

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

**Margaritis SCHINAS**

**Vice-President-designate for Protecting our European Way of Life**

**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?**

My belief in the European project has structured my life since I was a student and throughout my career, which I have spent entirely in the service of the European institutions. When I witnessed my country joining the European Union, I was about to start university and felt that this was the call of my generation.

If confirmed as a Member of the College of Commissioners, I intend to invest all my experience and knowledge of the institutions for the benefit of our work and to work with my colleagues to deliver our common agenda. I have a wide experience across a range of policy issues as well as in the workings of the institution, both of which I will be able to draw on. I have worked in the European Commission for almost 30 years mostly in senior management positions and served the European Parliament as Member from 2007 to 2009.

In the various functions I have served in, I have had the opportunity to help deliver what I consider to have been crucial projects for Europe in areas ranging from transport, energy, economic affairs, health and consumers. And in my recent role as the European Commission's Chief Spokesperson in the last five years, I had an insight into all areas of the Commission's work, across all countries of the European Union. During this time, the areas of migration and security were at the top of the political agenda as were jobs, growth, diversity and inclusiveness.

As a Member of the European Parliament, I became familiar with its operation. This is a privilege for a member of the College, as I believe strongly in the importance of accountability and solid inter-institutional relations. As a member of the BUDG Committee, at the time, I was always conscious of the importance of managing European taxpayers' money in a strategic and responsible manner - for example when I was rapporteur for the funding of Galileo and shadow rapporteur for the 2009 budget of the EU.

If confirmed as Vice-President, I also intend to fully deploy any knowledge of European policies that I have come across to provide guidance across my portfolio. For example, as Head of Cabinet, in the Barroso I Commission, to the Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, I worked to ensure that food safety remained one of Europe's hallmarks by steering the management of important crises such as the spread of avian flu and by helping maintain important trade relations in a key sector for the European economy. In public health, I worked on supporting Member States in the fight against chronic diseases.

I believe that a Member of the College must also help maintain the solidarity that is in the DNA of the European Union, especially in moments of crisis and when our Member States need it the most. For example, during the Barroso II Commission, I coordinated on the ground the work of the Commission's Task Force teams for Greece. We helped, in particular, the Greek authorities define in detail the technical assistance required in support of Greece's efforts to return to sustainable growth and job creation, which was made possible thanks to the solidarity of the Union.

These experiences have left me with a deep knowledge of how the European institutions work, and the utmost admiration for the results they are able to achieve. When we work together we can move mountains, simply by seeing the world as it could be, rather than how it is. This is what motivates me.

As Vice-President, I will work, together with the members of my Commissioners Group, with all relevant committees of the European Parliament and with the governments of EU Member States. I also intend to deploy my experience in communication to engage in citizens dialogues and take the pulse of people's expectations in the areas of my portfolio. I intend to invest my knowledge from my career as an official, MEP, manager, and member of the close team of the current President of the Commission to help the new College deliver an agenda that is political, steered by the debate with the institutions and the expectations of our citizens.

The Political Guidelines of President-elect von der Leyen form the basis of our work with the European Parliament and I commit to living up to my end in full. The portfolio responsibilities attributed to me as Vice-President-designate range from education and culture, to employment, security, migration, and to health and equality. But the common thread running through all of them is people. Defending the simple but essential premise that everybody matters. That no-one should be left behind and that all should have access to the same rights and opportunities. If confirmed as a member of the College, I want to build a Union of equality in which all are granted access to the same rights, and opportunities.

I will promote gender equality in all areas of my responsibility: coordinating a Gender Equality Strategy and taking it forward; working to promote equal pay for work of equal value between genders; promoting equal access to health and education and combatting discriminatory migration practices at home and abroad. I have myself applied gender equality as a manager and as a politician in the teams and policies I had the opportunity to form a team and I intend to do the same with my future team and policy proposals as Vice-President of the new Commission.

I strongly believe in accountability and have made my declaration of interest available to the European Parliament and commit to fully complying with the Treaty and the Code of Conduct for Commissioners. I will, as I have always done in my long service in the EU institutions, act

free from instructions from external bodies and in respect of the fundamental rights and values that make the European Union what it is.

