

Kdo vedl (a propadl) slyšení komisařů? Zde je to, co říkají naši zasvěcení.

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POLITICO

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1. Zprávy
2. Politika

Náš tým politických reportérů rozebírá to, co potřebujete vědět o největší bruselské události roku.

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Od POLITICO

Je čas představení, zlato!

Během příštího týdne bude všech 26 budoucích komisařů EU čelit tříhodinovému grilování ze strany odborných výborů Evropského parlamentu, které prozkoumají (alespoň teoreticky) jejich pověření k dohledu nad tvorbou politik EU.

Zatímco jejich úspěch bude částečně určován politickými machinacemi mimo jejich kontrolu, Parlament bude také připraven odmítnout každého, kdo podává špatný výkon – a bruselští politici budou bedlivě sledovat jakékoli náznaky toho, co si příštích pět let připraví.

V jistém smyslu je recept na úspěch jednoduchý: Předved'te své jazykové znalosti, buďte ohleduplní k parlamentu a především neslibujte žádné výdaje.

Je to ale také zkouška ohněm pro čekající komisaře, kteří měli sedm týdnů na to, aby prohloubili své chápání portfolií, které jim předsedkyně Evropské komise Ursula von der Leyenová udělila.

Budou schopni výmluvně hovořit o zásadních problémech na jejich náplasti, nebo zákonodárci Parlamentu – z nichž mnozí strávili roky hluboko v bahně evropské politiky – odhalí velké mezery ve znalostech kandidátů?

Zde je rychlý zasvěcený názor společnosti POLITICO o tom, jak dobře se dařilo každé naději na komisaře, který bude aktualizován po každém slyšení.

Piotr Serafin , komisař pro rozpočet, boj proti podvodům a veřejnou správu, Polsko



Piotr Serafin vyšel jako politik, který zná rozpočet naruby a dokáže uklidnit nespokojené europoslance. | Nicolas Tucat/AFP prostřednictvím Getty Images

Polský poslanec Piotr Serafin předvedl při svém slyšení v Evropském parlamentu silný politický nuz, šarm a řečnické schopnosti, což bylo možná překvapivé vzhledem k jeho minulosti jako zákulisního opraváře. Celkově bylo zasedání vysoce obsahové a relativně málo politického dramatu.

Na rozdíl od mnoha předchozích slyšení na kandidáta na komisaře Serafin učinil několik přívětivých prohlášení: Rozpočet Evropské komise musí přesáhnout 1 procento hrubého domácího produktu EU; převrácení dluhu po Covidu není skvělý nápad; Brusel musí místo toho tlačit hlavní města, aby ustoupila z takzvaných vlastních zdrojů; předávat peníze daňových poplatníků velkým poradenským společnostem může být plýtvání.

Serafin byl však ohledně financování obrany – pravděpodobně nejkontroverznějšího tématu v jednání o novém rozpočtu, které přesahuje jeho platovou třídu – těsný – a vyhýbal se uvádět konkrétní údaje o výdajích.

Nominovaný polský komisař se ukázal jako prostý politik, který zná rozpočet naruby a dokáže uklidnit nespokojené europoslance. V ústupku mnoha zákonodárcům zatloukl poselství, že místní orgány jsou pro rozpočet EU zásadní a že model obnovy po Covid by měl být přizpůsoben tak, aby místní orgány a sociální partneři zůstali v kontaktu.

— *Gregorio Sorigi a Aitor Hernández - Morales*

Verdikt výboru EP: Ano

[Zpět nahoru](#)

Valdis Dombrovskis, komisař pro ekonomiku a produktivitu, implementaci a zjednodušení, Lotyšsko



Valdis Dombrovskis zvládl více než tříhodinové slyšení jako profík. | Nicolas Tucat/AFP prostřednictvím Getty Images

Pro Lotyšské Valdise Dombrovskise, veterána z EU, to byl známý tanec, ale přesto je třeba ho brát vážně. Poslání, které mu svěřila Ursula von der Leyen, je možná méně prestižní než předchozí role, ale není o nic jednodušší.

Nominovaný na komisaře pro ekonomiku a produktivitu, implementaci a zjednodušení se má ujmout funkce hlavního investičního koordinátora s hlavní odpovědností zaměřenou na sladění finančních prostředků rozdělovaných na národní a evropské úrovni a snižování byrokracie.

