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315240 02.10.2014

Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety  
The Chairman

D(2014)43990



Mr Jerzy BUZEK  
Chair of the Conference of  
Committee Chairs  
European Parliament  
PHS 8B46

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Chair,

In accordance with Rule 118 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development as associated committee held a public hearing on Tuesday, 30 September 2014 with Mr Vytenis Andriukaitis, Commissioner-designate, who, subject to the positive outcome of the nomination procedure, will be responsible for health and food safety.

Prior to the hearing, Parliament had sent the Commissioner-designate a list of written questions.

Mr Andriukaitis opened the hearing by making a statement in which he referred to his intention to improve the efficiency and sustainability of national health systems, to provide equitable access to healthcare for all citizens and to promote e-Health and healthy life styles. He also highlighted the importance of ensuring the preparedness of the EU's emergency capabilities in case of health and food crises. In the field of food safety he stressed the need for an assessment of the possible simplification of food safety rules while limiting the scope for fraud and ensuring a level playing field for all operators in the food chain.

In his introductory statement, Mr Andriukaitis committed himself to working in an open and transparent manner in close dialogue with the European Parliament and all stakeholders. He also insisted on the importance of the effective implementation of EU laws, in particular the Cross Border Healthcare Directive, the Tobacco Products Directive as well as a review of the GMO decision-making process.

During the debate, the Commissioner-designate answered a wide range of questions touching upon all aspects of his portfolio.

Questions were raised relating to existing or forthcoming legislation, such as the implementation of the Cross Border Healthcare Directive and the Health Claims Regulation (in particular with regard to nutrient profiles), the revision of the Medical Devices legislation and the adoption of the final criteria for endocrine disruptors. In the field of **public health**, many questions were raised regarding the sustainability of healthcare systems and the challenges that they face in terms of different standards, austerity measures, privatisation, and corruption. Members further enquired about future action in fighting antimicrobial resistance and non-contagious chronic diseases, and in addressing unhealthy lifestyles in Europe. Last but not least, Members addressed the recognition of complementary alternative medicines, the use of innovative technologies e-Health and the interoperability of health information systems.

In the area of **food safety**, several Members touched on the issue of genetically modified organisms in relation to his mission letter, the on-going negotiations, as well as the prevention of cross-border contamination, and co-operation between Member States. Many Members insisted on the need to maintain high European food safety standards, in particular in relation to on-going Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations with the United States. The application of food safety legislation in the EU and in third countries was also raised. Some Members called for the adoption of a proposal on the labelling of the country of origin of meat in processed foods, and a revision of the current proposal on food from cloned animals. The problem of food waste in Europe was also raised several times.

Some issues of a horizontal nature, such as subsidiarity and transparency in the decision-making process, were also touched on.

During the debate, Mr Andriukaitis committed to upholding existing EU standards on food safety and health protection, in particular in the context of the TTIP negotiations, and to ensuring full transparency in the decision-making process within the EU regulatory bodies and the Commission. He committed to fully implementing the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the relevant areas within his portfolio.

At the end of the hearing, the Commissioner-designate made a brief statement in which he stressed his belief in the EU as a global leader in the fields of public health and food safety. He reaffirmed his intention to work on an equal footing with all European institutions.

#### *AGRI Opinion:*

Overall, the Commissioner-designate Andriukaitis made a positive general impression. His background as a medical doctor and as a parliamentarian, as well as his previous EU experience counted in his favour. In addition, he showed willingness to cooperate and work closely with the European Parliament.

However, on the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee's specific policy areas, the Commissioner-designate's answers were not convincing from a technical point of view or were generally vague. Nonetheless, we appreciated his scientific background and the importance he attaches to basing policy decisions on a scientific basis. He also demonstrated a better knowledge of the health policy area and we would therefore expect him to improve his knowledge of AGRI-related issues, should he be confirmed as Commissioner for Health and Food Safety.

*Overall Evaluation:*

On the basis of the responses of the Members present at the hearing, as well as the comments made by my committee's coordinators, who met after the hearing under my chairmanship, I am able to provide you with the following overall assessment of the Commissioner-designate:

Throughout the hearing, Mr Andriukaitis made an overall positive impression as an individual and especially in the field of health, which is his professional background. He made a clear pledge to the promotion and protection of health. He demonstrated that he had an overall acceptable understanding of the main issues inherent in the portfolio to which he is nominated. However, some of his replies, in particular in the areas of food safety, including food fraud, animal health and welfare and on how to reduce the administrative burden, especially for SMEs, without lowering the level of safety, were not detailed and concrete enough. Therefore, some reservations were expressed as to his in-depth knowledge in those fields and he is invited to deepen his knowledge in those areas.

No real commitments were made by the Commissioner-designate in the policy areas he will be responsible for, which regrettably seems to be a common thread running through all the hearings.

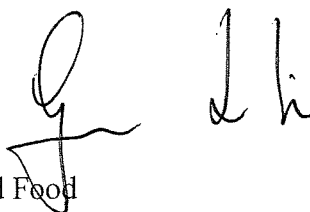
His integrity, European commitment, open attitude and independence were evident.

Mr Andriukaitis has the necessary professional and political experience to master the challenges the position of a Member of the European Commission bring with it. The coordinators, however, regretted that the competences for health technology, cosmetics, medicinal products and the European Medicines Agency, that are a significant part of the current portfolio of the Health Commissioner, have been moved to the portfolio of the Commissioner responsible for the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, and ask the President-elect to reverse this change before the plenary vote.

This represents the consensus reached among the political groups coordinators in the ENVI Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Giovanni LA VIA  
Chair of the Committee on the  
Environment, Public Health and Food  
Safety

Handwritten signature of Giovanni La Via, consisting of a stylized 'G' followed by 'L' and 'V'.