I commit to maintaining utmost transparency and making public all the contacts and meetings I hold with professional organisations or self-employed individuals on any matter relating to EU policy making and implementation in accordance with the applicable Commission 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?**

The role of Vice-Presidents is to steer and coordinate. I see my role as one of coordination, providing the guidance and steer to make sure that all areas of the Commission placed under my responsibility are working together towards the same goals. The portfolio responsibilities attributed to me as Commissioner-designate span through some of what I personally consider to be the most important areas of the Union's work. Because the thread that runs through all of the policy areas under my remit is people. People are at the centre of our work to improve education in the Union, and our work on health, our efforts to ensure the security of our Union, and to consolidate our migration policy. These are areas of work explicitly focused on improving everyday life for people inside and outside the EU. They are areas where I see the Union can really make a concrete difference on the ground. I will strive to ensure that our work in these areas remains people-focused.

As per my Mission Letter, I see my role as Vice-President bringing a significant added value in coordinating the Commission's work in three main areas: on skills, education and integration; on Security Union and hybrid threats; and on a New Pact for Migration and Asylum that combines internal and external policies.

As a Deputy Head of Cabinet in the Prodi Commission to the Vice-President responsible for Transport, Energy and relations with the European Parliament, I participated in the negotiations for an inter-institutional Framework Agreement between the European Parliament and the Commission. This experience formed my work culture both in the European Commission and in the European Parliament. A continuous, meaningful dialogue between the Commission and the European Parliament is fundamental for respecting the democratic values that underpin the European Union structure. I intend to deploy this culture fully in my new role by engaging with the Parliament during the policy-making process and as part of the political dialogue between the two institutions, including with regular involvement in parliamentary committees, trilogue discussions and plenary sessions of the European Parliament. Once appointed, I intend to propose a concrete schedule of structural dialogues with all Committees within the remit of my portfolio but also to encourage all Commissioners under my guidance as Vice-President to do so regularly and with specific agendas that will allow us to take our work forward.

I have always endeavoured to maintain close relationships with the European Parliament in all my policy tasks in the European Commission. As a Member of the European Parliament, I

learnt first-hand what it means to represent and defend a constituency's interests in the greater constellation of Europe; and how to translate Europe back into the local language. This is a principle that will guide my daily operation as Vice-President. I intend to work closely with all Committees and offer a benefit by being in a position to discuss with them all aspects that are cross-linked in my portfolio.

From my personal experience, it is crucial for our relationship to be open, transparent and based on mutual trust, and I will remain at the disposal of the European Parliament throughout my mandate, to discuss any topics that fall under my personal remit. I will also ensure that the same practice applies to my Cabinet, the Commissioners, Commission departments and services under my responsibility.

With regard to transparency, as a former Member of the European Parliament, I am fully aware of the importance this has here, but this extends far beyond Brussels. I will make public all the contacts and meetings I hold with professional organisations or self-employed individuals on any matter relating to EU policy making and implementation, in accordance with the applicable rules of the Commission. I will work with the Parliament in a transparent way and commit to working by engaging in constant dialogue, regular reporting and exchanging information with the Parliament's members. I will also ensure that the European Parliament is regularly briefed, notably before major events and at key stages of international negotiations in areas under my responsibility.

President-elect von der Leyen supports a right of initiative for the European Parliament. She committed that her Commission will follow-up on Parliamentary resolutions adopted by a majority of its members with a legislative act, in full respect of proportionality, subsidiarity and better law-making principles.

I fully subscribe to this objective and as part of the next College's commitment to a deepened partnership with the European Parliament, I will work hand in hand with Parliament at every stage in debating resolutions under Article 225 TFEU. I commit to work closely with the relevant parliamentary Committees, and be active and present during the preparation of Article 225 TFEU resolutions. I strongly believe that this will improve dialogue, foster confidence and a sense of working together towards a common goal.

Lastly, I also commit to ensuring that if a resolution is adopted by Parliament on areas within my remit, I will help ensure that the Commission follows up within the three-month deadline in accordance with the Framework Agreement.

Where the competences of the European Parliament and Council are equal, I fully commit to implementing the provisions of the Framework Agreement and of the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making, meaning that I am ready to provide Parliament with information and documents on an equal footing with the Council.

#### Questions from the Committee on Culture and Education

**3. How would you define the “European way of life” given the diversity of national cultures across the EU? What are your policy priorities in the fields of education, culture and sport? How do you assess the importance and visibility of funding programmes for education, culture and sport? How do you see interaction between the different policy areas and programmes? How can education and culture policy, for**

**example, complement each other? And how, in specific terms, are you going to ensure that the EU promotes an inclusive lifelong learning approach to education and skills, with a strong mobility dimension? Different Member States have different approaches to teaching about the EU. Do you think there is value in common EU tools to support Member States?**

The Treaty reminds us that the European Union is founded on the respect for human dignity *“in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.”* For me, being European is about respecting our diversity and promoting a way of life that champions those values of inclusion and solidarity. At its core, being European also means protecting the most vulnerable in society, at home and abroad.

