

**ANSWERS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE**

Didier REYNDERS

Commissioner-designate for Justice

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 am honoured to be proposed as the Commissioner–designate for Justice, including consumer protection, and upholding the Rule of Law. It is a portfolio that I am delighted to be allocated. I strongly feel that we need more European integration if we are to address the global issues that we face. The justice portfolio is central to the strategic agenda of the Union in the coming years. I intend to involve my fellow Colleagues closely in the development and implementation of policy initiatives.

I believe that I hold the right qualifications and professional experience to contribute to the European general interest. I have been fortunate enough to hold elected office for the last 20 years, first as Minister of Finance from 1999 to 2011, Deputy Prime Minister from 2004, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs (External Trade – from 2011 to 2014) since 2011, and Defence since December 2018. I am a lawyer by training and one of my first steps in my career was as Head of Cabinet of the Justice and Institutional reforms Minister and Deputy-Prime Minister Jean Gol. I have been proud to serve the people of Belgium over the last 20 years, and to have represented Belgium first at some Council meetings as Minister of Finance and at many of the key Council formations during 41 rotating presidencies.

I am a committed parliamentarian. I believe in a strong relationship between the Parliament and the Commission. With regard to my own experience, I first became an elected Member of Parliament in 1992. As Belgian minister in different capacities I had regular exchanges with Parliaments. During my political career, I have also had the opportunity to come regularly to this House, more specifically during the Belgian presidencies in 2001 and 2010 when I was ECOFIN Chair and Eurogroup Chair during 2001. I have a deep respect for the role of the European Parliament and the contribution that you have made to the European project. If

confirmed, I look forward to working with the European Parliament over the next five years, in particular with the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and the Committee on Legal Affairs.

I see this portfolio as three inter-linked parts: rule of law, civil and criminal justice, and consumers. It is built around the principles of trust, inclusion and fairness. All these areas provide huge opportunities to make a real impact on people's lives. I want to embrace new technologies and innovation to modernise our justice systems and the approach to working together. Europe can be proud to be a world leader on data protection and respect for fundamental rights. We must ensure full implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation and the Directive on Data Protection in Criminal Law Enforcement. We must continue to export our standards and values to our international partners. I will invest heavily in both the internal and external dimensions of my portfolio.

I fully subscribe to the President-elect's statement in my mission letter that "*The European Union is a community of law, based on the protection of individual rights and freedoms. This is what ensures that our Union is a place of equality, fairness and social justice*". I have worked extensively on rule of law issues and presented already in 2016 a proposal for a peer review mechanism. I would like to pay tribute to the European Parliament's role in upholding the rule of law. I am looking forward to working together to establish a rule of law review cycle as an inclusive, non-discriminatory and preventive annual process based on legal standards. In accordance with my mission letter I will lead the Commission's work to ensure that the rule of law is upheld across our Union. In this and other areas such as the Charter of Fundamental Rights, I will work under the guidance of the Vice-President for Values and Transparency.

I also intend to be the guarantor of consumers' interests across Europe and I am determined to ensure that we are able to unite around the core principles that underpin our democratic societies. Fairness and choice must be at the heart of all our European legislation and play an active role in the green and digital transitions. Justice and consumer policies can significantly contribute to the sustainability agenda.

I will support the Commissioner for Equality in the preparation and implementation of the new EU strategy on gender equality in my policy areas. There is a gender perspective in many policies under my responsibility. For example, the EU victims' rights policy, including the Victims' Right Directive, addresses specifically victims of gender-based violence. I will ensure that gender mainstreaming is part of correct and effective implementation of the Directive. I commit to further deepening gender mainstreaming in the policy areas and programmes that fall under my specific responsibility, namely justice and consumer protection. We have an obligation to mainstream and to promote gender equality in the EU and in all Commission actions, stemming from Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

I will neither seek nor take instructions from any entity. My aim is to consider all interests at stake, irrespective of any national, regional, professional or personal origin and work towards the implementation of the political guidelines accordingly.

I commit to comply without fail, as soon as I have been appointed, with the Treaty obligations on independence, transparency, impartiality and availability, as defined in Article 17(3) of the Treaty on European Union and in Article 245 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

If I am confirmed as Commissioner, I will fully respect the letter and spirit of the Treaty, in particular the obligation to act in the European interest and without taking any instructions. I will also honour the Code of Conduct of Members of the European Commission and its provisions on conflicts of interest. My Declaration of Interests is complete and accessible to the public, and I will update it rapidly should any change be required.