Dombrovskis zvládl více než tříhodinové slyšení jako profík, proměnil své znalosti oboru, ale také schopnost vyhýbat se nejzákladnějším otázkám – umění zdokonalované během dlouhé politické kariéry.

Často opakoval svůj závazek usnadnit malým firmám podnikání omezením byrokracie, aniž by došlo k narušení sociálních a ekologických norem bloku. Zároveň se zavázal rozšířit počet hráčů určených k zátěžovému testování stávající regulační zátěže.

Přesto se nikomu – a mnozí se o to pokusili – nepodařilo dosáhnout toho, co si skutečně myslel o vydávání společného dluhu jako o způsobu, jak zvýšit „masivní investice“, které EU potřebuje k odstranění rozdílu v produktivitě se svými klíčovými konkurenty.

Dombrovskis v místnosti řekl, že podporuje větší roli rozpočtového podniku EU, ale zastavil se před tím, aby překročil červené čáry stanovené jeho šéfkou Ursulou von der Leyenovou nebo kompetence svých kolegů. "Já v tom nevedu," odpověděl na otázku ohledně financování.

The only small loss of composure came when - a day after Donald Trump was reelected to the White House - he made his feelings about the Ukraine war clear, highlighting the importance of keeping funds flowing to the aspiring EU member state.

As expected, his approval came quickly. And overall, his performance was as solid as you would expect from a Commission veteran.

— *Giovanna Faggionato*

EP committee verdict: Yes

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Marta Kos, Commissioner for Enlargement, Slovenia



Marta Kos' road to Brussels was among the most politically explosive of all the commissioner hopefuls. | Nicolas Tucat/AFP via Getty Images

When it came to it, the parliamentary hearing of Marta Kos, Slovenia's nominee for the European Commission, was less dramatic than the build-up.

Her road to Brussels was among the most politically explosive of all the commissioner hopefuls, after Slovenia's first pick, Tomaž Vesel, withdrew under pressure from European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen for more women in her top team. There was then a protracted delay as the Slovenian parliament refused to complete the nomination process.

But Kos clearly showed she was on top of her subject matter, talking ably about countries from Albania to North Macedonia during a closely watched hearing in the European Parliament, where ambassadors from Ukraine and Turkey were in the room.

She repeatedly stressed the "merit-based" approach she would take to enlarging the bloc to include new countries, promised a new communication strategy to sing the praises of enlargement and pledged to support Ukraine's efforts to join the EU.

At times, national Slovenian politics overshadowed the hearing, with David McAllister, the German MEP chairing the foreign affairs panel, stepping in to calm things down. The main attack line from the far-right Patriots group and also parts of the Slovenian EPP (linked to former PM Janez Janša) was the allegation that Kos spied for the Yugoslav secret service — something she forcefully and repeatedly denied.

Kos also cleared up some outstanding issues regarding possible conflicts of interest. For example, she said that she had earned less than €5,000 from her work as a consultant; and also promised to sell her own boutique consultancy based in Switzerland if she was confirmed.

— *Eddy Wax, Max Griera and Elisa Braun*

EP committee verdict: Yes

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Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner for Climate, Net-Zero and Clean Growth, the Netherlands



Frederick Florin/AFP via Getty Images

Returning climate chief Wopke Hoekstra breezed through his confirmation hearing, skillfully dodging thorny questions and earning applause for slapping down climate-denying questions from far-right lawmakers.

While he had a few clear messages for MEPs — notably pledging no backtracking on existing green policies and reiterating his support for a 2040 climate target of 90 percent — Hoekstra strenuously avoided going into detail on trickier topics.

He spent more time on explaining why the green transition needs to be socially fair than on how he plans to ensure that it is, didn't spell out how to achieve the 2040 target, declined to say whether he'd include removals in the EU's carbon markets, and didn't specify how he intends to prepare Europe for climate disasters. (He could propose legislation on climate resilience, he said, but only if needed.) Occasionally, he outright ignored questions.

Still, his answers were good enough for MEPs, with Hoekstra managing to strike a delicate balance between giving enough climate commitments to the Greens while reassuring conservatives with

promises of dialogue and support for industry. He appeared equally — or perhaps even more — confident on taxation, insisting that he would push for measures to make big polluters pay.