The diversity of cultures in Member States and their regions is our common heritage and is what makes us European. European culture is admired throughout the world. We should celebrate this, but we also need to protect it. Our European way of life entails respecting and promoting our diversity and pluralism, upholding our common cultural legacy and stimulating the continued dynamism and creativity of cross-border cooperation.

The portfolio responsibilities attributed to me range from education and culture, to security and migration, to health and equality. These can promote a Europe which is inclusive, fair and vibrant and make a real difference to people’s lives. I want to do everything possible to harness EU policies to this end.

Education, culture and sport are about investing in people and engaging citizens across the Union. They are also about encouraging innovation. My goal will be to bring these policies closer together in the interest of European citizens. By cooperating across languages, borders and disciplines, together we can make a real difference in addressing the societal challenges and skills shortages we face. Education, culture and sport can improve our wellbeing, promote social inclusion and help create jobs and growth. Education for and through culture, as well as culture in education, are concepts which we need to develop further. I am particularly committed to using these policies to make sure people feel part of this society, and are equipped with the knowledge, life experience and skills they need to thrive. My priority will be to make sure that no demographic group is missed – from our youth, to those in work who need to learn new skills, to adults.

In the field of education, the Political Guidelines highlighted the need to provide a renewed dynamism to the ongoing efforts to create a European Education Area by 2025, which is more inclusive and accessible. We need to ensure that we see real advances in promoting access to high quality and innovation-driven education and training systems. I will work with the Commissioners for Youth and Innovation, Jobs and Equality to bring down barriers and overcome obstacles that hinder the free movement of learners, and to foster cross-border learning mobility and cooperation in education and training. The new Erasmus programme will provide opportunities for individuals, organisations and institutions, as well as for Member States, to make the vision of a European Education Area a reality: the President-elect support for Parliament's call to triple the budget of Erasmus has exactly this target in mind.

Against the background of social, demographic and technological transformations, culture can help create a feeling of community. Yet, according to Eurostat data, more than a third of Europeans do not participate in cultural activities. The cultural sector therefore needs our active support. Our established policies are very much geared towards achieving this goal. But

increased funding for the Creative Europe programme will be essential to address this negative trend in cultural participation in the EU.

When it comes to sport, one of my priorities will be reaping the benefits of sport as a uniting element of our society across the communities of our Member States. Sport can have a positive impact on society, in terms of health, social inclusion and gender equality. We need to ensure that this potential is realised, which also means action at the grassroots level.

The mutually enriching interaction of culture and education must be reflected in EU policy. Education and culture policies both have a pivotal role in promoting active citizenship and common values. By combining both policy areas, the impact on creating a sense of belonging is multiplied. Through Erasmus+, the European Commission will fund intercultural exchanges among students and support their participation in cultural heritage-related volunteering and educational projects.

We need to strengthen our educational models in order to make sure that Europeans learn – and keep on learning – throughout their lives. In our rapidly changing economy and society, we need to help people be ready for change and to adapt to the new environment – most obviously new digital needs. The Strategic Framework for cooperation in Education and Training, the European Education Area, the Skills Agenda for Europe, and the Erasmus+ programme all give a strong role to lifelong learning. Early childhood education, school education, higher education, vocational education and training, adult learning – these are all essential components in an education that delivers for citizens and for society as a whole. I believe we can work further on helping people switch more easily between different education sectors and learning contexts. For example, by providing best practices for people to continue their education and training at different steps of their career, by looking at how education and training systems can cater for more individualised education and training pathways, or through the recognition of learning outcomes achieved outside formal education settings.

I will work to ensure greater accessibility for all segments of society and in particular people belonging to minorities and people with disabilities. We also need to step up our efforts on skills development, skills anticipation and people's understanding of their own skills. This will allow us to better identify and fill skills shortages and support up- and re-skilling. Exploring the idea of individual learning accounts for people of working age should be part of this. I strongly look forward to working with the Commissioners for Youth and Innovation and Jobs to take this agenda forward.

Whilst fully respecting Member States' prerogative to organise their education system, I do believe we can do more to support efforts to teach about the EU. One step could be providing common EU tools to support Member States identifying relevant curricula, as well as tools to help teachers in the classroom. Based on the excellent experience we have with the Jean Monnet Action at higher education level, I would favour a new initiative to support Member States in sharing greater knowledge of the European Union.

