institutions.

Working together, we can reinforce the voice of the Union in external affairs. In that light, I would like to underline the importance of consultation in the policy-making process, including on foreign policy priorities. A good flow of information between the Commission and the European Parliament is of paramount importance.

I am ready to exchange views regularly with the European Parliament on any matters of my portfolio, including on the implementation of the financing instruments. I will also direct my services to be at the European Parliament's disposal to debrief on any technical dialogues if necessary.

In line with the specific commitments set out in the Framework Agreement and in the Interinstitutional Agreement, and in cooperation with the High Representative / Vice-President of the Commission, I will ensure cooperation and timely and full information sharing at all stages of the procedure with the responsible Committee as regards the negotiation of international agreements, and I will ensure that the European Parliament's views and recommendations are taken into account.

I am at the European Parliament's disposal to exchange information, ensure timely consultation and have regular exchanges of views with the responsible Committee on strategies, annual reports, and other ongoing or planned initiatives and mandates. I will be available for an exchange of views with the Committee on the Enlargement package directly after its adoption by the College and before it is presented to the press. I will inform the European Parliament, in writing, about my visits to the countries falling under my competence, and will engage with the AFET bureau, group coordinators and rapporteurs on Parliament's position and share information. Your inter-parliamentary meetings with national parliaments of partner countries allow for a strengthened cooperation and mutual understanding and I will attend myself whenever timing and venue allow.

I am committed to working closely with the European Parliament in designing and debating resolutions and to respond to issues raised in resolutions with a view to identifying the best way forward. The European Parliament's resolutions and follow-up to our consultations will be taken into account in our reflection of engagement in the framework of our bilateral or multilateral relations with the partner countries.

Parliamentary diplomacy is important notably in the countries I will be responsible for. I am keen to build on the good work done so far. I fully support and rely on the Parliament in playing this key role.

I look forward to a close cooperation with the European Parliament on democracy support and I highly value the role the European Parliament can play in mediating and promoting dialogue in difficult situations.

I will work closely with the European Parliament on the follow up to Electoral Observation Missions' recommendations to boost the EU impact of our combined efforts to support democracy and ensure stability in our immediate Neighbourhood.

Question 4

How do you envisage the division of tasks and complementarity of roles with the High Representative/Vice President of the Commission on the Enlargement and Neighbourhood policies?

As Commissioner in charge of an external relations portfolio, I will work under the guidance of the High Representative/Vice-President, within the Commissioners' Group on a Stronger Europe in the World, as well as with other Commissioners.

We need a coordinated EU response to effectively address the challenges in our Neighbourhood . Close cooperation with the High Representative/Vice-President is essential to ensure effective and coherent EU external action and will support the capacity of the EU to reinforce its global role, making it stronger, more coherent, more visible and more effective.

If confirmed as Commissioner, I will work hand-in-hand with the High Representative /Vice-President, to ensure the complementarity of our work and effective coordination of EU's actions and strategies. I will help the High Representative/Vice-President to consolidate views of the Member States on key policy issues relating to areas falling within my portfolio. This will entail regular and constructive cooperation, clear agreement on priorities as well as day-to-day cooperation and consultation. In view of Enlargement negotiations in particular, I will also ensure close coordination between the different Commission services to best support our partner countries in their reform efforts and their alignment with the EU acquis.

Together with the High Representative /Vice-President, I want to build on our strengths to ensure the maximum impact and influence of our policies. One of my first priorities will be to promote a common vision for the important regions under my portfolio. This will guide my relations with the High Representative / Vice-President throughout my mandate.

I will represent the Commission in the Foreign Affairs Council and coordinate the presence of other Members of the College as required, as indicated in the President-elect's Mission letter.

Question 5

With regard to the future generation of external financing instruments (2021-2027), how do you intend to ensure improvements in the following areas:

Genuine role of the Parliament in the strategic steering of the instruments (NDICI, IPA III), including the use of delegated acts for the adoption of strategic programming decisions and Parliament's attendance of the Commission expert groups drafting delegated acts,

Governance, including a proposal to establish a horizontal steering group potentially led by the VP/HR in order to ensure the overall political coordination of all external financing instruments,

Preservation of a strong support for the Neighbourhood, including in case the European Neighbourhood Instrument should be replaced by a single instrument for the external action of the EU (NDICI).