— *Zia Weise*

EP committee verdict: Yes

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Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare, Hungary



John Thys/AFP via Getty Images

We knew Olivér Várhelyi’s hearing was going to be a tough one. The commissioner-designate for animal welfare and health came into a room packed with MEPs who were bound to hold a grudge over his ties to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and, of course, his having called them “idiots” not so long ago.

But despite the poor prospects, it wasn’t a disastrous hearing: “Better than expected” is the feedback we received from several MEPs afterwards. Over the three-and-a-half-hour hearing, Várhelyi

explored some of his commitments for the next mandate, including working on a revision of the Medical Devices Regulation, delivering a Critical Medicines Act within the first 100 days and moving forward with a ban on cage farming.

Of course, it wasn't all smooth sailing. MEPs grilled him over women's rights, vaccines and his past controversies, creating moments filled with gasps, applause and occasional walk-outs. Some of the most heated moments concerned Hungary's approach to abortion, with multiple MEPs probing Várhelyi's commitment to safe access to abortion in the EU. He repeatedly answered that abortion isn't a medical issue or an EU competency, disappointing MEPs.

— *Claudia Chiappa, Paula Andres Richart and Mari Eccles*

EP committee verdict: Undecided. Várhelyi was unable to convince all groups to approve him and committee coordinators decided to ask for answers to a second round of questions, due by Monday.

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Andrius Kubilius, Commissioner for Defense and Space, Lithuania



Pool photo by John Thys via AFP/Getty Images

Two-time Lithuanian Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius deployed humor, a raft of EU defense acronyms and real talk on Russia's military ramp-up to get through his three-hour hearing in the European Parliament on Wednesday.

The vision he outlined, just hours after the victory of Donald Trump in Tuesday's U.S. presidential election, was a stark one: Russia will spend more on defense in 2025 than the entire EU27, while the U.S. will inevitably be distracted by China and less concerned with European security.

That means it's time for the EU to tool up, and quick.

In light of that threat environment, Kubilius urged that the EU budget be leveraged to spend more on defense, and that the bloc prefer cross-border, multicountry projects over purely national initiatives. Lithuania alone needs some €10 billion by 2028, he said, but only around €1.5 billion has been allocated in total EU extra spending.

The EU and NATO, Kubišius warned, need to brace for Russia to test their “resolve” by the end of this decade by “ bringing a genuine European Defense Union to life.”

“Not to wage a war,” he cautioned, “but to maintain peace.”

To pay for it all, Kubišius told MEPs he expected “substantially larger spending lines for defense and space in the next [EU budget],” and said he was hopeful, after speaking with officials from the European Investment Bank (EIB), that “we can ... open the door” for the EIB to invest in defense.

Kubišius’ space program, meanwhile, will be centered on boosting private rocket companies and finding ways to get more out of the bloc’s existing satellite programs.

Oh, and on trying humbly to get Elon Musk to comply with a coming EU Space Law that aims to set global rules of the road for orbit.

— *Tom Nicholson and Joshua Posaner*

EP committee verdict: Yes

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Jozef Síkela, Commissioner for International Partnerships, Czech Republic



Olivier Hoslet/EPA-EFE

Despite a sometimes tentative performance, Jozef Síkela received enough support from European lawmakers to be confirmed as the bloc's next chief for development cooperation. The center-left Socialists and Democrats group said it would throw its weight behind him.

It was by no means a stellar hearing for the Czech politician, who displayed a shallow knowledge of development issues and sometimes struggled to find the right words to make his points. He also missed the mark in answering some of the most burning questions posed by lawmakers — for instance on the European Parliament's involvement in the Global Gateway infrastructure initiative, or on gender issues.

Síkela did shine when asked about money, funding and investments, however, thanks to his background in investment banking. A one-liner he repeated a few times summed up his pitch: "I was selected to turn the Global Gateway from a startup into a scale-up."

He answered most questions in English, but clearly felt more comfortable speaking German whenever a German-speaking lawmaker threw him a query. He only responded to one question in his native Czech.

