Commission's legislative and work programme for 2009

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PURPOSE: to present the Commission's legislative programme for 2009. [COM(2008)0712 final].

BACKGROUND: the Commission has adopted its Legislative and Work Programme for 2009 which announces the main initiatives that it intends to present next year. In 2009, the Commission will follow up on the initiatives to address the financial crisis and to set out a European framework to address the economic downturn. At the same time, the Commission will use the final year of its mandate to complete the work already under way.

The 2009 Work Programme needs to respond to different challenges: in particular, 2009 will be a special year marked by the European elections in June, and certain vital dossiers will need to be followed up in areas such as energy, climate change, migration and social policy. Overall, the Work Programme will comprise 12 strategic initiatives, 37 priority initiatives, 33 simplification proposals and 20 withdrawals.

Main areas of Commission action: the priorities are structured around 4 pillars:

1) Growth and jobs: the current financial crisis and economic slowdown represent a huge challenge for Europe. If Europe showed some imagination in dealing with the sudden crisis in confidence which hit the financial markets, it must now bring the same qualities to bear on reforming the financial sector and cushioning the impact of the slowdown on the real economy and on citizens. Besides the economic turmoil, the EU faces a host of other problems such as **rises in food and energy prices**.

The Commission will remain active in rebuilding confidence in financial markets and play a particular role in developing and promoting a **common European approach** to the economic crisis.

The Commission will work on practical measures to **reshape the regulatory framework for the EU financial system**. It is tasked with proposing the right regulatory regime for the single market, including in the area of financial services. In 2008, it brought forward a series of detailed proposals on capital requirements, deposit guarantees and credit rating agencies, as well as new rules on accounting. One of the major objectives for 2009 should be to keep up the pace of reform and to help the European Parliament and the Council achieve swift adoption of these measures. This package of financial measures will flow from a wide ranging review already under way looking at the adequacy of regulation, oversight, and transparency of all financial actors and all significant capital market investors – including hedge funds and private equity. It will also cover executive remuneration, and derivative markets.

As the impact of the credit crisis is felt by the real economy, the Commission is developing a strategy to help limit the effect on growth, to **support those losing their jobs**. That means pressing ahead with many of the key objectives of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs and appropriate support to businesses to help them to address long-term needs like energy efficiency and innovative clean technology.

In other areas, the Commission will set in place a wide range of initiatives to empower consumers, improve redress and **facilitate business in the single market** (in particular, through improved approaches to taxation), as well as improve the regulatory environment for business in the retail sector, electrical goods and pharmaceuticals.

In parallel, the Commission will promote the **social agenda for Opportunities, Access and Solidarity** and will renew its youth strategy to better respond to the problems faced by youth – such as high unemployment and early school leaving**.**

2) Climate Chane and Sustainable Europe: the EU has set itself 3 core targets to be met by 2020: a reduction of 20% in greenhouse gases, a 20% share for renewable energy, and a 20% improvement in energy efficiency. The package of measures designed to deliver on these targets remains of the highest priority for Europe. In 2009, the Commission will come forward with proposals for the EU's approach to securing **anambitious and comprehensive global agreement**.

The other key target of the package is to make European energy secure, sustainable and competitive. The hike in energy prices seen in 2008 has again underlined the vulnerability of Europe in terms of energy, and the pressing need to promote energy security. This is why the Commission will adopt an overall strategy for **improving energy security**. This will include the adoption of concrete measures on energy efficiency; realising a common objective of interconnection and effective stock management and a coordinated approach on improving and **diversifying supply** from outside the Union.

The greening of **EU transport policy** will continue and the Commission will issue a Communication on future transport scenarios with a 20 to 40 year horizon and a Green Paper on trans-European transport networks.

Also in 2009, the Commission will launch a major consultation on the reform of the **Common Fisheries Policy** and implement the "health check" of the **CAP**.

3) A Europe close to citizens: food safety, animal health and animal welfare will be continuously monitored, whilst the Commission will continue the work of the EU Health Strategy to help Member States promote **public health** to best effect. The Commission will also examine what role the EU can play in helping to reduce health inequalities across Europe.

In 2009, the Commission will set out its proposals for the further development of the EU as an area of Freedom, Security and Justice. Pursuing the establishment of a **common immigration policy** will continue to be a priority. Immigration must be fully integrated into the wider EU policies for economic growth, competitiveness and social inclusion, and external relations policies must also play a role, through promoting reinforced partnerships with third countries in migration management.

Integrated border management will be pursued through greater operational cooperation and the launch of the new Schengen evaluation mechanism. Practical cooperation between Member States, and between Member States and FRONTEX, will also be promoted in the field of **return policy**.

The EU will move closer to becoming a true area of justice in 2009 through initiatives to improve mutual recognition in criminal and civil matters in a number of concrete areas (judgments, procedural rights, successions and wills). To enhance the security of EU citizens, the Commission will also present a series of proposals to deal with specific and new forms of criminality: greater prevention of child abuse and trafficking; reinforced international cooperation to fight and prevent cyber attacks; and combat the risk of terrorist attacks in areas such as chemical, biological, nuclear and radiological threats.

4) Europe as a World Partner: in 2009, the Commission will continue to build its long-term relationships with key partners: the US, Russia but also China, India, Japan and Brazil. The Georgia crisis showed two facets of the EU's external action. Above all, it showed that the European Union is seen as a positive force for conflict prevention and resolution, able to act as a mediating force acting with one voice.

In this area, particular attention will be devoted to:

- pursuing the enlargement process: negotiations with Croatia, European perspective for the other countries of the Western Balkans, accession negotiations with Turkey, continued attention to the economic and political development of Kosovo;
- Union for the Mediterranean and the Eastern Partnership: find the right balance between consolidated economic and political relationship with the EU's neighbourhood as a whole and tailor-made relations adapted to different partners;
- building an effective working partnership with the new US administr ation with a view to developing economic and regulatory co-operation;
- the completion of the Doha Development Agenda;
- cementing a relationship with developing countries based on the delivery of the Millennium Development Goals.

5) Other measures: 'better regulation' and improved communication: the Commission plans to focus on the following:

1. **'Better regulation'**: promoting a simpler and better regulatory environment without unnecessary administrative burdens will, therefore, remain a key component of the Commission's legislative work in 2009. This is why the programme mentions specific simplification measures in various fields ranging from agriculture to the environment and from accounting to transport. The strategy for simplifying the regulatory environment will be reviewed and updated as will the codification programme. At the same time, work on the application of Community law will continue. The pilot project, launched in April 2008 between the Commission and the Member States, on information provision, problem solving and correction of infringements will be evaluated;
2. **Improved communication:** 2009 will also be the first year that inter-institutional priorities will be agreed by the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission under the joint declaration on Communicating Europe in Partnership. In this context, communication activities will target, in particular, an audience which is less engaged with EU issues, such as young people, women, and the unemployed. Efforts will also be made to communicate on progress in the energy-climate change package in view of the Copenhagen Conference of December 2009, as well as for the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. A further focus will be strengthened communication activities on sustainable growth, jobs and solidarity, as well as on security in general and the need of a stronger Europe in the world.