The reality is that the potential to progress in this area cannot be achieved unless we have the funding required. We need strong and ambitious funding programmes in place for the future. It is also important to reach an agreement on the future Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps and Creative Europe programmes quickly, to avoid a funding gap in 2021. I will also deploy all my experience in communications to make sure that we reach out further, raise awareness about how people can take advantage of the opportunities the EU provides, as well as work to make these opportunities more accessible and more inclusive for all.

**4. As Vice-President, you are responsible for a range of policy areas that sit within different Commissioner portfolios. How are you going to work with, for example, the Commissioner for Innovation and Youth to ensure that the EU has a joined-up approach to education, culture and sport? How will coordination within the Commission work? You are specifically responsible for the European Solidarity Corps and for DiscoverEU, which, under the Commission proposal, is part of the Erasmus+ programme. How are you going to ensure an effective, joined-up approach to implementation across these programmes?**

The President-elect has clearly set out the roles of Vice-Presidents and Commissioners as part of a dynamic ‘whole of government’ approach. So many of our policies are interlinked, meaning we can only deliver by working across policy boundaries, with systems in place to exploit the synergies in full. The European Commission’s services are centres of excellence in their areas of responsibility but the organisation of the work often means that they are housed in different departments. If confirmed as Vice-President, I will draw on my thorough knowledge of the workings of the Commission to coordinate the policy fields related to inclusion falling under the Commissioners for Innovation and Youth, Jobs, Equality and Health. This will allow us to pursue our priorities in a collegial and creative way.

I have often served in positions in the institutions that required coordinating and working with various departments and Members of the College of Commissioners. I plan to work in open and collaborative ways, helping to prioritise and ensure concrete results. The Commission has considerable experience in using Vice-Presidents to help steer and coordinate work shaped by political priorities rather than institutional hierarchies, and this has proven to be an effective way to break silos and work across portfolios and teams. I see my role as ensuring complementarity and coherence between the different policy fields and capitalising on the synergies between portfolios, as well as giving added value through supporting the policy areas under my coordination. I will use the Commissioners Group I will chair as the forum to provide an overall strategic direction to this end.

One of my main tasks will be to ensure the future European Social Fund+ and Erasmus+ Fund foster social inclusion, support those most in need and help enhance labour mobility across the EU. A joined-up approach in the implementation of Erasmus, DiscoverEU and the European Solidarity Corps programmes is essential. With more than three decades of experience with the Erasmus programme and its predecessors, we have built a solid system that works, with implementation partly at national, partly at European level. It is time to take it to the next level and help Erasmus reach out to all citizens. The opportunities of the programme need to be communicated to our regions, our local communities but also to a variety of groups so that we can ensure it is a programme that reflects the principles of diversity and inclusion inherent to European societies. The European Solidarity Corps is more recent, but has benefitted from the Erasmus experience, and my intention would be to ensure that this programme moves forward fast and delivers tangible results for the years to come. I will ensure we use the Erasmus, DiscoverEU and European Solidarity Corps programmes to empower our youth, and offer new mobility opportunities. In the framework of building a Union of equality, I will also work to make the Erasmus and DiscoverEU programmes more accessible and more inclusive and believe the complementarity with the European Social Fund+ can be better exploited to this end.

**5. You have been entrusted with overseeing education, culture, sport and the integration of migrants and refugees. How do you see the role of education, culture and sport in fostering a European sense of belonging and cohesive communities and in promoting the integration of minorities, migrants and refugees, taking into account their diverse backgrounds? Which EU education, culture and sport programmes and policy instruments help to deliver on this objective and which measures, if any, are required in future?**

I believe that a new drive for inclusion across all spheres must include a strong and renewed push to further the integration and inclusion of migrants and refugees. Being European means being open to the world, extending heart and home to those less fortunate and to all those who live in our society. The imperatives of demography and labour market needs also make a strong case for greater legal migration and skills matching. Integration is key for people coming to Europe, for local communities, and for the long-term health of our society and our economy. Indeed, if we want to help our societies and economies thrive, we need to support everyone who is part of that society, with inclusion being both a right and a duty for all.

Education and training, skills and competence development are key to the successful integration of migrants and refugees. They help people to settle in new environments, thrive and contribute. Schools, museums, cultural centres and sports fields can be clearly identified as places where community-building happens. In every city and village, this is where families and neighbours meet and interact. By being involved, newly arrived migrants and refugees benefit in a multitude of ways: helping to learn the language of the host country, building a social network, using their skills or developing new ones, and acquiring a deeper understanding of the community's culture and values.