A tricky moment for Síkela came on the European Union's memorandum with Rwanda on building up sustainable supply chains for raw materials. Grilled by several French MEPs, he was told the deal is leading to smuggling from Rwanda's war-torn neighbor, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In an awkward response to Greens MEP Mounir Satouri, Síkela claimed "my level of information is not as dramatic as you told me."

On how development funding can reduce irregular migration, Síkela balanced his answers between not committing to forcing fund-receiving countries to take their citizens back while acknowledging that the Global Gateway can help by boosting economic growth and giving people an economic future at home.

— *Koen Verhelst*

EP committee verdict: Yes

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Costas Kadis, Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans, Cyprus



Olivier Hoslet/EPA-EFE

With the European Union facing increasing challenges from falling fish stocks, fishing quota fights with the United Kingdom, and Russia's shadow fleet cruising its waters despite sanctions, Costas Kadis promised MEPs he would steer a steady course.

The Cypriot commissioner-designate for fisheries and oceans did well in his three-hour faceoff with lawmakers during his European Parliament hearing, proving he had expertise on some of the key issues that occupy the fisheries committee.

Throughout the hearing, Kadis insisted he was committed to supporting small-scale fishers amid international competition and that he valued the role of fisheries and aquaculture in European food security. Kadis said he would work to "secure more support [for] this very important part of our sector," emphasizing his academic background in conservation biology and his recent experience as environment minister in Cyprus.

That's not to say the biologist by trade passed with flying colors, however. Kadis dodged several of the trickier questions posed by MEPs, including on the revision of the strategy for the Baltic Sea and

on whether the European Commission should revise the Common Fisheries Policy.

Of the European Oceans Pact, Kadis said it should remain soft law, something that didn't go down well with S&D and Greens MEPs in particular. He also left MEPs in the dark over whether they should expect more funding as part of the next budget.

Overall, though, it was a decent performance from the bookish Cyprus technocrat.

— *Marianne Gros and Louise Guillot*

EP committee verdict: Yes

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Hadja Lahbib, Commissioner for Preparedness, Crisis Management and Equality, Belgium



Nicolas Tucac/AFP via Getty Images

Belgian Foreign Minister Hadja Lahbib exceeded all expectations in her hearing, in terms of both performance and familiarity with her portfolio.

Despite her controversial reputation in Belgium, she remained calm and decisive throughout her hearing, fending off sensitive questions about her political past — whether the scandal concerning visas for Iranian officials or her visit to Crimea — in a politically adroit manner.

During the 3.5-hour hearing, MEPs mostly focused on her equality portfolio, asking about gender equality, sexual reproductive health, abortion and women's rights, but occasionally delved into preparedness, challenging the commissioner-designate on her plans to prepare Europe to face future crises.

Through it all, Lahbib demonstrated a clear grasp of her files and jumped with ease from one question and topic to the next, listing off various commitments and plans for her mandate as commissioner.

Her choice to answer all questions in her native French, in which she feels far more at ease, clearly helped. Only her opening and closing statements were delivered in (much-improved) English. After this hearing, the only way Lahbib wouldn't sail through is if her assessment is politically linked to other hearings.

— *Claudia Chiappa and Barbara Moens*

EP committee verdict: Yes

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Maria Luís Albuquerque, Commissioner for Financial Services and Savings and Investments Union, Portugal



Nicolas Tucac/AFP via Getty Images

Style-wise, Albuquerque sailed through Wednesday's three-hour hearing, which happened to coincide with Donald Trump's being confirmed as the winner of the U.S. election.

The political news from across the pond, however, didn't fluster the former Portuguese finance minister. Albuquerque stayed focused throughout, handling technical questions without breaking a sweat while politely fending off provocative jibes about conflicts of interest. While she chose to speak mostly in English, demonstrating a good command of the language, she happily addressed questions from Portuguese colleagues in her native tongue.

The slick performance enhanced her already good chances of being confirmed, even though her reluctance to be drawn on specific policy points was noted.

Throughout the hearing, Albuquerque focused mostly on talking points already stressed in her mission letter and in her written replies to MEPs' questions.

When pressed for specifics she was evasive, deferring commitments on policy until her position was secure. She also repeatedly sidestepped questions about her tenure as finance minister in post-crisis Portugal, while downplaying concerns over her frequent shifts between public-sector roles and the finance industry.