I fully support our 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 policymaking and implementation in accordance with the Commission's rules.

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

How would you assess your role as a Member of the College of Commissioners? In what respect would you consider yourself responsible and accountable to the Parliament for your actions and for those of your departments? What specific commitments are you prepared to make in terms of enhanced transparency, increased cooperation and effective follow-up to Parliament's positions and requests for legislative initiatives? In relation to planned initiatives or ongoing procedures, are you ready to provide Parliament with information and documents on an equal footing with the Council?

If confirmed as Commissioner, I will focus on the pursuit of social justice in its broad sense. I will therefore endeavour to make sure that the rule of law is effectively upheld within our Union, that the work on crime prevention and judicial cooperation is intensified and that consumers' rights are protected in the EU. To carry out my activities, I will work in full cooperation with all colleagues in the Commission, and in particular look forward to working with the Vice-President for Values and Transparency. I attach great importance to the principle of collegiality within the Commission. The Commission, as one single team, has to work together to deliver on EU citizens' ambitions and live up to its own commitments. Equally, in the justice area, no achievement is within reach if we work in silos. A coordinated approach is needed to build mutual trust between judicial systems, to allow citizens to exercise their rights, to stimulate consumers' confidence and to protect our society.

I am also strongly committed to the principle of full transparency. For our citizens to be aware of their rights, it is the Commission's duty to keep the European Parliament fully informed of the Commission's activities. This is especially relevant for the justice portfolio, which puts the EU citizens at the core of its work. I thus welcome and fully endorse President-elect's commitment to reinforce the Commission's relations with the European Parliament. I also support a right of initiative for the Parliament as described by the President-elect in her speech before this House, in full compliance with subsidiarity and proportionality and of better law-making principles. Having been a Member of Parliament myself, I know what is at stake; and I will therefore work closely with Parliament at every stage in debating resolutions under Article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Within the framework of the Treaties, I therefore fully commit to having a regular, open and constructive dialogue with the European Parliament at all stages of policy-making and negotiations, including international negotiations, and throughout the next five years, from day one. I will not hesitate to attend Parliamentary meetings, trilogue discussions and Plenary sessions. I will personally engage in bilateral talks with all the relevant Members of the

European Parliament. I also intend to keep a regular and direct flow of information with the Chairs of the Committees responsible for Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), Legal Affairs (JURI) and Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO).

Furthermore, in many of the areas falling under my immediate responsibility, the European Parliament and the Council act as co-legislators. The full respect of a loyal inter-institutional cooperation is essential, if not vital, to the delivery of the justice agenda. This is why I will fully apply, in my areas of responsibility, the Framework Agreement and the Inter-institutional Agreement on Better Law-Making. The European Parliament should be kept on an equal footing with the Council on all legal and political initiatives falling under my responsibility.

Finally, I want my and my cabinet's relations with the relevant Commission services to be based on trust, transparency and mutual assistance. As a Member of the Commission, I will be personally responsible and accountable to the Parliament for my actions and those of my departments, in particular the Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and Consumer Protection and the Internal Audit Service.

Questions from the Committee on Legal Affairs

3. In your Mission letter, you are given the task of contributing to the legislation on a coordinated approach on the human and ethical implications of artificial intelligence (AI). This stems from the commitment of the Commission's President-elect to present such legislation during her first 100 days in the office, which the Legal Affairs Committee strongly supports. What are the key guiding principles on which you would base such legislation, what is your vision for reconciling the ethical and regulatory aspects with the need to ensure the support to the development of AI and other new technologies (such as autonomous devices (robotics) and technologies copying human traits) and what specific future-proof legislative initiatives with regards to establishing a civil liability regime for AI, in order to clarify who is liable for the risks posed by AI from the development stage to placing on the market of products and services and thus to support its further development, would you like to propose?

Artificial intelligence is crucial for our century. It can bring major benefits to our society and economy, but also risks. This is why it is important to have a coordinated European approach to AI. We must develop policies that protect individuals – a human centric approach which at the same time allows Europe to be competitive in the AI landscape. AI applications must comply with fundamental rights. The General Data Protection Regulation already protects personal data. It is now essential to shape a framework to address possible challenges for human dignity, non-discrimination, equality, freedom of expression and other fundamental rights. This is why I will actively contribute to the preparation of legislation for a coordinated approach on the human and ethical dimension of Artificial Intelligence. I will work closely on this important matter with the Commissioner for Internal Market, under the coordination of the Executive Vice-President for a Europe fit for the Digital Age.

