

# Press release – Hearings of new Commissioners-designate to take place on 14 November



The exact timing looks as follows:

- Oliver Várhelyi (Hungary), Neighbourhood and Enlargement, from 8.00 – 11.00 in room JAN 4Q2
- Adina-Ioana Vălean (Romania), Transport, from 13.00 – 16.00 in room Jan 4Q2
- Thierry Breton (France), Internal Market, from 13.00 – 16.00 in room Jan 2Q2

## **Examination of declaration of financial interests by the Legal Affairs Committee**

Parliament's Committee on Legal Affairs will meet on 12 November to evaluate the candidates' declarations of financial interest.

The confirmation by the Legal Affairs Committee of the absence of any conflict of interests is an essential precondition for the holding of the hearing in the relevant policy committee.

## **Written questions and answers**

The deadline for answering the written questions addressed to the candidates by the relevant committees is 12 November end of business. Translations will be available the next day at noon.

## **Structure of the hearings**

Each hearing lasts three hours. The Commissioner-designate will make a 15-minute introductory statement, which will be followed by questions from MEPs. There will be 25 questions altogether: one minute per question, followed by an answer from the Commissioner-designate and a possible follow-up question from the MEP.

## **Evaluation**

The hearings will be followed by meetings in which the Chair and group representatives (coordinators) of the committees will evaluate the performance of the Commissioners-designate. More details on the evaluation process can be found [here](#) and in the [Rules of procedure](#).

The Conference of Committee Chairs will then assess the outcome of the hearings in the evening of 14 November and forward its conclusions to the Conference of Presidents. The latter will conduct the final evaluation and decide whether to close the hearings in its meeting on 21 November.

## **Plenary vote on 27 November**

The full Commission needs to be elected by a simple majority of the votes cast in Plenary, by roll call. The vote is set to take place on 27 November

Ahead of the vote, Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen is set to present the full College of Commissioners and its programme in plenary. Her statement will be followed by a debate.

## **Audiovisual services and webstreaming**

All hearings are public and can be followed live. You can watch them on EP Live [here](#).

Parliament's Multimedia Centre will provide HD quality videos, high-resolution photos and audio material (grouped by hearing in "media packages")

HD quality videos can be downloaded within 30 minutes of the start of the hearings (live replays) and a selection of high-quality photos will be available for download.

A new media work area (passerelle Karamanlis) is available with connectivity for live broadcasting through your own means. All requests for a spot must be addressed to [avplanning@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:avplanning@europarl.europa.eu)

There will be an area for camera crews and photographers at the back of each room where a live broadcast signal will be available.

## **Meeting rooms and listening rooms**

The last row in the rooms where the hearings will take place will be reserved for the media. However, seats cannot be reserved individually in advance and will be attributed inside the room on a first-come, first-served basis. Journalists are strongly advised to arrive in good time, as places cannot be guaranteed once the hearing has begun. Those wishing to leave the room before

the end of the hearing are also invited to do so quietly via the rear exit.

Two listening rooms will be made available to follow the hearings live on big screens, should there be insufficient space in the room itself. Those are: JAN 4Q1 (for the hearing of Adina-Ioana Vălean) and JAN 6Q2 (for the hearings of Oliver Várhelyi and Thierry Breton)

### **Accreditation and access**

No special accreditation is necessary during the hearings. Journalists holding an inter-institutional badge or annual badge delivered by the Parliament can enter Parliament's premises as they always do.

Those who do not have a badge need to request short-term accreditation through Parliament's [registration website](#), and collect their badges at the press accreditation office PHS-1C029 in Brussels (Paul-Henri Spaak building, Rue Wiertz, press entrance).

The accreditation office is open from 08:30 -17:45 from Monday to Thursday.

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## **Finland: EIB lends EUR 40m to Fazer Group for research and development**

- **European Investment Bank (EIB) finances Fazer's research and development activities, including the construction of an innovative xylitol manufacturing facility.**
- **EUR 40m loan for activities to be rolled out in Vantaa, Lahti and partially also in Lidköping.**

The EIB and Fazer have signed a EUR 40 million loan agreement to finance Fazer's research, development and innovation (RDI) activities in the coming years. Specifically, Fazer will fund the construction of a new plant, where the sweetener *xylitol* will be extracted from discarded oat hulls. This will be built next to the mill, located in Lahti, Finland. It is expected that the new facility will produce 4 000 tonnes of xylitol per year out of 20 000 tonnes of oat hulls, a by-product of the firm's milling business, thus also reducing waste.