But it wasn't all dodgeball. Albuquerque reassured the room that she was open to various approaches to breaking the deadlocks currently plaguing the sector, such as how to deepen the EU's private investment pool and how to move ahead with establishing an EU insurance scheme for bank deposits.

She also provided some concrete thoughts on already-decided rules for banking and green finance, noting the EU should stay the course because it was important to focus on financial stability to avoid another economic crash.

Overall, the substance of the meeting set the scene for many of the conflicts that will define Albuquerque's first months in the job.

As expected, all parties voted in favor of the Portuguese nominee except The Left and the far-right Europe of Sovereign Nations group, according to two people in the room.

Albuquerque will now be expected to offer concrete ideas about how to create a "savings and investments union," by getting savers investing and by helping money to flow more easily within the bloc. She will also be under pressure to cut red tape across the industry, which is fed up with five years of dense rulemaking by the outgoing Commission. Finally, she will need to decide whether to extend the EU's recognition of U.K. clearing, in areas where the EU still depends on the U.K., in what could prove a politically awkward post-Brexit hangover.

Overall, a strong performance from Albuquerque — but the ghosts of her past, and the entrenched conflicts blocking the EU's progress on finance issues, may still return to haunt her.

— Kathryn Carlson

EP committee verdict: Yes

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Magnus Brunner, Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, Austria



Nicolas Tucet/AFP via Getty Images

In his parting words to MEPs, Brunner said he had been warned against the migration and internal affairs portfolio as a “mission impossible” that is “politically highly charged.” Clearly he took those warnings to heart, delivering a cautious and at times dull performance, revealing little to the assembled MEPs.

Legislators saw a commissioner-hopeful who knew what not to say — he didn’t slam Italian PM Giorgia Meloni’s plan to detain asylum seekers in Albania, for example — but nor did he give his audience much to get excited about, even when pressed. His safe performance served him well, as enough political group whips waved his appointment through.

Brunner did commit to a new deportations directive, but told lawmakers they should not expect a proposal before June 2025 and only after broad consultations with stakeholders. He also pledged that, as a guardian of the treaty, he'd trigger "necessary proceedings" if countries don't implement the asylum and migration pact. And he repeatedly said he'd insist on an approach that's "fair and firm" (without explaining how.)

Asked several times whether he would support EU cash to finance physical barriers on the bloc's external borders, Brunner said "physical infrastructure such as fences and walls could be financed by European funding, in terms of legality. But we do not have funds in place for now." However, he vowed to have funding for border management "reflected" in the next EU budget.

He paid homage to the importance of boosting the EU's internal security, and despite frequent prodding by lawmakers failed to take a strong stance against EU countries that have reinstated checks on borders in the free-travel Schengen zone. (The list includes his own country, Austria.)

He also dodged questions on search-and-rescue operations, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the Hamas militant group and anti-Christian hatred.

Brunner did, however, commit to launching a new strategy for internal security; to an action plan against drug trafficking; to a port strategy; and to enhancing Europol capacities.

— *Hanne Cokelaere and Max Griera*

EP committee verdict: Yes

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Jessika Roswall, Commissioner for the Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy, Sweden



Nicolas Tucac/AFP via Getty Images

Sweden's Jessika Roswall doesn't have the longest track record in environmental policymaking — and that showed during her hearing.

The Commissioner-designate for the environment, water and the circular economy faced tough questions on virtually every single topic relevant to her extensive portfolio, from encouraging farmers to decarbonize their businesses and to protect biodiversity, to harmonizing the management of waste by EU countries and creating a single market for secondary materials. In light of the disastrous floods that hit Valencia, Spain last week, the Commissioner-designate was grilled on her plans to ensure the EU was better prepared for increasingly frequent climate events, flood risks and water scarcity.

Just as she had done in her written answers to MEP questions, Roswall tried to thread the needle between lawmakers asking for an unwavering defender of the EU's green agenda, and those who want her to protect European businesses at all cost. "A competitive economy and a clean transition goes hand in hand," Roswall said.

Overall, however, the 51-year old lawyer gave a disappointing performance. Appearing increasingly less confident as the hearing went on, Roswall repeatedly dodged questions from MEPs on whether she would back the creation of a new biodiversity fund, which product groups would be covered by the Ecodesign regulation, or when MEPs could expect a timeframe for her proposed ban on PFAS in consumer products.

