

## Commission 2014: What's in for Health?

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The names and portfolios of the new European Commission (2014-2019) were announced on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September. Interel's Parliamentary Intelligence Unit developed an infographic overviewing relevant information that can be found [here](#).

The Commission will have a completely new structure: besides its President, Jean-Claude Juncker, it will include seven Vice-Presidents (VPs), each leading on an overarching policy area and 20 'classic' Commissioners.

The VPs will be in charge of coordinating teams of Commissioners ('project teams') whose composition will be tailored to political needs.

The overarching policy areas covered by VPs stem from the [political guidelines](#) put forth by President Juncker in his electoral Programme for the European Elections (e.g. 'Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness' or the 'Energy Union').

As for health policies, there will be important changes in the new Commission at Directorate General (DG)'s level which are overviewed below:

- 1) Directorate SANCO B (Consumer Affairs) moves from DG SANCO to DG Justice; meaning that Consumer affairs will be under the responsibility of the Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality.
- 2) Units SANCO B2 (Health Technology and Cosmetics), SANCO D5 (Medicinal Products – Authorisations, European Medicines Agency) and SANCO D6 (Medical Products – Quality, Safety and Efficacy) all move from DG SANCO to DG Enterprise and Industry. **Therefore, pharmaceuticals and medical devices will now be the responsibility of the Commissioner for 'Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship & SMEs'** - no longer of the Health Commissioner, which has been a point of major contention amongst EU Health Stakeholder Groups.
- 3) In addition, the parts of Unit ENV A3 (Chemicals) dealing with biocides, moves from DG Environment (ENV) to DG SANCO. This means that **it is possible that the leadership on the EDCs (Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals) dossier will shift from the Environment Commissioner to the Health Commissioner**. It is to recall that **EDCs dossier is meant to have a direct impact on the medical devices Regulation**.

Hence the Commission portfolios of specific relevance in the context of health policies will include:

- **'Health and Food Safety'**
- **'Research, Science & Innovation'**
- **'Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship & SMEs'**

### **Commissioner for Health and Food Safety**

As anticipated, **Dr Vytenis Andriukaitis** from Lithuania, a Socialist and surgeon who was former Health Minister has been proposed as new Commissioner for Health and Food Safety. The short biographies of all VPs and Commissioner designates can be accessed [here](#).

As stated in the mission letter sent by President Juncker to Mr. Andriukaitis, the Commissioner for Health and Food Safety will report to Vice President for 'Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness'. However, the **Commissioner for Health is not directly included in any of the VPs' project teams**. This is likely to be a reflection of Juncker's willingness to place higher emphasis on the subsidiarity principle, health being a Member States competency ultimately. This, together with the shift of responsibilities from DG SANCO to DG Enterprise lend an impression that the profile of the Health Commissioner has been somewhat watered down in the context of the new Commission. This opinion is indeed shared by major health and consumers organizations such as BEUC, EPHA or Health Action International Europe.

The two areas of responsibilities for the Health Commissioner as stated in Juncker's mission letter are from now on food safety and human health. Regarding human health, **the Commissioner's main focus will be the development of expertise on performance assessments of health systems to build up country-specific and cross-country knowledge**. This expertise is also meant to **inform the work of the European Semester** of economic policy coordination.

### **Commissioner for Research, Science & Innovation**

The Research, Science & Innovation proposed Commissioner is **Carlos Moedas**, from Portugal. He only entered politics three years ago, but he has played a major role in Portugal regarding the Troika bailout. He has however very little public profile.

The Commissioner for Research has been included in the **project team of Vice President for the Energy Union**. He will also report to the Vice President for 'Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness'; Vice President for the 'Euro and Social

Dialogue’; and Vice President for the ‘Digital Single Market’. Having to report to all the four Vice Presidents in charge of project teams is coherent with one of the main tasks he has been asked to perform by President Juncker namely ‘to **facilitate that decision making across the Commission is supported by scientific evidence**’. Other priorities will be to **make the most of Horizon 2020** with an enhanced **focus on applied research** and greater participation of the private sector.

An interesting change in this portfolio is that the **Research Commissioner will no longer be responsible for the Joint Research Centre (JRC)**. Instead, the JRC is going to be under the responsibility of the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Citizenship.

### **Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs**

The proposed industry Commissioner - now **in charge of medical devices and pharmaceutical products** - is **Elżbieta Bieńkowska**. She is **Polish** and from the center-right European People’s Party. She has earned a reputation as the Polish ‘iron lady’. Within just seven years, she won a strong position in the government (Minister for Regional Development) and the respect of the opposition.

Her complete title will be Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. **This new macro-portfolio is part of all VPs project teams** and will require major adjustments at DGs level: DG ENTR (the Directorate General on Enterprise and Industry) is to merge with DG MARKT (Internal Market).

In his mission letter, Juncker insists on Europe's need for ‘a high-performing industrial base’ to ensure it keeps global leadership in strategic sectors with high-value jobs ‘such as the automotive, aeronautics, **engineering, chemicals and pharmaceutical industries**.’ The Commissioner’s priority should be to shape ‘a renewed strategy for completing the internal market for goods and services’, including possible extension of mutual recognition ‘and new policy measures to address remaining obstacles’ At the same time, President Juncker also warns against red tape: ‘To support innovation and competitiveness, we must not come with too prescriptive nor too detailed recommendations’ - particularly for smaller firms, ‘which are the backbone of our economy’.

### **What’s next?**

The proposed Commission configuration will now have to be approved by the European Parliament. Some of the Commissioner designates have already been questioned by a number of MEPs and the road to confirmation could be rocky for some candidates who lack experience or who have what the Parliament sees as

skeletons in the cupboard. **For the time being, none of the three Commissioners profiled in this note are among the candidates perceived to be at risk of being rejected.**

The hearings at the European Parliament to assess Commissioners' capabilities will start on **29th September and end October 7th.**

- ❖ Hearings of Commissioner for Health and Food Safety -Dr Vythenis Andriukatis- and of Commissioner for Research, Science & Innovation - Carlos Moedas- will take place at the same time, on Monday 30th September, from 9 am to 12.00. Dr. Andriukatis will be assessed by the ENVI Committee (Environment, Public Health and Food Safety) whilst Mr. Moedas will be assessed by ITRE (Industry, Research and Energy)
- ❖ Hearing of Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs -Elżbieta Bieńkowska- will take place on Thursday 2 October from 13.30 to 16.30. The hearing will be conducted jointly by ITRE and IMCO (Internal Market and Consumer Protection)
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- ❖ The Committees are now finalising their written questions to the candidates who must send replies by 26 September. Each candidate will receive two general questions common to all (covering independence, European commitment etc) and three questions from the main committee responsible (two extra questions if it's a joint committee, as it is the case for Ms. Bieńkowska).
- ❖ Political groups will have speaking time during the 3 hours hearing based on the size of their Group. It will then be up to each political group to decide who gets to speak and for how long.
- ❖ The political groups coordinators will meet at the end of the hearing to evaluate the candidate and send a recommendation to the EP President.
- ❖ If the hearings go smoothly, the Commission will start working 1st of November.