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Fundamental rights and migration under Team Juncker

Green MEP Judith Sargentini on the provocative candidate choices

So, overall, are you happy with the proposal from Jean Claude Juncker?

While President-elect Juncker has made positive sounds as regards the need to address the challenges of migration and fundamental rights in Europe, some of his proposals in terms of candidates raise serious questions.

What is your initial reaction to the proposed candidates in charge of migration and citizenship?

The decision to propose former Hungarian foreign minister **Tibor Navracsics** as commissioner for education, culture, youth and (particularly) **citizenship** is astonishing. Navracsics played a prominent role in the Viktor Orbán-led government that has been widely criticised for pursuing an anti-democratic

agenda, undermining media freedom, pluralism and the independence of the judiciary. Just recently, the Hungarian National Investigation Bureau together with special police forces raided the offices of two NGOs, which work to promote human rights and democracy, without clear legitimate reasons why such an invasive measure was deemed necessary. We, as the Greens/EFA group, have requested EP president Schulz to investigate the facts and to ask the Commission to apply the new rule of law mechanism. How will a commissioner who played a key role in a government that infringes basic democratic freedoms and values contribute positively to the EU in the field of education, culture and youth? Isn't it a downright provocation to put him in charge of citizenship?

The decision to propose a former Greek defence minister, **Dimitris Avramopoulos**, as commissioner in charge of **migration** is also curious to say the least. The Greek government under Néa Dimokratía (ND), of which Avramopoulos is a prominent figure, has been subjected to widespread criticism due to its lack of meaningful action against harassment of migrants, anti-fascist and racist behaviour. The detention of 80,000 migrants in Athens was a particularly black episode. Juncker's choice to designate Avramopoulos for this portfolio does not inspire confidence for a more humane migration policy. Against this background, it will be interesting to see how he plans to develop policy in and what kind of initiatives he will take to reform this area.

What about the structure of the portfolio they will have?

Juncker highlighted migration as one of the pressing challenges and presented it as one of the 10 priority policy areas of his programme to renew the EU for the coming five years. In order to "ensure that situations as the one in Lampedusa never arise again" he underlined its intentions by entrusting a Commissioner "with special responsibility for migration." In the new structure created by Juncker the commissioner will have to liaise closely with the first vice-president Frans Timmermans, and work together with the EU's foreign policy high representative Mogherini. Additional guarantees have been given by designating Timmermans with the responsibility to "ensure that every Commission proposal or initiative complies with the Charter of Fundamental Rights." Specifically in the field of migration. Given the choice of Commissioner for Migration, this puts a heavy responsibility on Timmermans as guardian of fundamental rights of migrants.

If you could pose one question to the candidate, what would it be?

I would ask Dimitris Avramopoulos about the recurring tragedies in the Mediterranean and what he intends to do, with boats carrying hundreds of migrants from Egypt to Malta having deliberately been sunk by people-traffickers again this past week. What concrete steps will the commissioner take in the short-term to address the pressing issues surrounding 'boat migration'?

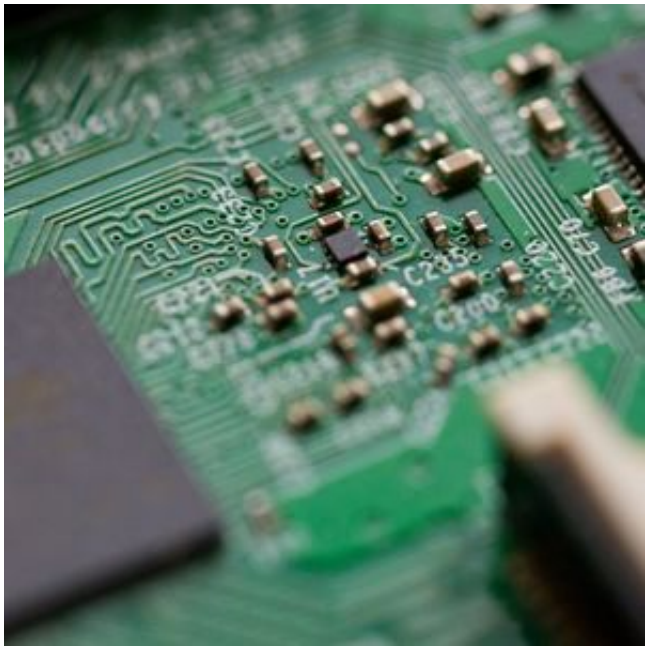
What other issues do you think the candidate will need to address in their hearing?

The issue of abusing vulnerable migrant workers in the EU for economic gain is still pressing. The Commissioner needs to address which initiatives and measures he will take against the exploitation of migrant workers.

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