MEPs were not impressed.

— *Marianne Gros*

EP committee verdict: Yes

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Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner for Energy and Housing, Denmark



Nicolas Tucac/AFP via Getty Images

No stranger to the European Parliament after serving as an MEP for almost a decade, Dan Jørgensen clearly knew how to please the crowd. The Danish commissioner-designate cleanly navigated

difficult questions on affordable housing, energy costs and renewables during his hearing — while drawing repeated laughs from MEPs.

Jørgensen faces a mammoth task: bringing down energy prices in the EU, which is essential to the bloc's plans to remain competitive with the United States and China. In pursuit of that aim he vowed to focus on renewables and energy efficiency, better grid infrastructure, increased digitalization, faster permitting and new technologies such as carbon capture and green hydrogen.

Still, there was one area where the former Danish climate minister struggled to please everyone: nuclear power. Although calm and charismatic, Jørgensen repeatedly refused to throw his support behind atomic energy, which displeased pro-nuclear lawmakers. He also rejected the idea of pumping EU cash into new nuclear projects, and cast doubt on the imminent rollout of advanced small-scale reactors known as SMRs.

He was also wishy-washy at times, refusing to provide details or timelines on overhauling EU state aid rules, on phasing out Russian energy, and on where he will find the money to enact his ambitious agenda.

But hey, at least he was entertaining. Pressured by French MEP Christophe Grudler for being insufficiently pro-nuclear, and by German MEP Jutta Paulus for being too supportive of nuclear, he asked Paulus: “May I suggest you go to a room with Mr. Grudler and sort this out?”

— *Victor Jack*

EP committee verdict: Yes

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Dubravka Šuica, Commissioner for Mediterranean, Croatia



Nicolas Tucac/AFP via Getty Images

The 67-year-old Croatian center-right politician was clearly pursuing a no-risk strategy of doing just enough to get lawmakers' approval for a second term on the Commission.

Questions about Israel's war in Gaza and migration dominated proceedings, with Šuica repeatedly asked to condemn Israel's actions or to take action by suspending an EU-Israel trade agreement.

But Šuica stuck to the narrow tram tracks laid down in the instructions she received from Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and toughed out the entire three-hour hearing without wavering from her center-right European People's Party's typical stance on the Middle East conflict. Namely: calling for a two-state solution, describing the Oct. 7 attacks as "unjustifiable," and deploring the humanitarian situation in Gaza while refraining from laying blame at Israel's door.

She promised to continue funding the United Nations Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA) along with the Palestinian Authority.

Her new Mediterranean portfolio appeared to be full of age-old and intractable problems, concerning not just the Middle East but also migration, where the EU is seeking to take a tougher line.

Here, she sketched out a desire to strike new “comprehensive partnerships” with Jordan, Morocco and other countries in the image of deals struck with Tunisia and Egypt. MEPs appeared to win some concessions from her to scrutinize the often flawed human-rights dimensions of these deals.

She also told MEPs how she intends to work with the EU’s likely next foreign affairs chief, Kaja Kallas. “Her role will be more on [a] diplomatic track and my role will be more on the economic track,” Šuica said.

— *Eddy Wax*

EP committee verdict: Yes

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Michael McGrath, Commissioner for Democracy, Justice and Rule of Law, Ireland



Nicolas Tucac/AFP via Getty Images

This was a solid performance before European lawmakers with no slip-ups or signs of misunderstanding.

It delivered exactly what you'd expect from an aspiring democracy chief: numerous mentions of EU treaties and fundamental rights; a firm “political will” to challenge member states weakening rule of law; a promise to avoid “double standards”; and a clear commitment to uphold the primacy of EU law.

McGrath's priorities included enforcing the bloc's new media freedom rulebook and the upcoming Digital Fairness Act to tackle social media's addictive “business models” that can harm children online. And he pushed back on the idea that the General Data Protection Regulation harms innovation, saying the EU can enjoy high standards and benefit from new tech.

While he didn't go overboard on details around the new job, he did dodge loaded questions from far-right lawmakers, triggering rounds of applause from the other groups. And the seasoned politician very

much played to his audience, citing his career as a parliamentarian and regularly praising and promoting the role of the European Parliament. A smart move.