Regulation and development of AI must go hand in hand. Developing AI on the basis of shared European values can be a competitive advantage as trust is a very important factor for the uptake of the development and use of new technologies. Business interests and fundamental rights converge when it comes to creating sustainable AI business models. We

need the right kind of innovation.

I am in favour of an approach which promotes the roll-out of AI by creating legal certainty and investment stability and at the same time establishes societal acceptance and trust.

4. The strategic agenda for 2019-2024 adopted by the European Council in June 2019 emphasised EU's role as a driving force behind multilateralism and the global rules-based international order, ensuring openness and fairness and the necessary reforms and also supporting the UN and key multilateral organisations. How do you intend to promote effective international multilateral cooperation in the field of commercial and civil justice and what further action is envisaged to ensure equal access to justice for all and promotion of the rule of law? As some European companies and companies operating in the EU can be involved in environmental violations, social, human rights and corruptions matters inside and outside of Europe and taking the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights reporting framework as an example, how would you follow-up on the revision of the 2014 EU Non-financial reporting Directive?

Multilateralism has always been one of Europe's guiding principles. Cooperation with third countries and international organisations is an obvious element of the EU's external policy and this applies also to the EU's justice policy.

A good example of effective international multilateral cooperation is the recently adopted Hague Judgments Convention, which sets out a comprehensive global system for the recognition and enforcement of foreign judgments in civil and commercial matters. I will propose ratification by the EU. It will provide better access to justice both to our citizens and to businesses and facilitate trade and investment. I will also continue the efforts to encourage accession of third countries to existing civil justice conventions, such as the Hague Conventions on International Child Abduction and on Protection of Children.

I want to ensure that policies under my responsibility contribute as much as possible to the sustainability agenda of this Commission and to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Company law legislation, changes in corporate governance or fostering green consumption-patterns can all contribute to this overriding objective.

On corporate social responsibility and respect for Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles, it will be important to encourage businesses to apply the existing international guidelines and principles. It is equally important to ensure full application and enforcement of existing EU legislation in this area, like the Non-financial reporting Directive of 2014, the timber Regulation of 2013 and the conflict minerals Regulation of 2017. The Commission services are currently finalising an evaluation on whether these reporting rules satisfy the growing expectations of investors, civil society and other stakeholders. I will support my fellow-Commissioners responsible for these directives in the work to ensure full implementation.

Some Member States have obliged companies and their boards to integrate in the reporting obligations environmental, social and human right factors relating to their operations and decision-making. As for any further legislative initiatives on responsible business practices or 'due diligence', I will first assess carefully the concrete effect and impact, the proportionate

nature of any measure and the possible effect on the level playing field for our industries. But these ideas deserve further exploration at EU level.

On access to justice and provision of remedies of victims, the EU has measures in place in civil and commercial justice to ensure victims' access to justice, for instance, in the Brussels I Regulation on jurisdiction and enforcement and recognition of judgments. In certain circumstances, these measures also benefit victims of corporate abuses in third countries.

5. The Commission, as Guardian of the Treaties, has a duty to monitor and assess the correct implementation of Union law, and the respect given to the principles and objectives enshrined in the Treaties, by the Member States and all the Union institutions and bodies. Furthermore, it has to respect its commitment to actively help Member States transpose and implement Union law. A large number of infringement procedures shows that ensuring the timely and correct application of EU legislation in the Member States remains a serious challenge and priority. Lack of correct transposition, implementation and enforcement of Union law does not allow our citizens to fully benefit from their rights and denies our companies a level playing field. How do you intend to deal with this challenge to ensure the timely and correct transposition, implementation and application of Union law in the Member States, also with a view to strengthening the rule of law and legal culture across the Union, and how do you envisage to involve the Parliament better in this process?

Only a coherent application and effective enforcement of EU law will ensure that Europeans can truly enjoy their rights and businesses can rely on a level playing field created by EU law. In the justice area, enforcement is of direct relevance to citizens. This covers areas such as the rule of law, fundamental rights, citizens' rights, data protection, justice cooperation in criminal and civil matters and consumer protection. Effective application of EU law in the justice area is also an essential aspect of the rule of law and this requires national law enforcement authorities and justice systems to function well. Combined efforts from the Member States and the Commission are needed, and the Commission's targeted enforcement has already brought advances in this area.