Grassroots participation in education, culture and sport all bring people closer together. They combat xenophobia, exclusion, and 'us vs. them' narratives. It allows both migrants and host communities to make the most of the skills available: almost a quarter of migrants are highly educated but they can often not put their skills to use. Over 40% are overqualified for the job they do. We cannot afford for this potential to go to waste. At the same time, almost a fifth of migrants have only primary school education and need further support.

The EU can help support Member States' efforts in this area. The existing Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals from 2016 brought together measures in fields such as education, integration in the labour market, and active participation/social inclusion. We need to take the success stories from its implementation and look at how we can develop this work further.

In education, the Erasmus+ programme already supports Member States in learning from one another and in the development of innovative practices in education, youth and sport. It brings education institutions, youth organisations and sport clubs directly together to implement common projects. It supports mobility and exchange, and works online to help teachers promote intercultural dialogue in the classroom. DiscoverEU fosters young people's sense of belonging to the European Union with new opportunities to discover Europe's cultural heritage. In the future, I would also like to see the education and cultural learning component of this programme developed further. The fact that around 275,000 young people have already applied to take part in DiscoverEU shows there is a real appetite for cross-border learning. Similarly, 160,000 young people have signed up to participate in volunteering, traineeships or job activities through the European Solidarity Corps. The integration of third-country nationals, asylum seekers and refugees is one of the areas in which the Corps' work to address

societal challenges can contribute. There is a similar focus in sport, with the #BeInclusive EU sport awards highlighting outstanding work in promoting social integration across Europe, including the integration of migrants and refugees, as well as in the work on cross-border cultural cooperation and diversity in culture cooperation projects.

These bottom-up initiatives all allow people to show their commitment to taking proactive steps to support integration. Looking at the experiences in the past and the challenges ahead of us, we must continue to build an integration ecosystem in this way, supporting vulnerable groups and promoting integration through education, youth, sport and culture. Targeted funding through the Erasmus+, Social Fund+, European Solidarity Corps and Creative Europe programmes will remain key to success.

My task as a coordinating Vice-President will be to exploit the synergies between these different funding instruments. Under the Commission's proposals for the next long-term budget, the longer-term integration of migrants and refugees has been incorporated under the European Social Fund+, whereas the initial integration of asylum seekers will continue to be addressed under the Asylum and Migration Fund. Meanwhile, the Erasmus+, Solidarity Corps and Creative Europe – Culture Funds are all separate funding instruments. This means there is great scope for developing stronger synergies in the relevant programmes to ensure we are mobilising all our efforts towards the same overarching goal of more equality and inclusion, whilst avoiding overlaps.

We will also need to look into how other EU programmes and policies can contribute to building a more inclusive society across the board. For example, there are other ways in which we could support schools in opening up to the wider community, by involving different formal and non-formal learning providers, cultural institutions, sport clubs and youth organisations. This would clearly bring opportunities to help migrant and refugee communities. Another example could be further support for teachers, educators and school leaders in professional development in inclusive teaching methods. We must also help Member States in supporting the recognition of skills and qualifications, as well as the transparency of qualifications obtained in third countries. The Skills Profile Tool for third-country nationals can be a real help in integration, supporting inclusion in labour markets and finding relevant training opportunities.

### **Questions from the Committee of Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs**

**6. What will be your key priorities within the portfolio you have been assigned to and are you ready to support a change of the title of your portfolio? Given that your portfolio overlaps, to a large extent, with the portfolio of the Commissioner for Home Affairs, can you identify specifically those areas for which you will be responsible and those for which the Commissioner for Home Affairs will be responsible? How will you ensure that there is no duplication of responsibilities that would lead to certain policy areas being overlooked? Do you commit to appear in front of the LIBE Committee when requested and at least twice per year?**

Respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, pluralism and equality between women and men – these are the values and principles upon which our Union is founded. This is what generations before us have fought for and something we should never take for granted.

Being European means protecting the most vulnerable in our midst. It means healthcare and welfare systems that all can access. It means having the same opportunities. It means ensuring that people are equipped to thrive as our society and our labour market evolve. It also means a strong European dimension for culture and sports, as building blocks for our communities and drivers for our economy. It means feeling safe on our streets, in our homes and in all of the places we like to meet, exchange, experience life together. Being European means being open to the world, extending heart and home to those less fortunate. It means standing up for the same rights, principles and values across the globe.

