



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from:	General Secretariat of the Council
to:	Delegations
Subject:	European Parliament plenary session in Strasbourg on 20 November 2013: Commission Work Programme 2014

On behalf of the Commission, Vice President Šefčovič delivered the speech set out in Annex I.

The following comments were made on behalf of the political groups:

- speaking on behalf of EPP, Mr Szájer said that the Commission should concentrate on the following priorities : industrialization, job creation, combating youth unemployment, support for SMEs, and Eurozone instruments. In its actions the EU should always apply the test of added-value and have due regard to the subsidiarity principle, so that it can demonstrate the benefits of action at the EU level to its EU citizens ;
- speaking on behalf of S&D, Mr Guerrero Salom called on the Commission to take decisive action on issues such as economic growth, the protection of workers across the EU (in particular those who are working in a different Member State from their own), youth unemployment, tackling inequality and the promotion of social and regional cohesion. He opposed the macroeconomic conditionality principle and regretted the reduction in funds available for the European Social Fund;

- speaking on behalf of ALDE, Mr Duff welcomed the prioritization in the Commission's work programme and stressed that the procedure for preparing it worked well between the EP and the Commission. He called on the Council to participate in the future in a joint planning and to move away from the troika presidency programmes, which were in his view partial and incoherent. He also said that the legislative performance of the EU would be improved if the European Council were to get a grip on the direction and management of the affairs of the ordinary Council business ;
- speaking on behalf of Greens/EFA, Mr Jadot said that the current negotiations on a free trade agreement with the US were being negotiated in a non-transparent manner. He called for greater transparency in order to avoid the impression that the EU cared more about multinational companies than its own citizens;
- speaking on behalf of ECR, Mr Szymański spoke of the need to reduce red tape for SMEs and develop the digital market. The internal market and free trade agreements were the only instruments available to tackle the economic crisis and should therefore be used to their full potential;
- speaking on behalf of EFD, Mr Paksas supported the Commission's programme in order to make progress on the key challenge of promoting economic recovery and reducing unemployment. He called for a EU-wide minimum wage, subsidising youth employment and a reduction in the tax burden for employers across the EU.

Vice President Šefčovič reiterated the Commission's intention to focus on delivering the greatest added value at EU level, and to contribute to economic recovery and job creation. He agreed with Mr Duff that better coordination of programming and planning with the Council was important. He pointed out that several Ministers in the GAC had declared their willingness to examine, after the European elections, the possible involvement of the Council in a framework agreement.

Check against delivery

Speech by Vice President Šefčovič, European Commission

Mr President, honourable Members, it is a great pleasure to present to this House the Commission's work programme for 2014.

This work programme is the culmination of an intense political dialogue between our two institutions, drawing on the State of the Union debate, the meetings with the Conference of Committee Chairs and the Conference of Presidents in October, this Parliament's resolutions and discussions at committee level in the form of structured dialogues.

The political dialogue helps to generate a real consensus around key political priorities. This will mean that, as we enter a year of institutional transition and elections, citizens will see that there is a real sense of direction in the European Union, a sense of purpose centred on the goals of completing the banking union and delivering on growth and jobs.

The work programme underlines the Commission's determination to keep up the pace of work to deliver the reforms we have all agreed to over the past five years.

In addition to a limited number of new initiatives, the Commission has put the focus firmly on concluding legislative work on key proposals that are already on the table. We count on Parliament's strong support for this, and we also call on the Member States to implement what has been agreed without delay.

Nowhere is that more important than on the Multiannual Financial Framework. Parliament has played a key role in reaching agreement on the EU budget, which is a catalyst for reforms, investments and support to communities across Europe, and I warmly welcome the positive vote on this chapter of the MFF yesterday. We now need to get the MFF programmes off the ground as soon as possible to produce concrete results for citizens and businesses hit by the crisis.

Honourable Members, we have worked hard under difficult circumstances to support the economic recovery and to restore the confidence of citizens and markets. We see positive signs today but we

cannot afford any complacency. We can and must go further together. The Commission launched the 2014 European Semester last week. This is now a well-established exercise with a reinforced social dimension.

But this year is, of course, the first time that the Commission has delivered its assessment of the draft national budget which it published last Friday, and work continues on the deepening of EMU while ensuring full democratic control.

That option of the Single Supervisory Mechanism is transforming the banking landscape and this needs to be accompanied by an agreement on a Single Resolution Mechanism as well as the Bank Recovery and Resolution and Deposit Guarantee Directives by the end of this parliamentary term.

We also need to focus on how the EU can help those for whom recovery still seems a distant prospect rather than a reality. Support for the young and unemployed is a particular priority. We must keep the pressure on Member States to implement the Youth Guarantee and to use European funding intelligently and efficiently to help young people.

Six Member States have already shared their draft Youth Guarantee implementation plans with us and we are working with the remaining Member States to ensure that the plans are in place by the end of the year so as to ensure that the EUR 6 billion of the Youth Initiative can be spent accordingly.

Further work on labour mobility and networking between public employment services is also underway. Access to finance is another top priority. We have agreed changes to the cohesion rules that will pave the way for the new SME financial instruments.

The Commission will also follow up on the Green Paper on the Financing of the Economy with a new initiative in 2014.

With economic recovery still fragile, we need to exploit the full potential of the single market and our trade agenda and force competitiveness across all sectors.

Europe's economy needs a modern industrial base and streamlined regulation. This Parliament has given much attention to the proposals in the two single market acts. Adopting legislation in areas

like electronic signatures, payments and switching bank accounts will not only have a direct economic knock on for the digital single market; it will also be felt directly by citizens.

Energy is a major preoccupation for many European citizens. That is why we need to keep up the work to deliver a real single market for energy. We also need to look to the long term with a long lead time for investment in energy generation. This is reason why the Commission will move ahead to start putting in place a clear framework for climate and energy policies beyond 2020.

Honourable Members, we are a community of values and at a time when our attention is directed at the economy we must not lose sight of this. Our freedoms sustain our prosperity. To grow and create jobs we must continue to safeguard and expand the freedoms of our citizens.

The EU must also protect its citizens by adapting to new threats and challenges. Concrete action in the coming months to finalise the data protection framework will have to ensure that citizens and companies can exercise their freedoms and rights in security.

The Commission will also be taking forward the reflection on the rule of law as well as feeding into the debate on the future of Europe. And let us not forget our common objective to conclude discussions on the statute and funding of European political parties in good time before the next elections.

In 2014 the Commission will continue to defend European values and interests around the world and to show that it is a positive force worldwide through effective development and humanitarian aid directed to those most in need and through an active enlargement and neighbourhood policy that will continue to make the EU an anchor of peaceful development in our region and beyond.

Mr President, honourable Members, this is the time to direct our energies towards making the most of the rest of this legislature, bringing all key proposals to conclusion and ensuring the smooth and timely start of MMF programmes.

From the beginning, this Commission has worked very closely with this Parliament, its shared objectives and its common sense of the European good. Let us maintain this spirit over the final months of the legislature and ensure that we do the maximum to show citizens what our Union can achieve: a Europe that is stronger, more united and open to the world.

Thank you very much for your attention and am looking forward to our discussions.