President-elect Ursula von der Leyen has asked me to focus on the application and enforcement of EU law in the area of justice. Application and enforcement of EU law is indeed a priority for the new Commission. The Commission and the Member States have a shared responsibility to ensure that EU legislation is correctly implemented, applied and enforced. The Commission has a particular role as Guardian of the Treaties to provide support and guidance to Member States on implementation and to pursue breaches of EU law. The objective of the Commission's infringement policy is to ensure swifter compliance where it matters, to be able to deliver on the Commission's policy priorities.

If I am confirmed as Commissioner, I will ensure that my department supports the Member States in the implementation of EU law and is available to provide continuous guidance. This is a continuous process underpinned by sincere cooperation between the Member States and the Commission. These efforts will cover support for the national enforcement authorities applying EU laws, including making sure they have the necessary independence and capacity to fulfil their role. However, if Member States, despite the support given by the Commission, do not comply with EU law in a timely manner, I will propose to make use of infringement procedures to ensure that the EU legislation within my remit is enforced.

I will promote cooperation among justice professionals, such as judges and prosecutors, and their adequate training and funding, because they are the core actors in ensuring coherent application of EU law.

I will lead the Commission's work to ensure that the rule of law is upheld across the Union, in coordination with the Vice-President for Values and Transparency. We need to strengthen the rule of law culture among the general public. We also need to promote a better knowledge of the requirements of EU law and European standards relating to the rule of law. I will make full use of funding possibilities to empower stakeholders - including civil society - to promote the rule of law. I will also follow up on the idea of an annual rule of law event open to national stakeholders and civil society organisations.

I will work with Parliament in a transparent way, in a spirit of mutual trust and cooperation. In this spirit, I will regularly inform the Parliament on the monitoring of the implementation of EU law in the area under my responsibility.. Specifically on the rule of law, the new comprehensive European Rule of Law Mechanism will be essential to enhance the inter-institutional cooperation in this area.

Questions from the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

6. What will be your key priorities within the portfolio you have been assigned to and as the Commissioner-designate for Justice, how does your portfolio interact, dovetail and/or overlap with the portfolios of the Executive Vice President for a Europe fit for the Digital Age, the Vice President for Values and Transparency, the Vice President for protecting a European Way of Life and the Commissioner designate for Home Affairs? Do you commit to appear in front of the LIBE Committee when requested and at least twice per year?¹

My first core task is to lead the Commission work to uphold the rule of law and to preserve it in each and every Member State. I will establish the new comprehensive European Rule of Law Mechanism. I will ensure full implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation and the Directive on Data Protection in Criminal Law Enforcement and seek to extend the European Union's leadership on data protection and privacy. We should embrace new technologies and one of my priorities will be to make sure that fundamental rights are fully protected in the digital age, including by actively contributing to the coordinated approach on the human and ethical implications of artificial intelligence. In the area of civil and criminal justice, my first priority will be to facilitate and improve judicial cooperation between Member States and develop the justice area. I want to ensure that law enforcement and respect for fundamental rights go hand in hand, especially online. I will reach out to Parliament to find a way forward on files like electronic evidence. We need to build trust between national legal systems. I will defend citizens' rights, especially free movement and the rights conferred by European citizenship. On consumer policy, I will lead the work on consumer protection, notably for cross-border and online transactions.

¹ The question would be maintained in case the request to the CoP to add one question to the general questions is not agreed.

The Justice portfolio has a strong external dimension. I will encourage third countries to accede to and implement the Hague conventions on civil justice and family law. I will lead the negotiations with the United States on a possible EU-US Agreement on electronic evidence, encourage international convergence with EU standards for data protection and data flows and push ahead with talks on consumer protection enforcement, both with China and the United States. I will also continue to prioritise justice reforms with the European Union's close neighbours, the Western Balkans, Turkey and the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood.

Justice policies are by their very nature inter-linked with many other policy areas. For this reason it is crucial to closely cooperate and make the best use of all of the talents within the Commission, in full compliance with the principle of collegiality. That is why I fully support the approach of the President-elect to combine Vice-Presidents and Commissioners in order to maximize the ability of the Commission to deliver on the political guidelines. For example, for the rule of law field I will rely on the support and guidance of the Vice-President for Values and Transparency. I will also rely on the support and guidance of the Executive Vice-President for a Europe fit for the Digital Age for issues such as Artificial Intelligence or the Vice-President for protecting a European Way of Life for the Security Union files. Last but not least I will work in partnership with my colleague Commissioners.

I intend to work in partnership with the European Parliament. I commit to appear before the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs at least twice a year and it is my wish to meet with the committee whenever necessary.