This is what defines Europeans and it is these values and principles that I take as my mission to promote – with my colleagues and together with you, the European Parliament. This will be the essence of my work, if confirmed.

And it is essential that this work takes place on the basis of non-discrimination, mutual respect and support for the vulnerable, including in terms of the integration of those building a new life in Europe. My priority is to make sure that we bring out the very real added value that the EU can offer in driving a cohesive and inclusive society. This means giving people the tools and support they need to grow as individuals. It means providing the secure environment and peace of mind we need. It means paying particular attention and giving particular support to the vulnerable and those in need, inside Europe but also beyond.

The role of Vice-Presidents is to steer and coordinate. I see my role as one of coordination, providing the guidance to make sure that all areas of the Commission placed in my portfolio are working together towards the same goals and that there are no duplications.

I see my role as Vice-President bringing a significant added value in coordinating the Commission's work. Firstly, on inclusion and integration, where I will work with the Commissioners for Jobs, Home Affairs, Youth and Innovation, Equality and Health and their related services to promote a Union of equality across the board, and including when it comes to the integration of third country nationals.

Secondly, on migration, where I will work alongside colleagues to build a New Pact for Migration and Asylum that combines internal and external policies. The measures to be taken therefore have to cut across internal organisational silos. We can only bring a sustainable answer through a comprehensive approach, looking at legal pathways, borders, asylum, return, and working closely with partners outside of the European Union. My job will be to ensure all these moving parts work in tandem. My work will also be to ensure that in all migration-related policies, our work remains people-focused, with solutions that are true to our values of solidarity, of humanity, and of tolerance.

Lastly, my coordinating role will bring a real added value to the Commission's work on Security Union and notably hybrid threats, where I will work with the Commissioners for Home Affairs, Equality, Internal Market and their related services and alongside the High Representative/Vice-President for a Stronger Europe in the World.

In the past few years, it has become more and more obvious that the security of EU citizens can only be delivered through a joint effort at national and EU level. My role will be to direct the work on Security Union to bring together the Commission's work across sectors and portfolio areas on denying terrorists the means to act, combatting serious and cross border crime, protecting Europeans online and fighting cybercrime as well as closing information

gaps and promoting cross border law enforcement cooperation. I will also use the geopolitical and whole-of-government approach that will be the hallmark of the von der Leyen Commission to deepen the EU's cooperation on building resilience in response to hybrid threats.

All these priorities involve a range of policy areas and investment is needed to ensure that our tools, our resources and our values come together in the most effective way. I believe this is exactly why we need the creative organisation of the College set out by the President-elect, where the overarching role of Vice-Presidents complements the policy focus of Commissioners. While every Commissioner leads the policy field of the department under their responsibility, many issues are covered by many different departments. I therefore see my role as bringing together all the angles of a policy, for instance education and skills, migration and skills or the multiple angles of security. I will maximise synergies and minimise the risk of gaps. In working with the Commissioners for Home Affairs, Justice, Equality, Health, Innovation and Youth but also Jobs or the Internal Market and indeed with many other colleagues, I will seek to bring together policies in creative ways to find common solutions grounded in our values and our responsibilities. I am also deeply committed to the Commission's role in building consensus, through openness, consultation and accountability. For this purpose, we will be setting up coordinating mechanisms with a focused agenda and a vision of concrete deliverables.

My parliamentary experience has convinced me that it is also essential to have a frank and political dialogue with the European Parliament based on openness, transparency and, mutual trust. These are areas of great public interest where it is essential that citizens can see that there is effective democratic accountability. I cannot imagine fulfilling my responsibilities as a Commissioner without a constant exchange with the Parliament and its committees, and I see part of my coordination responsibilities as chair of a Commissioners Group as ensuring a regular political-level dialogue with the Parliament on all of the issues covered. I commit to reporting to you in this Parliament whenever requested but most importantly regularly; and I intend to invest in all Committees that are linked to the areas of my portfolio in my coordinating role so as to have an understanding of all perspectives.

**7. Which forms of legal migration will you prioritise as an essential part of a holistic approach to migration in the new Pact on Migration and Asylum? How will you ensure that small-scale initiatives – such as the current labour migration pilot projects being coordinated by the Commission – will be scaled up to promote greater labour mobility at different skills levels to the EU? Will you engage to ensure that the Blue Card negotiations are unblocked and will you pursue a more coherent approach to legal migration by providing opportunity for legal migration for medium and low skilled workers based on the demands on the EU labour market? Will you commit to promoting, both internally and externally, EU legal migration tools such as the Directives on the Blue Card, Seasonal Workers, Students and Researchers, Family Reunification, and, in the future, a Union Resettlement Framework and humanitarian visa? Which initiatives will you develop to ensure the integration of third country nationals for cohesive local communities, in which exploitation is prevented? Which EU-support do you envisage for this objective?<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> If question 1 becomes redundant this question could be split in two to better reflect the provisions of Article 3(5) of Annex VII of the Parliament's rules of procedure.

