

Address given by José Manuel Barroso to the European Parliament (Strasbourg, 17 November 2004)

Caption: Following the postponement of the vote of approval, José Manuel Barroso asks the European Parliament, during the plenary sitting of 17 November 2004, to give its full support to the new European Commission.

Source: RAPID. The Press and Communication Service of the European Commission. [ON-LINE]. [Brussels]: European Commission, [09.12.2004]. SPEECH/04/484. Available on <http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/04/484&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>.

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Last updated: 03/11/2015

Speech by José Manuel Barroso, President-designate of the European Commission, to the European Parliament (Strasbourg, 17 November 2004)

Mr President, Honourable Members

Three weeks ago I suggested to “stop the clock”. Today, I believe it is the moment to start it again and submit my team to your approval.

The decision to postpone the vote was widely welcomed both inside and outside this Parliament as a means to create the conditions for a positive outcome to this process of approval; a process which shows European democracy in action.

Tomorrow you can choose to **give strong parliamentary support to the incoming Commission** and by doing so you can deliver a further victory for European democracy.

You can confirm a Commission that wants - as I clearly indicated in July when I had the honour to receive your support as President-designate - to have a close relationship with this Parliament (a “positive complicity” as I like to call it); a Commission that with your support and partnership can **drive forward a European agenda** that can make Europe matter to its citizens.

Mr President, Honourable Members

I have listened to your concerns.

You have stressed the need to have a strong and competent Commission; a **Commission for all Europeans.**

And in response I have made what I believe to be **sensible and necessary changes**, without requiring a wholesale revision of my proposed team.

In this process, I have had to respond to a number of **different, and sometimes contradictory, expectations**; both from the political families within this Parliament and from the Member States.

As you are aware, I must choose my team in agreement with each Member State. It is a shared responsibility. I therefore discussed with my colleagues in the European Council, highlighting the concerns of this Parliament and suggesting to them the changes that I felt necessary. Let me briefly outline the changes I made:

- I have brought in two new Commissioners, **Franco Frattini** and **Andris Piebalgs**, and I have changed the portfolio of **Laszlo Kovacs**.

All three of them have now met with Committees of this Parliament, providing you and the public with an opportunity to get to know them and their European vision better.

- I am grateful in this regard to the flexibility shown by the Parliament in expediting these hearings, while nevertheless ensuring a rigorous approach. This process has allowed you to put tough and serious questions to the Commissioners-designate and I believe they have acquitted themselves very well.

- In presenting my team today, I also stand by my earlier **commitments to create a new Commissioners Group on Fundamental Rights, Anti-discrimination and Equal Opportunities**, as well as to propose an ambitious **package of measures consolidating our respect for fundamental rights**. This is a cross-cutting issue. It should be in the minds of all Members of my Commission.

This is why I will myself chair the work of this group with Vice President Franco Frattini as my Deputy.

- Finally, I have also taken the other steps that I announced ahead to the October Plenary session, for

example, by putting in place very strict procedures to avoid any potential conflicts of interest in the area of competition policy.

Overall, these changes allow us to **maintain the balance of the original team**. This Commission will still contain the **highest proportion of women ever**. Its members have a broad range of political experience and in-depth knowledge of the EU.

However, we must not forget that the Commission's strength is drawn from the collegiality it embodies. The treaty foresees the approval of the College in its entirety, and so I would ask you to shift your focus and in voting tomorrow consider our capacity as a College to work with you in Europe's interest.

I can assure you of our determination to work openly and in a transparent way. I want to build on the mutual respect that we have established through this approval process and to see this reflected in a renewed framework agreement.

This will allow us to address constructively the issues reflected in the draft resolutions on which you will vote and on which I will be glad to comment tomorrow.

Mr President, Honourable Members

I want to return to my invitation to you last July to build a **partnership for Europe**; a partnership for prosperity, solidarity and security.

It is **urgent that we now get back to work**.

Both in July and last month I set out in some detail our policy priorities and concerns, so I do not wish to repeat them today. Nevertheless, whatever our priorities and objectives, we can **do more by acting together than separately**.

Let me add two comments:

First, I believe the Union, the **European Commission and this Parliament can emerge stronger** from this process of approval.

Of course, we may not agree on every issue. Like any family we will have arguments and differences.

But let me assure you that this Commission will, with your help, play its leadership role; this Commission will strive to lead a dynamic coalition, reflecting the views of this Parliament and promoting the common European interest.

Second, **with this new strength comes greater responsibility**; a responsibility to work together; a responsibility to forge a relationship built on mutual respect and shared confidence in Europe's future; a responsibility to deliver results which make a difference to the lives of Europeans.

Mr President, Honourable Members

It is time to shift the focus away from who we are and where we have come from, to where we want to go.

We must implement a **positive agenda for change**.

- We must create the **conditions for growth and jobs**, sharing **prosperity and opportunity** across the whole of the Union; to do this we must put a premium on innovation, education and research – we must leverage **knowledge for growth**. And if I refer to the economy first, it is not because it is an end in its own right; it is because a strong and dynamic economy is a pre-condition to our ambitious social and environmental goals.

- We must **reinforce European democracy**, reconnecting the Union with the people, and work towards the ratification of our **new Constitution**.

- We must reach out across our continent to **make a success of our recent enlargement**.

- We must work to improve the quality of life, anchored firmly within a **modern European model, based on economic dynamism and social justice**.

- We must reaffirm the Union's pre-eminent role as an **area of freedom and justice** and we must consolidate our **leadership in striving for peace, security and sustainable development** around the globe.

We must therefore **shape a Europe for future generations** and capture the **imagination and enthusiasm of our young people**.

Today, I ask you for your confidence so that we can start this task.

With your support, we can build a better Europe. My team is ready and anxious to play its part. So let us now get on with our job.

Thank you.