— *Mathieu Pollet and Sam Clark*

EP committee verdict: Yes

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Ekaterina Zaharieva, Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation, Bulgaria



Nicolas Tucac/AFP via Getty Images

Zaharieva's strategy to survive her hearing was clear: Pick a couple of priorities that would resonate well with lawmakers and double down on them.

Within the first hour, Zaharieva managed to clearly convey two of her main talking points: to simplify and cut red tape in Horizon Europe, the EU's main research funding program, and to push EU countries

to finally reach their target of spending 3 percent of GDP on research and innovation.

It made for a strong first 60 minutes. Lawmakers have long called for both of these things, so Zaharieva was telling them what they wanted to hear. The only dissent came from The Left lawmaker Per Clausen, who pressed Zaharieva on EU research funding for Israel — but she managed to avoid controversy.

After that, it fell a bit flat.

Zaharieva kept repeating the same lines, on simplification in particular, without ever really going into detail. But lawmakers also seemed to run out of steam, refraining from pushing her to give more details. At one point she was called out for dodging a question. Meanwhile, some major policy files promised by Ursula von der Leyen and falling under Zaharieva's remit — such as the long anticipated but still mysterious life sciences strategy, comprising new legislation to support biotech development — were largely omitted from the discussions.

“I don't know what else to add,” Zaharieva said at one point, inadvertently summing up the hearing's final hour.

— *Pieter Haeck*

EP committee verdict: Yes

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Apostolos Tzitzikostas, Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism, Greece



Greek politician Apostolos Tzitzikostas maneuvered his commissioner hearing like a seasoned veteran. | Nicolas Tucat/AFP via Getty Images

Greek politician Apostolos Tzitzikostas maneuvered his commissioner hearing like a seasoned veteran, deftly reminding the transport chair of his speaking time, addressing potential conflicts of interest head on and even navigating multiple interruptions from protesting MEPs.

The 56-year-old economist appeared well informed, with eloquent responses and occasional quips, though his answers largely lacked detail — even after multiple questions probed him for specifics.

The crisis surrounding the automotive sector took up a large chunk of the session, but automakers hoping to find an ally to reverse legislation mandating that sales of new vehicles be 100 percent zero-emissions by 2035 left disappointed. Carmakers have had plenty of notice, he said, and the legislation creates certainty for the sector. The European People’s Party, however, received its desired commitment on an exception to the law for e-fuels.

TRAN Committee Chair Eliza Vozemberg, a fellow Greek, presided over the hearings, showing just how much control the Southern European country will have over the transport portfolio — and the potential for conflicts of interest. On two separate occasions, lawmakers disrupted the proceedings to protest Tzitzikostas' nomination.

The 2023 train crash in Greece that left 57 people dead loomed over the proceedings, but Tzitzikostas didn't shy away from the controversy, instead preemptively bringing it up during his opening remarks. But his repeated insistence that safety will be his No. 1 concern did little to stifle questions as to how he would handle a potential infringement case over the rail tragedy.

In the end, he demonstrated his political chops, sticking to his talking points and maintaining his energy throughout while promising that the details of his proposals would be revealed — after his confirmation, of course.

— *Jordyn Dahl*

EP committee verdict: Yes

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Christophe Hansen, Commissioner for Agriculture and Food, Luxembourg



Luxembourg's Christophe Hansen had a truly impressive hearing. | Nicolas Tucac/AFP via Getty Images

Luxembourg's Christophe Hansen had a truly impressive hearing, at various moments brain-wrinklingly interesting, gut-wrenchingly funny, and heart-breakingly sad. The 42-year-old won half a dozen rounds of applause during the session as he deftly addressed tricky policy problems and personalities.

After a polarizing year for EU agriculture, the MEP could have fallen foul of several issues. The Socialists were grumpy that their *Spitzenkandidat*, Nicolas Schmit, hadn't got Luxembourg's nomination; Hansen chose to ignore the far-right Patriots and Europe of Sovereign Nations folk in his pre-hearing lobbying; and as its rapporteur in ENVI, he's tied to the increasingly controversial (and now delayed) deforestation law.

But it all went swimmingly. Hansen stuck to the center on most issues, promising fair pricing for farmers, environmental mirror clauses on agrifood imports, and generational renewal in farming. He veered conservative on some issues, refusing to legislate on

Europeans' meat consumption, downplaying the scale of livestock emissions, and criticizing the idea of an agri-emissions trading system, or ETS.