Developing the opportunities for legal migration is a key priority for the von der Leyen Commission's mandate. I see legal migration as serving several objectives. Firstly, legal migration can help respond to the demographic realities and the labour market needs of the European economy in the face of a global race for talent. Secondly, it can offer a safe alternative to people who might otherwise be driven to undertake dangerous and irregular routes to Europe. Thirdly, legal migration is also a key building block in serious, long-term relationships with partners outside the EU, who want to see opportunities opening up for their citizens and who see the benefits of developing a more skilled population.

Legal migration is therefore a key part of the policy mix of a rational migration policy. But we will need to overcome hesitations in some Member States.

In taking the existing stock of EU legal migration tools forward, we should look at how they can be better enforced and implemented, at how they could be improved, and also at how we can deepen cooperation with Member States and economic stakeholders on labour migration, where several barriers hamper the capacity of the EU to attract highly skilled workers. I will invest and work closely with the Commissioners for Home Affairs and for Jobs to find a solution that responds to any concerns and unblocks the current stalemate.

An important part of our agreements with third countries will be including a legal migration component. I will work very closely with the High Representative/Vice-President and other Commissioners to ensure the coherence of the external and internal dimensions of this important policy area. The pilot projects under way show exactly the cooperation between Member States, third countries and employers needed for a productive cooperation. Building on these, I will explore modern and targeted legal migration schemes that respond to the needs of the EU economy, labour market and demographic challenges. The support provided today under the Trust Fund for Africa has proved an effective stimulus for these pilots and we will need to keep open the option of EU funding.

The effective integration of migrants legally staying in the EU is crucial for the cohesion of our societies. Large numbers of third country nationals have arrived in Member States' territory in the past years, and effective integration is both a right and a duty. The EU can play a key role in supporting Member States' efforts in this area, facilitating the exchange of good practices and mutual learning. The solutions need to be bottom up and not top down, which means supporting and working with local communities who know what works best in the area. We must build on the positive examples such as the European Partnership on Integration into the labour market and the Partnership on the inclusion of migrants and refugees under the Urban Agenda.

EU funding is a key part of this. Under the proposals for the next long-term budget, the longer-term integration of migrants and refugees would fall under the European Social Fund+, whilst the initial integration of asylum seekers would continue to be supported by the future Asylum and Migration Fund. With one of my tasks being to ensure the future European Social Fund+ fosters social inclusion, supports those most in need and helps enhance labour mobility across the EU, for me, this represents an opportunity to mainstream the integration of migrants and refugees across policy areas.

Enhancing legal and safe avenues to the EU for third-country nationals in need of international protection is an essential component in any EU migration policy as a concrete

demonstration of the humanitarian imperative that must guide our work. The fact that since 2015, two successful EU resettlement programmes have helped almost 60,000 of the most vulnerable persons in need of international protection find shelter in the EU is a source of pride, but we need to ensure the continuity of these efforts. This starts by concluding the Union resettlement framework.

I will also work with the High Representative/Vice-President and Commissioner for Home Affairs to open up new humanitarian corridors. For these humanitarian corridors to work, they need the resettlement places in the EU to back them up. The two must therefore go hand in hand.

Once the Union resettlement framework is adopted, we should consider whether additional measures for humanitarian admission are needed.

**8. As the Vice-President designate you will be responsible for the Security Union coordination, how will you ensure that the existing set of instruments in the area of security are appropriate, implemented fully and correctly and that there are no gaps? Will you continue to report on the progress made towards a Security Union by analysing which are the remaining biggest gaps of the European Security Union and how these can be addressed? Will you also analyse how existing instruments and tools are implemented by Member States, if accuracy of data is checked and if remedies - the Commission being the guardian of the treaties - are applied when need be and when fundamental rights and freedoms are at risk or breached? How will you ensure that every security-related measure proposed fully respects fundamental rights, the principles of necessity and proportionality and in particular does not entail blanket data collection or mass surveillance, and how will you address the implementation of existing measures in this regard? Will you take a firmer stance against those Members States that do not implement security measures in time by starting immediate infringement procedures?**

As underlined in the Political Guidelines, we can leave no stone unturned when it comes to protecting our citizens. The first priority set by European Council in the Strategic Agenda for the period 2019-2024 concerns the protection of citizens and freedoms. The EU can support Member States in protecting citizens, most obviously in areas with a strong cross-border dimension such as terrorism, organised crime or cybercrime, and in ensuring a strong security dimension in policies from digital to energy, financial services to borders. I will use my crosscutting responsibilities to ensure that we progress further in the creation of a genuine and effective Security Union. I also commit to continuing to produce regular Security Union reports and to reporting to the Parliament.

