



Brussels 12 July 2011

Dear President Buzek,

On behalf of the European Parliament Platform for Secularism in Politics, EPPSP, I would like to thank you for your contribution to the debate on the implementation of Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty on June 29th.

By way of this letter I would like to share a few more thoughts with you, that arose from the debate.

We very much subscribe to your remarks about the importance of legitimacy: all citizens must feel represented by the EU institutions, in particular the European Parliament. Therefore it is essential that any arrangement for the implementation of Article 17 reflects the full range of beliefs, convictions and life stances held by 500 million European citizens. However, we are concerned that the current arrangement does not meet that objective.

First of all, not all convictions and beliefs held by European citizens, are organized. Therefore, an arrangement that is based exclusively on contacts with formal associations or institutions, by its very nature excludes a large part of the European population and advantages organized religion over secular voices.

We therefore suggest that more thought is given as to how the dialogue foreseen by Article 17 can be made more inclusive and representative, so as to genuinely give a voice to all citizens, not just those who have signed up to an association or community.

We suggest that modern media and communications technologies would enable many more people, in particular young people, to take part. In our view, proposals for the organization of the Dialogue should be prepared by the Presidency and put to the House for approval.

Secondly, although we appreciate the appointment of a Vice President of the Parliament responsible for contacts with religious and non-confessional organizations, we are concerned that secular voices are not sufficiently heard.

We therefore propose a second Vice President be appointed to ensure contacts with secular organizations, both religious and non religious, such as the convictions and life stances represented in the EPPSP. In this context we point out that Vice President Miguel Angel Martinez has closely followed the work of the platform for secularism in Parliament and he would be a suitable candidate.

We hope we can further shape the Dialogue together, and make it fully inclusive and representative.

With kind regards,

Sophie in 't Veld
Chair European Parliament Platform for Secularism in Politics

C.c.

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