



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

José Manuel Barroso
President

Margot Wallström
Vice President

Brussels,
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Dear Speaker,

Only a few months have passed since the new Commission took office, but we would already now like to take this opportunity to communicate to you some of our intentions for the next few years in the important area of our relations with the national parliaments of the EU Member States.

The Constitution – the outcome of a democratic and inclusive process – offers innovative ways to give a greater voice to national parliaments and to Europe's citizens. In so far as it codifies current practices or widely shared principles, we intend to continue those practices and implement those principles. For example, the new chapter on the Democratic Life of the Union contains provisions that are both fundamental and widely shared: equality of European citizens, democracy, participation, transparency, dialogue.

However, from a democratic and political point of view, the Commission should not generally anticipate any provisions of the Constitution. Therefore we do not have the intention to move in any such direction that could be perceived as circumventing the national parliaments and the citizens, and that could jeopardise the ratification processes and the citizens' confidence in the EU Institutions or the national parliaments.

The reason for this is simple: we believe the future of Europe is dependent on a good and close co-operation between the national parliaments of the Member States and the EU Institutions. This matter cannot wait – we want to do our utmost to get this close co-operation on track as quickly as possible and in as efficient and concrete a way as possible.

We do not want the European Commission's relations with national parliaments to be limited to theories or to speeches and declarations – we want it to be real and we want it to show tangible results, to the benefit of all our respective institutions.

That is why the Commission recently discussed long and short term targets for its relations with the national parliaments. We enclose an information note outlining those targets, but we

would like to underline a few of them that we believe highlight the importance we attach to this particular subject.

For example, we have requested that that all Commissioners, as well as Commission officials, should always strive to be accessible and prepared to assist national parliament committees in their enquiries into EU policy.

Another concrete example stems from our understanding of your concern that six weeks can seem a rather short time for the national parliaments to scrutinise legislative proposals in detail and to co-ordinate their positions. With your agreement and in line with the current Treaties, we therefore intend to play an active role as “facilitator” in the important work of the electronic exchange of EU-related information between your parliaments, for example via the IPEX co-operation.

Furthermore, we will of course also do what we can, from our side, to facilitate the important work foreseen in the *Guidelines on interparliamentary co-operation between parliaments in the European Union*, which you adopted at your latest Conference in the Hague in July last year.

In order to discuss these and other matters with you and your Members personally, the responsible Vice President of the Commission has set as a top priority in this area to get the possibility to visit all the national parliaments of the Member States, hopefully already during this year.

We are very much looking forward to the opportunities we will have to meet and discuss these and other matters of mutual concern, and we are very much looking forward to hearing your views on what ways and means of co-operation would be most helpful and constructive in achieving what we believe is our common goal – a better Europe for all.

Yours sincerely,

José Manuel Barroso
President

Margot Wallström
Vice President

INFORMATION NOTE FROM MRS WALLSTRÖM TO THE COMMISSION

TARGETS FOR THE COMMISSION'S RELATIONS WITH THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES

I. Background

Inspired by the strengthened role foreseen for national parliaments within the Constitution, this Commission has set itself the priority of reinforcing its relations with national parliaments and through them communicating our message to the Member States.

This objective is an integral part of a culture where European institutions at large work together, but also as a communication tool for increasing a shared ownership of the European project by connecting with people and their elected representatives.

II. Short term goals

In order to facilitate the realisation of its objective of strengthened relations with the national parliaments, the Commission has to set out concrete short term goals for an enhanced co-operation. I will strive to introduce all the activities mentioned below during 2005, as the Commission's short term goals for relations with the national parliaments. This does not in any way exclude the introduction of other short term initiatives, as long as they are coherent with these short term goals.

- I will visit all the national parliaments of the Member States, as well as fulfilling my commitment to participate in, for example, the COSAC Chairpersons Meeting and the EU Speakers Conference.
- I will issue an annual information report on the Commission's relations with the national parliaments (stocktaking and perspectives; fulfilment and planning of short and medium term goals).
- All Commissioners, as well as Commission officials, should strive to be accessible and prepared to assist national parliament committees in their enquiries into EU policy.
- The Commission should seek to establish, in detail, the national parliaments' requirements for types of information and ways of co-operation, thus avoiding moving in any such direction that could be perceived as circumventing the national parliaments and the citizens.
- The Commission administration will produce a regular newsletter – to be distributed internally as well as to the national parliaments and to the European Parliament – highlighting current Commission activities regarding relations with the national parliaments and, possibly, selected information directly from the national parliaments.
- My Cabinet and the Commission administration will seek to maintain close contacts and exchange information with the existing network of EU affairs liaison officers in the national parliaments and with the national parliament's permanent representatives in Brussels.

- The Commission should play an active role as “facilitator” in the important work of the electronic exchange of EU-related information between the national parliaments, for example via the IPEX co-operation.
- The Commission should do what it can to facilitate the work foreseen in the *Guidelines on interparliamentary co-operation between parliaments in the European Union*, adopted by the Conference of EU Speakers in the Hague in July 2004.
- The already successful organisation by the Commission administration of information meetings for national parliament civil servants on specific (technical) topics should be maintained and increased, if such requests are made.
- The Commission Secretariat General will designate a service/person to be the main contact person and co-ordinator for requests directly from national parliament administrations.

III. Long term goals

Due to the necessity to nurture a climate of openness, mutual respect and attentiveness to each others constitutional prerequisites, the long term goals for the Commission’s relations with the national parliaments can not be defined in detail until the Commission has heard the views and processed the requests of the national parliaments. Moreover, once concluded, the outcome of the Constitution ratification process will have to be taken into due account.

However, in broad terms, in the long term perspective, the Commission’s relations with the national parliaments should take its starting point in three key objectives:

1. **Mutual service – a continuous and open dialogue:** we are interested in and depending on each others views and possibilities in order to perform our respective tasks in an efficient, open and transparent manner;
2. **Concrete networking:** make full use of each others expertise at political as well as administrative level, always in line with current Treaties and constitutions;
3. **Connecting with people and their elected representatives:** a greater voice to parliaments is a greater voice to Europe’s citizens.