Effective interinstitutional cooperation is essential for the efficiency and legitimacy of EU decision-making. President-elect von der Leyen wants to reinforce the special relationship between the European Parliament and the Commission. If confirmed as Commissioner, I will work towards this objective.

I will ensure that the relevant committees are involved in any major developments under my responsibility and that they are informed before major events and key negotiations. And I want the direction

of our financial assistance to be guided by this frank, rich and timely political dialogue and inter-institutional cooperation.

The trilogues on the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) will provide us with an opportunity to discuss different ideas to improve political steering while preserving the inter-institutional balance established by the Treaties. One of my key goals in that discussion will be to ensure that governance arrangements remain efficient so that the financing instruments deliver on their objectives in an effective, timely and accountable way.

Our objective in European Neighbourhood is to build genuine partnerships based on common values and shared objectives. Programming must therefore be open to take the specific needs of the partner countries into account.

Our partnerships in the Neighbourhood are of paramount importance. The core of my mission will be to continue accelerating cooperation with the Neighbourhood partners on the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in order to foster stability, security and prosperity in and around Europe.

The EU's Neighbourhood is very diverse. That is why the key principles of the European Neighbourhood Policy are differentiation and ownership. Flexibility is also crucial. The Eastern and the Southern Neighbourhoods currently volatile and uncertain regions. However, they are also regions of great opportunity and interest to the EU. We will need to be prepared, in the course of this Commission's mandate, to respond to the evolving situation in Syria, to promote the EU's steadfast commitment to Ukraine's territorial integrity, to support democratic transition in Algeria, to continue our comprehensive partnerships with Morocco and Tunisia as well as supporting reforms for growth in Georgia.

To preserve the special relationship with our neighbouring countries we need an architecture that not only continues to serve our policy goals and priorities in the European Neighbourhood but that also enhances flexibility in order to address our priorities in a more timely, efficient and coherent manner. I believe that the new instrument, the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) is the best way to achieve this – it keeps all the specificities of our cooperation with the Neighbourhood. It proposes to increase and ring-fence an important amount of funding for the Neighbourhood, which can be increased from a sizeable flexibility cushion to address emerging needs. It also includes budgetary flexibilities that have proven their benefits in the Sub-Saharan Africa region currently covered by the European Development Fund.

Question 6

What will be your priorities in reforming the Neighbourhood policy, including introducing some further differentiation (political, financial etc.) on the basis of needs, merits and EU priorities as well as the implementation of the Human Rights conditionality?

Over the years, the European Neighbourhood Policy has been much more than just a framework for providing assistance. Our cooperation with Neighbourhood partners under a single policy framework has covered political, sectoral and financial aspects. We have a solid framework that has been instrumental in addressing EU's and partners' joint interests and common challenges, and for exercising genuine joint ownership.

It is in the interest of the European Union in terms of stability, resilience and prosperity to maintain a privileged relationship with all Neighbourhood countries based on our key priorities for cooperation

in the areas of democracy, human rights and good governance, socio-economic development, security and migration.

I am committed to reaping the benefits of this framework, nurturing opportunities for cooperation and wherever possible supporting the transformational reforms that would strongly underpin our mutual interests. I will further strengthen the differentiation principle in the policy to ensure that it remains relevant to each of our partners, while, at the same time, securing our own strategic interests. And I will make full use of the opportunities to reinforce our bilateral and regional engagement under the next Multiannual Financial Framework through the proposed new financing instrument, which foresees further differentiation and flexibility in EU's support to partner countries while preserving the specificity of the EU Neighbourhood policy.

At the beginning of my mandate, I will advance work on the revision and update of Partnership Priorities with our partners, in particular those from the Southern Neighbourhood. I will do so with a view to ensuring the full application of the principles of differentiation and flexibility and in line with EU interests. As regards the Eastern Neighbourhood, I will seek deeper sectoral cooperation with our most advanced partners – Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova – working in a flexible manner and based on an accelerated implementation of the Association Agreements and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas. As indicated in the President-elect's Mission letter, I will bring forward a new set of long-term policy objectives for the Eastern Partnership by mid-2020, based on the just completed structured consultation on the future of this partnership.

