

**XXXVII COSAC**

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**Vice President Margot Wallström  
Introductory address**

**Presentation of the  
Commission's Annual Policy Strategy  
(APS) for 2008**

Chairman, Honourable Members,

Last Thursday I presented the 2006 Annual Report on the Commission's relations with the national parliaments. I did that with great satisfaction. And the report was welcomed with as great satisfaction by my colleagues.

Our relations have developed significantly over the past two years. I am very happy for all the positive feedback and the inspiring engagement and activity by your parliaments, and by my Commission colleagues.

Together the Commission and the national parliaments can improve the process of policy formulation. That is a welcome contribution to democratising the EU. Our discussions contribute both to better EU policies and to a better understanding of EU issues. Together we increase the shared ownership of the European project.

That is why I'm so pleased to meet with you to discuss the Commission's Annual Policy Strategy for 2008.

The Commission adopted the Annual Policy Strategy on 21 February and sent it to Parliament and Council and to your parliaments at the same time.

In this strategy we define our main policy priorities and key initiatives for next year. We also propose an appropriate allocation of staff to match our policies.

Limited additional resources will be used exclusively to cover needs due to enlargement, in line with the Commission's previous commitments. All other needs will have to be served through internal redeployment within the Commission.

2008 will clearly be an important year for the European construction. Having celebrated the 50 year anniversary of the Rome Treaty in 2007 with the Berlin Declaration, 2008 will be an opportunity to look forward. What better impetus could we think of to this process than a clear and constructive institutional settlement?

The Commission fully supports the efforts of the German Presidency in this regard and will contribute to its work as effectively as possible. We need an institutional reform to make Europe more democratic and efficient. We need to build a renewed consensus about our common future and to send a positive signal to the citizens in good time before the European elections in 2009.

Meanwhile, we will see a further consolidation of the Union. In 2008, we expect to see a number of Member States joining the Schengen area which will allow EU citizens to travel freely in a Europe of 27. We also hope to see additional Member States adopt the Euro as their currency, once they fulfil the defined criteria.

Following on from the Single Market Review and the Social Reality Check which will be presented in 2007, the Commission will launch a series of initiatives. We need to make sure that the Single Market continues to deliver on its economic promise and that it allows citizens to reap the benefits.

Through the social reality check the Commission will take stock of the social situation in the EU and help address people's access to rights and opportunities.

2008 will also be an important year in terms of laying the ground for the future financing of the EU through a review of the multi-annual financial framework for 2007-2013 by the Commission.

The strategic objectives defined by this Commission at the beginning of its mandate remain valid. Prosperity, solidarity, security and freedom, and a strong and open Europe in the world summarise the core ambitions of the Commission. We see through opinion polls, consultations and our dialogue with citizens that they correspond to people's real priorities for Europe.

We also see, however, that a number of highly important issues are not confined to one or the other of the strategic objectives. They need to be taken forward in synergy across policy areas, and they have a shelf life beyond 2008. In the APS decision, the Commission specifically highlights three cross-cutting priorities for 2008.

- Firstly, energy and climate change, where we will implement the Energy and Climate Change Package adopted by the Commission and supported by the March European Council. We will continue to push for a European gas network and electricity grid. We intend to take further steps to promote energy efficiency and sustainable energy. And we plan to enforce the competition and internal market rules in the energy sector. Furthermore, the Commission will push for new commitments by the EU and global stakeholders to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions beyond 2012 when the Kyoto protocol expires.
- Secondly, the renewed Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs remains the Commission's main instrument for promoting a more prosperous, environmentally responsible and socially inclusive Europe. In partnership with the Member States, we are making good progress and need to seize the opportunity and press ahead with further reforms.
- Thirdly, migration in its various facets has become a key challenge for the EU. Labour migration, properly managed, can make a positive contribution to our economies and to our societies, not least because of the demographic situation. We also plan to propose further measures to achieve a Common European Asylum System by 2010. Finally, preventing illegal migration, combating the ruthless business of human trafficking and protecting our common external borders will require further action by the EU in 2008.

But let me now come back to our strategic objectives and give you a few examples of key areas for action and initiatives under each of them.

Under the heading of prosperity the Commission will take preparatory action to ensure the European Institute for Technology (EIT) is operational as from 2009. In the transport area, we intend to present an Action Plan on Urban Transport to green the transport sector as well as legislative proposals to limit nitrogen oxide emissions from aviation and to reduce emissions from ships.

