



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

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*Committee on Industry, Research and Energy*

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22.12.2009

## **NOTICE TO MEMBERS**

Subject: Hearing with Günther H.OETTINGER, Commissioner-designate for Energy

Please find enclosed the written answers sent by Günther H.OETTINGER.

The Secretariat

**ANSWERS TO EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT  
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE  
Günther OETTINGER  
(Energy)**

**General competence, European commitment and personal independence**

- 1. 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? 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?**

My professional background as a commercial lawyer, my 25 years' experience as a member of parliament and parliamentary party leader and my time in office as head of government of the German federal state of Baden-Württemberg are important and appropriate qualifications for future work as a member of the European Commission.

My native Baden-Württemberg has more than 10 million inhabitants and is one of Europe's economically strongest and most innovative regions. I personally have been shaped since my early youth by Franco-German reconciliation, the construction of a united Europe and cross-border cooperation between people. For many years I have therefore been a member of the cross-party *Europa-Union Deutschland*. A further expression of my deep European conviction is my effort on behalf of cross-border cooperation along the Upper Rhine and the 'Four Motors Initiative' with Catalonia, Rhône-Alpes and Lombardy, which have made Baden-Württemberg an important player in cooperation between Europe's regions.

Active participation in European politics has long been a central feature of my political work. My home state of Baden-Württemberg represented the interests of all the German *Länder* in the EU constitutional convention, contributing in particular regional and municipal experience. A further example is my initiative to encourage a European Danube strategy, in order to give greater effect to the development potential of the Danube countries in the interests of the European Union as a whole. Baden-Württemberg also played a leading role in the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in Germany.

On the basis of this experience I am looking forward, as a convinced European, to serving the overall European interest in future. As parliamentary party leader and later as head of the state government I have already contributed to cooperation in the European Union in various

political circumstances and cultivated constructive, result-oriented dialogue beyond all party boundaries. I continue to feel bound to this conviction based on balance and joint objective work.

Sustainable economic growth and in particular the challenges of energy production and energy efficiency have long been key themes of my work in parliament and government. In both areas Baden-Württemberg is a leader on account of its innovative strength and the political framework conditions. I am therefore ideally prepared to meet the challenges of my future office in the interests of Europe as a whole.

I assure you that I will unreservedly devote my strength to the exercise of my office and will carry out my duties within the Commission comprehensively and completely. Personal independence and independence from individual interests are essential prerequisites for the Commission to be able to carry out its tasks credibly. For me personally, these are key elements of my work in the Commission. I will scrupulously comply with the obligation in Article 17(3) of the Treaty on European Union and in Article 245 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, under which the Members of the European Commission must exercise their office in total independence and refrain from any action which is incompatible with their tasks. I also undertake not to pursue any other paid or unpaid professional activity during my term of office and to continue strictly to avoid any conflicts of interest in the exercise of my office. I also undertake to comply with the rules of the code of conduct for Commission Members.

As can be seen from my 'declaration of financial interests', which I have submitted to the President of the Commission in accordance with the code of conduct, I hold no posts and have no financial interests which conflict with the tasks of a Commissioner.

### **Management of the portfolio and cooperation with the European Parliament and its committees**

#### **2. 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?**

Under the framework agreement on relations with the European Parliament and the Commission, each Member of the Commission takes political responsibility for his or her field of jurisdiction. This applies notwithstanding the principle of the Commission's collegiate character. I will of course be politically responsible for the work of my departments in the fields entrusted to me, and I will exercise that responsibility in close cooperation with the other Members of the College.

In my work as head of government I have always sought a constructive basis for discussion with the members of all parliamentary parties. I therefore personally attach great importance to cultivating a future dialogue with the Members of the European Parliament, a dialogue which is close, trusting and not oriented towards party-political preferences. I expressly include in this obligation the services assigned to me.

On the basis of the Commission's code of conduct I will at all times ensure trusting cooperation with the Director-General, the management and staff of the future

Directorate-General for Energy. I will do everything in my power to ensure that internal controls work efficiently. I attach great importance to cooperation with my departments based on the principles of loyalty, trust, transparency and reciprocal provision of information and support.

**3. 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, also in the light of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon? 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?**

As a Member of the Commission, I regard myself as under an obligation to ensure complete transparency and to inform Parliament continually. I consider this obligation to be a key prerequisite for our democracy to be able to function. In my many years of parliamentary work, but also particularly in my personal responsibility as a head of government, I have adhered strictly to this principle and in future I will continue to do so in every respect.

One of the main achievements of the Lisbon Treaty has been to further strengthen the rights of the European Parliament. My departments and I will comply with these expanded parliamentary rights and claims in every respect. I will of course cultivate discussions with Members of all parliamentary parties in a spirit of trust and incorporate into my work the advice which I receive from the parliamentary sphere. Against this background, open dialogue between the Commission and Parliament is for me not only an obligation but also a personal need.

The European Parliament and the Council are equal players in the legislative process and therefore I will of course provide the Parliament with information and documents in the same way as the Council expects me to do. I also undertake to comply with all the provisions of the framework agreement between our institutions, *inter alia* because the European Parliament has a special role in monitoring the Commission.