As we review the Partnership Priorities, further anchoring human rights, the rule of law and democracy elements in these political frameworks will be a key priority. At the same time, I would like to underline that promoting the EU's interest, as required in Article 21(2) of the Treaty on European Union, and partner countries' interest is not in conflict with the EU's values-based agenda. Continuing to develop true partnerships of equals based on shared interests is key, while continuing to promote the universal principles of democracy and human rights through political dialogue. The EU's own stability is built on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These principles and promotion of reforms in these fields feature as an integral part of all bilateral political partnerships in line with Article 8 of the Treaty on European Union.

The Commission regularly assesses the commitment and record of partner countries in this area and can take a gradual and proportionate approach to non-compliant countries, ranging from temporary “freezing” of budget support payments, to the application of human rights suspensive clauses in EU's financing agreements. While a suspension of EU support is seen as a last resort, it is not ruled out, as illustrated by the suspension of financial assistance to Syrian authorities in 2011, or more recently the suspension of budget support operations in Moldova.

Applying strict conditionality is key. And I will pay particular attention to those mechanisms that emphasise positive developments in partner countries. In this regard, I stand behind the Commission's proposal to preserve the incentive-based approach (“more for more”) in the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument to reward those EU neighbours who make progress in democracy, human rights, rule of law, cooperation on migration, economic development and reforms. Supporting a rights-based approach and promoting gender mainstreaming will be at the heart of my action. I will use the Human Rights and Democracy thematic programme and our support for the European Endowment for Democracy to ensure that the new instrument will contribute more to anchoring of human rights, supporting human rights defenders, vulnerable groups and the persons most at risk and other minorities, and ensuring media freedom and the freedom of expression.

Question 7

Which priority initiatives do you intend to take vis-à-vis Member States to ensure that a credible Enlargement perspective is possible and can advance in compliance with the Treaties, the Copenhagen criteria and the negotiating framework? Are you prepared to review the methodology of collecting data for progress reports and to envisage a different structure, which would better allow comparing countries across sectors and policies?

More specifically, which concrete steps would you take should an Enlargement country take measures or adopt policies that are not in line or compatible with the acquis, values and principles of the EU, notably as regards democracy, the rule of law, including the independence of the judiciary, and the fight against corruption?

In this regard, which initiatives could be envisaged to reinvigorate the accession process and push for fundamental reforms in the accession countries, especially in areas of the judiciary, the rule of law and media freedom? Which initiatives could be envisaged, where relevant, to enhance political dialogue between the opposition and the ruling parties in accession countries? Which policy instruments could be used in order to support and enhance the functioning of national Parliaments in accession countries with a view to strengthening their role in the accession process?

How would you assess the remarks made by your country's Prime Minister on the 7th Summit of the Turkic Council in Baku regarding your portfolio and responsibilities? Please assess the remarks both from the point of view of the European Enlargement and Neighbourhood policy and from the point of view of the position of a commissioner.

Concerning the Enlargement process to the Western Balkans, President elect Ursula von der Leyen unequivocally tasked me in my mission letter with ensuring to sustain and accelerate progress in the next five years, through a merit-based assessment of each candidate country, keeping a credible perspective on future accession. She also clarified that the Commission will stand by the proposals made to open enlargement negotiations with the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Albania. She also tasked me to work on speeding up structural and institutional reforms with a strong focus on the fundamentals of rule of law, economic development and public administration reforms.

I will reach out to fully engage with all Member States to deliver on these objectives.

I fully support the position of the President elect and intend to implement it fully in cooperation with the European Parliament and with the Council.

Member States have repeatedly underlined their commitment to the European perspective of the Western Balkans at the highest level. Based on the Treaties and the Copenhagen criteria, the conditions for becoming a Member State of the European Union are clear.

So too is the enlargement process and the expectations of aspiring countries throughout, with consensus among Member States that this process is based on strict and fair conditionality and the principle of own merits.