In the context of the Single Market Review, we will be working on a proposal to allow enterprises to use a Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base for their EU wide activities. New initiatives should be presented as a follow-up to the new EU Patent Strategy. We also intend to present legislative initiatives to strengthen consumer protection. These may include rules covering software, music or films bought and downloaded over the Internet.

As regards labour migration, the Commission plans to present two Directives concerning the conditions of entry and residence of seasonal workers and paid trainees. And the European Maritime Policy will clearly move forward from policy formulation to implementation.

In the field of solidarity, the Commission will present a "Health Check" of the Common Agricultural Policy, which will pave the way for the future CAP. Following on from the Social Reality Stocktaking, we consider putting forward initiatives such as a legislative proposal against discrimination outside the labour market and propose further measures to promote "flexicurity".

We intend to propose an EU Action Plan on Drugs covering the period 2009-2012. A number of initiatives will also be put forward focusing on children, to protect children using the Internet and to tackle child poverty.

Finally, in cooperation with the Member States we will promote multilingualism not just as a reflection of our cultural heritage and rich diversity but also as an element that contributes to jobs and prosperity.

To promote security and freedom, we plan to propose new measures for managing our external borders and to set up a European surveillance system to help Member States to deal with growing flows of illegal immigrants. To support the fight against organised crime and terrorism, we expect to see a centralised database of fingerprints becoming operational, and the Commission will also launch a policy to tackle violent radicalisation in cooperation with the Member States.

Health and health services are of major interest to most citizens. In 2008, the Commission will undertake a review of the EU legal framework for pharmaceutical products with the objective of ensuring that medicines are safe and that information to users is clear and accurate. We also intend to propose a Recommendation on patient safety and the quality of health services. Finally, we will propose a series of measures to protect critical communication and information infrastructure and to promote privacy and trust in the information society.

The Commission will continue to fight for a Europe with a strong voice in the world. Internal and external coherence in our policies become even more important as we see that core policies, such as climate change, migration, terrorism, or energy, need to be addressed in a global context. The Commission will continue the accession negotiations with Croatia and Turkey, and stands ready to play a strong role following a status settlement for Kosovo. We will pursue negotiations of new agreements with Russia and Ukraine and develop our ties with key partners further away such as the US, China, India, the ASEAN countries, and Latin America.

As regards trade policy, we will continue to work hard to ensure the success of the Doha Development Round and we expect to see a strong implementation of the Global Europe external competitiveness agenda. The Commission will also work closely with Member States and partner countries to make sure that the European Consensus on Development makes good progress and strengthen our partnership with the African Union.

The APS in many ways exists as a recognition of one of the Commission's special roles – initiating legislation. The Commission has a broader role to bring fresh ideas and policy directions to Europe, but at the core of this is its legislative role. We are committed to exercising this responsibility to the highest possible standards. That means making proposals after full consultation and after detailed impact assessment. It also means legislating only when it is the best option – only when we have considered whether self-regulation or soft law measures could be more effective or quicker.

Let me be clear: if legislation is necessary, the Commission will legislate. Just look at the figures: over the last ten years, the Commission has brought forward an average of 489 proposals a year. Last year's figure was very close to this, at 474. Of course the global figures hide different trends – in recent years, we have made a high number of enlargement-linked proposals as well as codification proposals.

But even if you look at this politically rather than statistically, the same message comes through. This year will see a wide range of legislation – on energy, on emissions, on immigration, on defence procurement, on health services, on the internal market.

Europe expects an active Commission initiating action to respond to these and other challenges. And in many cases we will respond through legislation.

Let me also underline a novelty in our strategy for 2008. Following the example of the Commission's Legislative and Work Programme for 2007, communication priorities are an integral part of our policy strategy. Focusing our messages on a limited number of issues that are of key concern to people, and communicating these clearly, reflects and contributes to our overall communication strategy and strengthens our policies.

The APS is only the beginning of a process leading to the adoption in October of the Commission's Legislative and Work Programme for 2008. I want the national parliaments' input into that process. So I very much welcome COSAC's initiative to have a discussion here today. And I'm looking forward to the results of the deliberations you will have back home in your parliaments.

It is important that we together explore the best ways to ensure that your parliaments can channel your views on where Europe should put its political weight. It is important that the Commission pays close attention to what you have to say. It is important that we all play our part in the process of policy formulation.

Let today be the start of that frank and constructive dialogue on the Annual Policy Strategy. Thank you.