He leaned progressive on others, defending his deforestation law, hinting that farmers' fears over Ukraine's accession were overblown, and even coming out in favor of the EU-Mercosur free trade deal (nearly taboo in agrifood circles).

One moment will stay with MEPs, however. Asked about the high number of farmer suicides, Hansen grew solemn and told the story of his brother, who took over the family farm then spent decades working exhausting hours, facing constant insecurity and navigating byzantine regulations. Last year, aged 55, he fell down the stairs and died. It was an accident, Hansen said, but one related to the stress of keeping the family farm going — and an experience that informs Hansen's own view of agriculture.

— *Alessandro Ford*

EP committee verdict: Yes

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Glenn Micallef, Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport, Malta



At 35, Malta's Glenn Micallef is the youngest EU commissioner nominee, and was joint first to face MEPs. | Nicolas Tucat/AFP via Getty Images

At 35, Malta's Glenn Micallef is the youngest EU commissioner nominee, and was joint first to face MEPs. Despite never having held political office, he was largely successful in battling the pre-hearing narrative that he is too young and inexperienced to be a commissioner.

Micallef pulled off some tricks that scored him points among culture committee lawmakers and — crucially — didn't screw up on the content (of his rather light portfolio of intergenerational fairness, culture, youth, and sport). He kicked off by referring to his time as a Parliament intern (and closed with an outstretched hand to lawmakers); spoke Maltese when addressing a question on multilingualism; and emphasized the importance of diversity after a controversial gender-in-sports-question — all of which went down well.

Culture, youth and sports are competencies in which the European Commission depends heavily on goodwill from EU countries (a fact Micallef acknowledged) and where the commissioner-in-charge has to team up with colleagues (which he repeatedly vowed to do).

“Intergenerational fairness” was a key pitch by von der Leyen in her bid for a second term at the head of the European Commission, but EU lawmakers didn’t go in very hard on it.

Helping Micallef was the fact that his portfolio contains nuggets that everyone cares deeply about but that aren’t too divisive, such as the impact of social media on the mental health of young people, and the immensely popular Erasmus + exchange program.

Yes, he once mixed up the names of two colleagues.

Yes, he had soundbites that became repetitive (such as that Europe has a “rich and diverse tapestry”).

And yes, he stuck to the script and gave rather general answers.

But who’s to blame him? Not European lawmakers, we reckon.

— *Pieter Haeck*

EP committee verdict: Yes

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**Maroš Šefčovič, Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security,
Interinstitutional Relations and Transparency, Slovakia**



Maroš Šefčovič walked a fine line between conflicting allegiances during his confirmation hearing in the Parliament on Monday. | Nicolas Tucac/AFP via Getty Images

Maroš Šefčovič walked a fine line between conflicting allegiances during his confirmation hearing in the Parliament on Monday. He said he'll be tough on Beijing, putting some distance between himself and the man who nominated him to Brussels.

As the longest-serving current commissioner, Šefčovič sailed through the hearing, navigating with ease questions from European lawmakers that included the bloc's fraught relations with China and, potentially, the United States. He was careful to balance national sensibilities, such as on trading with the Mercosur group of countries, an agricultural colossus, or with Ukraine.

But with his fresh suntan and shiny white teeth, Šefčovič was also careful to show he's not a crony of Robert Fico, the Slovak prime minister whose country could be turning into an illiberal state along the lines of Viktor Orbán's Hungary.

Šefčovič was eager to point out that the pro-China lines of the Slovak government — which included a meeting between Fico and China's Xi Jinping on Friday — would not stand in the way of his job as EU commissioner.

Navzdory otázkám několika skupin na toto téma však mlžil ohledně toho, jak přesně hodlá Brusel čelit levnému dovozu Číny do bloku a zda Evropská komise navrhne nový nástroj na ochranu obchodu.

— *Camille Gijs a Koen Verhelst*

Verdikt výboru EP: Ano

[Zpět nahoru](#)

OPRAVA: Tento článek byl upraven tak, aby objasnil, že Kubilius řekl, že Litva potřebuje do roku 2028 výdaje na obranu ve výši 10 miliard eur.