



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

Directorat B
SG B4 – Public service ethics

Brussels, 05/02/2010
SG/B.4/DCB/ 548-2010-AA0272

Mr de Clerck,
Member of the ALTER-EU Steering
Committee

Dear Mr de Clerck,

Dear Members of the ALTER-EU Steering Committee,

President Barroso asked me to reply on his behalf to your letter of 24 November 2009 concerning the Commissioners' Code of Conduct and to thank you for your interest and your contribution to the ongoing reflection.

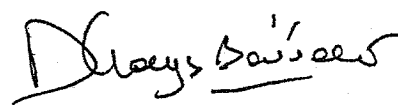
It is important to recall that the principle of Commissioners' independence and their duty to avoid any conflict of interest are enshrined in the Treaties, and that the Code of Conduct for Commissioners provides detailed implementing rules that the Commission decided to adopt because it strongly believes in ethical values.

Moreover, the Commissioners are under constant public scrutiny; their nomination includes thorough parliamentary hearings, there is public disclosure of their financial interests and they are under the watchful eye of the European and national Parliaments, as well of course as the media and individual citizens. In addition, the way the Commission is organised – as a collegial body - provides additional guarantees against vested interests. Finally, should a risk of conflict of interest arise, the President of the Commission has the power to reallocate a file or revise the attribution of a portfolio, ensuring that the Commission meets at all times the high ethical standards required under the Treaties.

The President of the Commission and all members are perfectly conscious of their responsibilities and promote the general interest of the Union without allowing any external pressure or personal interest to exercise undue influence on the decision-making process. Also, after they have ceased to hold office, they are bound to act with integrity and discretion.

In his Political Guidelines for the next Commission, President Barroso has announced his intention to review the Code of Conduct for Commissioners, to take stock and further adapt it where necessary. It is his hope that this document could become a "*document of reference*" also for other EU institutions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donatienne Claeys Bouaert', written in a cursive style.

Donatienne Claeys Bouaert
Head of Unit