In 2018, the Commission adopted the strategy 'A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans', outlining that for this perspective to be concrete, it requires sustained efforts and irreversible reforms. Progress along the European path is an objective and merit-based process. It depends on the concrete results being achieved by each individual country. That is why it is important that the EU gives credit where credit is due. During my mandate, I will work hard, together with the Member States, to make sure this happens. We must acknowledge that there are countries, as is the case with Albania and North Macedonia, which have made impressive progress on difficult reforms and are meeting the conditions set for the opening of negotiations. Opening accession negotiations with these countries should boost the reform momentum elsewhere in the region and inject new confidence in the enlargement perspective. As regard Turkey, the General Affairs Council concluded on 18 June 2019 that "Turkey's accession negotiations have [...] effectively come to a standstill and no further chapters can be considered for opening or closing".

The Commission already has a strong basis for its assessments in the annual reports. The reporting methodology ensures that in addition to reporting on progress, emphasis is put on the actual state of play or level of preparedness for membership. Reporting is harmonised, with a clear assessment scale allowing each country to see clearly where they stand in key areas. This increases the transparency of the process making it easier for citizens and civil society to scrutinise reforms, and has been welcomed by Member States and the European Parliament alike.

In terms of identifying and addressing breaches of core values, the Enlargement package makes a factual and fair assessment of progress or lack of it and provides concrete recommendations to remedy shortcomings. The Commission is monitoring the follow-up to these recommendations through well-established instruments such as Justice and Home Affairs Committee meetings under the Stabilisation and Association Agreements or peer-review missions. For countries negotiating accession, safeguard provisions - the so called imbalance clause - of the negotiating frameworks allows us to stop further work on other negotiating chapters should progress under the rule of law chapters (chapter 23 on judiciary and fundamental rights and chapter 24 on justice, freedom and security) lag significantly behind progress in the negotiations overall. Should the need arise; I will not hesitate to take the decision to stop technical work on negotiations in other chapters, including withholding the recommendation to open and/or close other chapters, until this disequilibrium is resolved.

Of course, we can also suspend negotiations in case of serious and persistent breaches of principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

I will ensure that we use our significant financial support as a tool to incentivise results, and where needed, sanction a lack of reforms or re-orient funds, for example to civil society. In the future Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance III Regulation, the Commission proposal offers more explicitly the possibility to adapt the scope and the intensity of financial assistance based on performance and the commitment of our partners in key areas.

The effective functioning of national Parliaments is an essential element of the political criteria that all candidate countries must satisfy to become an EU Member State. Considering the complexity of reform processes required for countries to meet EU membership requirements, it is of the utmost importance that national Parliaments are accountable, effective, transparent and accessible to their constituents. I am committed to continue supporting the role of national Parliaments in accession negotiations and to support the strengthening of their capacities and count also on the valuable expertise of the European Parliament in this domain.

The accession process today is more rigorous and comprehensive than in the past. However, success in anchoring rule of law and democratic values ultimately depends on the political will and on overcoming institutional resistance in beneficiary countries. Where fundamental values, which are central to the accession process are breached, I will not hesitate to use all instruments available in our toolbox to incentivise the respect of such values and to try to resolve any shortcomings.

The Hungarian Prime Minister outlined the political priorities of Hungary vis-à-vis the members of the Turkic Council at his speech in Baku. As Commissioner, my only objective is to implement the political priorities of the European Union towards all the Enlargement and Neighbourhood partners, elaborating and implementing policies in the Western Balkans as well as in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood in true European spirit, as I have outlined in other parts of my answers. These European political priorities reflect the interest of the European Union as a whole and are based on the contributions from the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission.

If confirmed, I commit to fully observe the rules related to the functioning of the European Commission and in particular, the ones related to Commissioners. I will act in the general interest of the European Union in line with Article 17(1) of the Treaty on European Union. In my functions as Commissioner I will act independently; I will not seek nor take instructions from any Government or other institution, body, office or entity in line with Article 17(3) of the Treaty on European Union. Furthermore, I commit also to fully observe the obligations set out in Articles 245 and 339 of the Treaty on the Functioning of European Union and the Code of Conduct for Commissioners.