

6th December 2011

Dear Sophie,

Thank you for your letter as Chair of the European Parliament Platform for Secularism in Politics, about the implementation of Article 17 of TFEU. We have of course had some correspondence on this issue in the past and I would want to thank you for all your work in pursuing this. It is crucial that the work of our Parliament is open to all the groups mentioned in the article.

You will appreciate that I have done my utmost, as Vice President with responsibility for Transparency, in the negotiations with the Commission on the joint Transparency Register to ensure that representatives of all faiths and views are treated in a similar way. I believe we reached a reasonable outcome in this respect. However the Register is a work in progress and if you feel there are improvements that can be made please let me know.

I also believe that the distribution of Vice Presidential portfolios should respect the requirements of the Treaty in a balanced way. This is key, and I would strive to ensure this. As I have indicated to you before, I think there should also be a portfolio for citizens' rights within the Union; this was argued for by NGOs such as ECAS. I believe it is important that the Parliament should have a Vice President on an equal par with the responsible Commissioner, more especially in the run up to, and during 2013, which is of course due to be formally designated the Year of the Citizen.

I would also, if elected, seek to develop a programme that on any visit within the Union there should be a meeting or meetings with 'unsung' citizens groups - having some connection with our European work. I agree with you that we have to demonstrate to all Europe's citizens - and above all the Parliament should do this - that we are open to their views and are taking up their concerns about the future in these most unsettling times.

I look forward to speaking to you further on this issue.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Diana Wallis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Diana Wallis MEP