



7 July 2014

Dear MEP,

Re: Question to the Candidate President of the European Commission on increasing democratic legitimacy and engagement in the European Semester to President of the Commission

On behalf of the EU Alliance for a democratic, social and sustainable European Semester, I want to congratulate you on your election and new position in the European Parliament. We also thank you for your support under the previous mandate to the Alliance and its objectives.

The EU Alliance for democratic, social and sustainable European Semester (EU Semester Alliance) is a broad coalition bringing together major European civil-society organisations and trade unions, representing thousands of member organisations on the ground at European, national and local levels of the European Union. The EU Semester Alliance aims to support progress towards a more democratic, social and sustainable Europe 2020 strategy and semester process, through strengthening democratic legitimacy and civil dialogue engagement at national and EU levels.

We are writing to you ask whether you would consider including a specific question to the President Candidate of the European Commission regarding meaningful stakeholder involvement in the Semester Process.

We set out below the question and justification.

Question

Given the commitments made by the current Commission to increasing ownership and legitimacy in the current Europe 2020 and European Semester process, can the President say how he will increase the involvement of the European Parliament and civil society in the Semester process during the coming mandate, including the establishment of concrete guidelines on stakeholder engagement at national, and EU level and an inter-institutional agreement between the EC, EP and Council?

Background

The European Semester is the annual coordination instrument to deliver on the Europe 2020 targets economic governance goals. There is concern about the lack of balance between these different goals, and the failure to deliver on the targets. This is underpinned by the weak involvement of the European and national parliaments, as well as civil society and social organisations in the process which puts into jeopardy the ownership and legitimacy of the Semester process and the policies proposed. Assessments from NGOs' highlight the failure of this engagement, characterising it as low quality and with little impact.¹ The Commission recognized this

¹ European Alliance for a Democratic, Social and Sustainable European Semester: 2014 Proposals for Country-Specific Recommendations.

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weakness in the latest Annual Growth Surveys (13 and 14) as well as its recent stock-taking document in preparation for the European Mid-Term Review. ([Taking Stock of Europe 2020 – Feb 2014](#)).

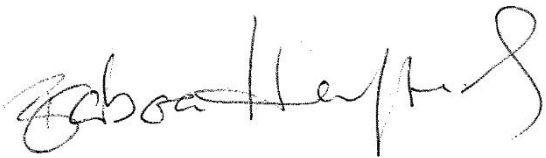
“Awareness and ownership by all relevant actors – governments, parliaments, regional and local authorities, social partners and all stakeholders – is a crucial prerequisite for success. In many Member States, the involvement of the different stakeholders in the implementation of the strategy could still be improved.

The European Commission in their communication on the European Platform Against Poverty (COM: 2010), proposed developing guidelines for stakeholder engagement but this has not been progressed. Meanwhile the Commission has shown its determination to ensure meaningful stakeholder engagement in the Structural Fund Regulations where a code of guidance for engagement has been agreed and is being currently implemented. The weakness of parliamentary engagement has been highlighted by the European Parliament in its last AGS report who called for an inter-institutional agreement with the EP, Council and Commission.

The European Alliance strongly believes that without increasing the involvement of European and national parliaments, and ensuring meaningful stakeholder engagement, particularly of civil society and social organisations, the legitimacy and effectiveness of the strategy and process will continue to be undermined.

We thank you for including this question in your presentation.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barbara Helfferich', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Barbara Helfferich,
EAPN Director and Chair of the EU Semester Alliance

For more information on the EU Alliance for democratic, social and sustainable Semester: See [here](#).

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