The EU has developed a wide range of tools and policies to support internal security. But challenges and gaps still remain that prevent us from meeting the full potential of the Security Union – and we face an ever-changing threat landscape that requires constant vigilance and adaptability.

I will work to close information gaps through the implementation of the interoperability proposals, which will be particularly important as we launch new information systems in the form of the Entry/Exit system, the European Travel Authorisation Information System (ETIAS) and the reformed European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS).

Thanks to the hard work of the Parliament, as well as the Council, these proposals have all been adopted and I am determined to see them implemented. I will place relentless emphasis on implementation of what we have collectively agreed to do. The Commission can support Member States in the implementation process by providing financial support, legal assistance and practical advice. The Commission must also use its role as Guardian of the Treaties to ensure that what has been commonly agreed is carried forward into implementation, always in full compliance with fundamental rights.

Implementing this legislation will already help improve cross-border cooperation but we need to do more to help modernise the tools at the disposal of law enforcement and adapt them to the new security environment of the digital age. We must create a better culture of cross border cooperation to help avoid the risk of organised criminals exploiting differences in national approaches or the opportunism of cyber-enabled crime. We have to pull together resources and expertise so that no Member States is left behind and no new security loopholes emerge.

All of this calls for an approach that builds on existing structures and agencies, builds dialogue with Member States, and focuses on how practical steps in EU cooperation can help law enforcement. This requires a clear legal framework, facilitating cooperation between authorities as well as with the private sector, in full respect of fundamental rights. What concerns one, concerns us all: we need to foster cooperation not just between authorities but across different communities. For example, to better address child sexual abuse online, service providers whose services are used by criminals need to work with law enforcement and with educators and social services to strengthen prevention, to better share detected abuse, to identify and rescue victims, and to identify and prosecute perpetrators. This is where the Commission needs to create the space for a productive dialogue and practical cooperation.

The strategic challenges we face today are such that we will need to do both more and better. Security is an essential element in a wide range of EU policies. We will therefore need to draw on all policies and capabilities we have, and in particular to ensure a coherent framework to coordinate effectively.

The Commission has already paid particular attention to the need to bring EU policies and instruments together in this area. As Vice-President, I intend to build on the Security Union approach of strong internal coordination. This is also the best way to ensure that fundamental rights are hard-wired into our policies in a consistent way. We need to help keep citizens safe from serious crimes and terrorist attacks – but equally, security policy can only be sustainable if it respects our fundamental rights. Both the policy objective to protect our citizens and the respect of fundamental rights need to be designed into policies from the start. This will be a key task for the Commissioners Group on Protecting the European Way of Life, with the involvement of the Vice-President for Values and Transparency, as well as the High Representative/Vice-President for a Stronger Europe in the World to better link our work on internal and external security.

It is the most basic and universal of rights to feel safe and secure in your own home. But no right is absolute and the right to security must be balanced against the right to privacy and to the protection of personal data. Compliance with fundamental rights must therefore remain a key characteristic of EU security policy, in line with the legal obligations under the Treaties. In addition to effective judicial control by the Court of Justice of the European Union, the Commission has developed several mechanisms to mainstream fundamental rights into the

formulation of legislative and policy proposals. I am fully aware of the sensitivity of this issue and of the importance of testing security measures for compliance with fundamental rights. I will also ensure we take account of rulings of the European Court of Justice. This includes full respect for proportionality and subsidiarity, and governance mechanisms allowing for redress. The European Parliament plays a key role here and I will always seek to promote and enable this.

The Commission should also continue to exercise its role as guardian of the Treaties and commence infringement proceedings whenever necessary to ensure the full transposition and effective application of EU law. This approach will also be accompanied by a full willingness to engage in discussing how to overcome any practical obstacles and help Member States move forward. This is all part of the transparent and results-based approach I would like to promote to deliver the effective Security Union citizens expect of us.