7. As Commissioner for Justice, upholding the Rule of law is a key responsibility. How do you plan to implement the recent communication by the Commission on this matter and when should we expect the first annual rule of law report to be published? How will you ensure that the rule of law report will be thorough and not subject to the pressure of concerned Member States to water down its contents? Based on the mechanism put forward by your predecessors in this field, can you ensure, as commissioner responsible for the rule of law, that the “new comprehensive European Rule of Law Mechanism” you will present, will take the form of a comprehensive binding inter-institutional mechanism covering the full scope of Article 2 TEU - democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights, which is based on annual independent expert monitoring as requested by the European Parliament in the EP resolution of 25 October 2016 with recommendations to the Commission on the establishment of an EU mechanism on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights and that this mechanism forms the basis for corrective measures, including the protection of the Union's budget? Are you prepared to follow up the position of the EP on the matter and commit to proposing new legislation in this regard? What further actions do you envisage to strengthen the rule of law in the EU? What role do you envisage for the European Union to tackle corruption in Member States?

As underlined in the President-elect's political guidelines, there must be no compromise when it comes to defending our core values. Threats to the rule of law challenge the legal, political and economic basis of how our Union works.

If confirmed, I will be in charge of ensuring that the rule of law is upheld across our Union and my immediate priority will be to establish the comprehensive European Rule of Law Mechanism. I will rely on the support and guidance of the Vice-President for Values and

Transparency and I will also closely work with the Commissioner in charge of Neighbourhood and Enlargement to ensure the consistency of the internal and external Rule of Law approach.

The new Rule of Law Mechanism will be comprehensive as the respect for the rule of law is a precondition for democracy and fundamental rights. These values are so closely interlinked that, by protecting the rule of law, the Commission also acts to protect fundamental rights and democracy. For example, the mechanism will cover issues in relation to media pluralism and elections where there is a connection with the application of EU law.

I believe that we should adopt the first annual Rule of Law Report during the first year of the Commission. This report will provide an objective synthesis of the significant developments as regards the rule of law in all Member States and at EU level. The monitoring will cover all Member States, but will naturally go into more depth in Member States where particular risks have been identified. Over time, the substance and the architecture of the new mechanism and reporting is likely to evolve. I would also very much hope that the report can serve as a basis for an enhanced inter-institutional cooperation. To deliver concrete results, the support of the European Parliament will be crucial. Strengthening the rule of law is a joint responsibility of all EU institutions and Member States and we need to join efforts.

Additionally, we need to take action to better promote a rule of law culture, to prevent the development of rule of law concerns, and to respond when national rule of law safeguards falter.

Under the responsibility of the Vice-President for Values and Transparency, the Commission will monitor the respect by Member States of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and will report annually on its application. The political guidelines of the President-elect include a commitment to a number of concrete measures to nurturing, protecting and strengthening our democracy, including the European Democracy Action Plan.

To monitor the situation in the Member States, the Commission relies on a diversity of sources of expertise, including from the Council of Europe bodies, and with the close involvement of the Member States and the stakeholders. Establishing an external independent expert monitoring would raise a number of questions in terms of legitimacy, the balance of inputs and the accountability for the results. External expertise cannot take the place of an assessment made by the Commission itself, particularly when the Commission's conclusions could be the basis for acts that come with legal and financial consequences.

As regards the protection of the Union' budget, the priority is the rapid adoption by the Council and the European Parliament of the Regulation proposed by the Commission on the protection of the Union's budget in case of generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law in the Member States.

As regards corruption, the European Rule of Law Mechanism will also examine the capacity of Member States to fight corruption. The forthcoming Directive on the protection of whistleblowers will become an important component of the EU toolbox for the fight against corruption.

8. The data protection package, consisting of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Law Enforcement Directive (LED) is one of the biggest successes of the previous mandate. Effective implementation and enforcement, however, is the key to make Europe a true privacy champion in the world. The national supervisory authorities that are responsible for supervision and enforcement of the GDPR and LED, cannot effectively perform their tasks and exercise their powers, because the Member States do not equip them with the necessary financial, technical and human resources, while the law explicitly lays down this obligation. How will you ensure the national supervisory authorities' full ability to perform their tasks, and will you start infringement procedures against those Member States that fail to provide the necessary resources?

It is crucial that Member States fulfill their obligation to equip their national data protection authorities with adequate resources. This is indispensable to ensure a proper enforcement of the EU data protection rules.

I know that due to the new data protection legislation, many data protection authorities have received extra staff and financial resources. I understand that the situation remains uneven among the data protection authorities.

