

Letter to José Manuel Barroso

Mr President of the European Commission,

First of all, I would like to congratulate you on the official support the European Council has given you as the candidate for President of the European Commission 2009-2014.

It is my honour to deliver to you the Memorandum of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. This Memorandum clearly states what the ALDE Group in the European Parliament expects of the President of the next European Commission. In this document we focus on the main priorities that we insist you include in the policy programme you are going to present to the European Parliament. Following the presentation of this policy programme we would be glad to invite you to a debate with the ALDE group.

Naturally, a second more detailed memorandum will follow once the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty has been completed and before the new Commission and its detailed policy programme will be approved.

The ALDE group already made clear several times that the support of the group for your candidacy will depend on the content of your policy programme. Moreover, we are convinced that in these turbulent and important times, more than ever, the European Commission must again become the engine of the European Union, defend the general European interest and therefore it must make maximum use of its right of initiative. Equally, the Commission must work on better and more transparent lawmaking and better implementation of Community laws.

We welcome the gender balance the Commission has pursued during the last five years, but we expect the President to insist on a higher percentage of female representatives in the composition of the next European Commission.

Next to the challenges concerning climate change where the European Union needs to maintain the lead, for the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe five concrete and ambitious initiatives are essential in our consideration of support. We ask you to commit yourself to put proposals to the European Council and the European Parliament in the following areas:

1. build a single European recovery plan in the fight against the economic, financial and social crisis. Today it is clear that Europe will not recover if it sticks to its 27 different, and often even protectionist, recovery plans. Coordination of national policies is not enough. The European Commission needs to build a coherent, common and ambitious strategy, taking into account the climate package, new technologies and sustainable investments, that will lead us out of the crisis as soon as possible and will take advantage of the opportunity to renew our economy and strengthen enterprise, especially SMEs. The Commission also needs to work out cross-border, sectoral strategies as it successfully did with the steel sector in the past and as it should do these days, more specifically with the automotive and the banking sectors.
2. install a single European Financial Supervisor. The lack of such a European Financial Supervisor is clearly proven as one of the reasons of the financial and economic crisis. Failure to insist on this will increase the risk of the disintegration of a single market in

financial services - a phenomenon that we have already begun to witness as banks have turned inwards on their own domestic markets at the expense of maintaining a presence in many Member States. In any case, the European Systemic Risk Board must have full powers in order to take binding decisions regarding cross border financial institutions.

3. introduce a European Union medium-term financial plan (2013 - 2020) based to a large extent on independent own resources. This is important for the autonomy of the European decision making process and it will end unproductive discussion between net contributing and net beneficiary countries.
4. extend the reach and coherence of European diplomacy. Making good use of the European External Action Service, the Commission has to become the driving force in organizing a more unified European position towards the outside world. Focusing on our traditional strengths of conflict prevention and crisis management, the EU must put a particular focus on human rights and democracy promotion as well as humanitarian relief missions. In addition, the Commission must see to it that the new Directive on Defence Procurement is implemented in a way that ensures the emergence of a truly common defence market, strengthening the European defence, technological and industrial base, exploiting economies of scale and ensuring that European forces will benefit from the best possible equipment whenever they are sent on ESDP missions abroad.
5. create a specific commissioner's portfolio for fundamental rights and anti-discrimination. We expect that EU citizens are granted genuine and enforceable rights, notably in the fields of equality and anti-discrimination, protection of minorities and the fight against racism, homophobia, xenophobia, anti-Gypsism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. The Commission should defend with all means free movement of people, freedom of the press, procedural safeguards for defendants and strong and universally applicable data protection rules. In particular, it has a duty to act to eliminate all forms of discrimination and ensure that all key legislation is adopted in the forthcoming mandate. In order to guarantee fundamental rights the Commission needs to increase the fight against corruption, human trafficking and organised crime.

The ALDE group is convinced that if you, as President of the next European Commission will take the initiative on each of these five points, the European Union will provide answers and solutions to the questions and concerns of its citizens.

We are eager to read your policy programme in the weeks to come and meet you to discuss this and the content of our memorandum in September.

Yours sincerely,

Guy Verhofstadt
Leader of the ALDE group.