I am fully aware that the long-term security of the European Union's energy supply and increased energy efficiency, and particularly the objectives resulting from climate change and the requirement to conserve natural resources, cannot be achieved without comprehensive cooperation with Parliament and its constructive proposals, ideas and advice. I will therefore examine the European Parliament's proposals in detail and take them up where possible.

**Policy-related questions**

**4. What are the three main priorities you intend to pursue as part of your proposed portfolio, taking into account, where relevant, the financial, economic and social crisis and concerns related to sustainable development?**

Sustainability, competitiveness and security of supply have been at the centre of European energy policy over the past five years. These three objectives must be pursued further and integrated into a long-term policy strategy up to 2050 in order to achieve decarbonisation of the EU's energy mix. I therefore have the following five priorities:

Firstly, I would like energy policy to make a key contribution towards building a low-carbon economy. We must fully utilise the potential of energy efficiency for sustainable growth. My aim is to increase energy efficiency by reducing the costs of energy-efficient investment. We must also call for greater willingness to invest in energy-efficiency measures.

Electricity is the key energy source in a low-carbon energy mix. Massive expansion of renewable forms of energy is required. Europe also has a duty to support the safe use of nuclear energy, e.g. by laying down common rules on waste management. The individual Member States will remain free to choose their own energy mix.

Secondly, I would like to ensure that technologies with low or zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, such as renewable forms of energy, low-emission vehicles or CO<sub>2</sub> separation and storage, are at the top of the decarbonisation agenda. I would like to help boost the competitiveness of European industry by means of a more industry-oriented applied research and development policy, in order to bring onto the market new top-range products and future-oriented, environment-friendly energy technologies.

Thirdly, I would like to secure our energy supply by means of better infrastructure. EU expenditure should be concentrated on measures which really add European value in terms of cross-border effects, economies of scale and combating market failures. The Commission should continue to coordinate strategically important projects, such as the plan to connect the Baltic energy networks and the Nabucco gas pipeline. It should also further develop the trans-European network projects in the energy sphere, including in the Mediterranean area and the North Sea. This also includes the development of intelligent European networks, a corresponding supergrid and regional connection points.

Fourthly, I will champion expansion of the internal market for the benefit of consumers. The full and timely transposition of the third internal market package will be key to overcoming the remaining (infra)structural barriers, legal obstacles or cases of market failure. I will also promote the introduction of intelligent energy technologies, such as smart electricity meters, not least in order to make both private and business consumers more aware of the need to save energy, to facilitate their monitoring of their own energy consumption and to pave the way for improving energy efficiency and reducing energy costs.

Lastly, I will strengthen and expand the external dimension of energy policy. Notwithstanding all the efforts to diversify energy sources, we will still need a considerable quantity of oil and gas imports for many years to come. Building on the experience gained from the 2009 gas crisis, I would like to strengthen further the solidarity between Member States and the EU's ability to speak with one voice in international energy matters and to secure the supply of all Member States.

**5. What are the specific legislative and non-legislative initiatives you intend to put forward, and according to what timetable? What specific commitments can you make regarding in particular the committees' priorities and requests attached hereto which would fall within your portfolio? How would you personally ensure the good quality of legislative proposals?**

I aim to interlink the Energy Action Plan for 2010-14 with the overriding EU 2020 Strategy and the above-mentioned priorities, in particular decarbonising the energy mix and making

our energy supply more secure. If Parliament expresses its confidence in me on the basis of these aims, I will ask for Parliament and the Council to support me in order to give our energy policy further impetus.

I can assure you that my priorities fully correspond with the five priorities which you have set for the coming years. On taking up office, I would like to make a start on the following projects immediately:

- A roadmap for a low-carbon energy system by 2050. This will be a programmatic document stimulating the social debate about more sustainable energy use and energy production with regard to a common European agenda.
- A new action plan for energy efficiency. Within the framework of the debate about the European economic recovery plan, the outgoing Commission gave a commitment to Parliament to adopt an ambitious action plan on energy efficiency. I would like to proceed in two stages, in order to ensure the quality of this action plan: firstly, evaluate the measures implemented to date and the resultant conclusions. Secondly, building on that, draw up a complete action plan for achieving our 20% target, with specific short-term measures.
- An energy infrastructure package. This will contain priorities for the expansion of the energy infrastructure up to 2030 and legislative proposals for a new EU instrument for security of energy supply and energy supply infrastructure, including the TEN-E guidelines. This infrastructure package should be available in time to be taken into account during the discussions about the next EU financial perspectives.
- In addition to these initiatives, in the first half of 2010 I will report on the functioning of the internal market and the implementation of the European economic recovery plan as regards projects in the energy field. Further reports will assess Member States' progress with regard to transposing the Directive on renewable forms of energy and the rules on energy efficiency.

I would like to, and I will, work on ensuring that EU provisions are correctly transposed in the Member States, particularly in the internal-market, renewable-energy and energy-efficiency sectors. This includes instituting infringement proceedings, but also exchanging information and experience of best practice with national authorities and parliaments. I am certain that in this I can count on the European Parliament's firm support.

Lastly, I will present legislative proposals only once the relevant consultation procedures and economic, social and environmental impact assessments have been successfully carried out. We must work together to make European lawmaking simpler and more readily comprehensible.