I am determined to put this issue high on the agenda in my dialogue with Member States. If data protection rules are not effectively enforced by a national data protection authority because of a lack of resources, I stand ready to make use of all tools at my disposal, including launching infringement procedures.

We need to continue our financial support for the activities of national data protection authorities. I plan to continue this support in 2020.

I will also encourage joint investigations between data protection authorities, which is a way for them to pool resources and share knowledge.

9. In recent years, the EU has also passed a number of Regulations aiming at improving security within the Union which have a significant impact on citizens' fundamental rights, including the protection of personal data. The protection of the personal data of citizens in the context of law enforcement is provided by the Data Protection Law Enforcement Directive, which is not directly applicable. Do you agree that when law enforcement gets more competences at EU level, the fundamental right of data protection should also be given equal priority, and will you propose a Regulation replacing the Directive, so that protection for citizens' personal data in the law-enforcement context is binding and directly applicable in all Member States?

Complying with fundamental rights, including data protection rules, is a key element to ensure the sustainability and legitimacy of law enforcement policies.

The Data Protection in Criminal Law Enforcement Directive is a remarkable step forward compared to the previous legislation. The protection of personal data in the area of law enforcement now applies across the whole European Union.

I believe we should first focus on making sure it is effectively applied and enforced. I will therefore closely check how the directive is fully transposed by the Member States.

We should give the new legislation time to show its results. The review of the legislation will be the opportunity to take stock and examine the practical application and functioning of the directive. In light of this, we should consider whether to prepare a new legal instrument to further reinforce the fundamental right of data protection.

10. What will be your top priorities in the area of judicial cooperation in criminal matters and criminal law? How would you further strengthen and facilitate judicial cooperation among Member States? How will you improve the state of implementation of EU criminal law instruments, particularly the Directives on procedural safeguards? How do you envisage that the work and powers of Eurojust or EPPO and the coordination between them could be further strengthened? Will you present a proposal revising the European Arrest Warrant?¹

My priorities in this area will be to improve judicial cooperation among European Union authorities and with third countries. I want to ensure that those involved in criminal proceedings, both defendants and victims, have their procedural rights protected throughout the Union. I will also seek to ensure that Eurojust and the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) are able to work efficiently and have adequate resources.

In terms of judicial cooperation, it is important to enhance trust between our Member States and to continue to build a European area of Justice. I will strengthen compliance with our fundamental principles of justice systems, such as independence, transparency and efficiency, through the range of instruments we have at our disposal, such as EU-level judicial training, the Scoreboard on justice systems and the European Semester recommendations. I will put particular emphasis on the independence of judges and judicial authorities which need to rely on each other in cross-border prosecutions or executing decisions. I will also look into how prison conditions in the Union could be improved and explore the idea of establishing minimum standards for pre-trial detention in order to strengthen trust.

I firmly believe that European law only serves citizens if properly implemented. I will use all possible means to ensure that practitioners can use our instruments, including soft law (guidance) and judicial training. I will closely monitor the implementation by Member States of the criminal law instruments, notably the Directives on procedural rights and victims' rights. Where necessary, I will not hesitate to enforce EU law, including through infringement proceedings.

As regards our criminal justice agencies, my objective is to support them and develop further their capacities in accordance with their mandates. On Eurojust, I will make sure that the new Eurojust Regulation is fully and correctly implemented as from 12 December 2019 and is fully implemented, I will submit recommendations to the Council for the opening of negotiations with selected third countries, and continue to provide support to the Digital Criminal Justice project for Eurojust to keep up with the developments in the digital age.

On EPPO, I am dedicated to making sure that it will be able to take up its functions by the end of next year. I am pleased that we are moving forward on the appointment of the European

¹ This question would become obsolete in case the request to add one question to the general questions is not agreed by the Conference of Presidents.

Chief Prosecutor. The Political Guidelines called for the EPPO to be able to investigate and prosecute cross-border terrorism and this will be one of the issues for my mandate.

The European Arrest Warrant is an essential criminal justice instrument in the Union. The European Court of Justice has shown that the Framework Decision can be interpreted in a way that protects fundamental rights. A successful European Arrest Warrant system is entirely dependent on effective cooperation between Member States. The Commission is currently performing a compliance assessment of all the national legislations transposing the Framework Decision and will therefore consider whether infringement proceedings are necessary. In light of the compliance assessment, I will also seriously consider whether to bring forward a proposal to revise the European Arrest Warrant.