The project will also support RDI activities relating to Fazer's bakery and confectionery products, biscuit and grain products, plant-based meals and non-dairy products, with a focus on developing new ingredients to improve quality and shelf life, as well as new products for the well-being segment. The R&D activities will mostly be carried out at Fazer's Vantaa HQ, and to a lesser extent in Lidköping in neighbouring Sweden.

**Christoph Vitzthum**, the CEO of Fazer, said: "Fazer sees food as a solution

and foodtech makes the food system more productive, affordable, sustainable and healthy. As sustainability is an integral part of Fazer's strategy, innovations supporting the circular economy, such as the production of xylitol from oat hulls, represent a future direction for the food industry. As we have already now seen a huge interest in oat-based xylitol and an increasing demand for xylitol, we have adjusted our original investment plans to build a solid foundation for potential future expansions of the xylitol capacity. Accordingly, we have increased the investment by approximately EUR 10m."

Fazer is transforming itself into a modern sustainable food company in a joint direction, executing its ambitious growth strategy with a focus on innovation across categories. Building on the current strengths of Fazer's research and development capabilities as well as open innovation in collaboration with universities, research networks and start-ups, Fazer aims to strengthen its position as a frontrunner in foodtech.

The new xylitol production factory will valorise by-products of Fazer's milling business and therefore contribute to circular economy goals. The plant will produce the biomass feedstock for an associated, third party CHP plant that will supply renewable heat and power to Fazer's site in Lahti, thus reducing the climate footprint of its operations.

#### **Background information:**

#### **Fazer Group**

In 1891, the young Karl Fazer opened his first café with a mission to make food with a purpose – and a passion to create moments of joy for all the people around him. It became Northern Magic. Made Real. Today, Fazer is an international family-owned company offering quality bakery, confectionery, biscuit and grain products, plant-based meals, non-dairy products, on-the-go food and drinks as well as food and café services. The Group operates in nine countries and exports to around 40 countries. The success of Fazer has been built on Karl Fazer's vision, values and fearless creativity: the best product and service quality, beloved brands, the passion of skilful people and responsible ways of working. In 2018, Fazer Group had net sales of EUR 1.6 billion and more than 15 000 employees. Fazer's operations comply with ethical principles that are based on the Group's values and the UN Global Compact.

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**[Finland: European backing for Helsinki Airport's expansion plans](#)**



- **European Investment Bank (EIB) lends EUR 150 million to Finavia for “phase IV” of the expansion of Helsinki Airport.**
- **Project includes extension of Terminal 2 and improved connectivity with public transport, as well as expansion of the baggage handling system and passport control areas.**

Finavia Corporation, a Finnish airport company, and the European Investment Bank (EIB) have signed a loan agreement of EUR 150 million in Helsinki today. The financing will be used for phase IV of Helsinki Airport’s expansion plans, featuring the extension of Terminal 2 with new arrivals and departures halls, new gates, increased border control capacity, and better connections to public transport and taxi services.

The project is expected to alleviate bottlenecks in the Schengen area, as well as between the airport and the rail, bus and taxi services, thus enhancing links to public transportation. The financing will also allow Finavia to expand the baggage handling system and passport control areas, with the objective of smoother transit of passengers and luggage. With these interventions, Helsinki Airport’s annual capacity is expected to rise to about 30 million passengers per year.

At the signing ceremony, EIB Vice-President **Alexander Stubb** remarked: *“HEL never freezes, and neither does its traffic. Helsinki Airport probably has some of the most extreme conditions of any major international airport and it’s nothing short of amazing how Finavia deals with this, while smoothly transiting millions of passengers per year. The EIB’s backing will allow the airport to cope with the expected increase in passenger numbers in a rational and sustainable way. We’re very proud to support this.”*

The works will see the creation of a new departures hall with 76 check-in desks and a new arrivals hall. On the 'airside' the border control area will be expanded to include 24 passport check lines and 20 automated kiosks for both arrivals and departures. On the 'landside', apart from the remodelling of the bus and taxi area, a new tunnel connection to the ring rail connection will be built. Finally, new parking facilities will be opened, with 1 800 new parking spots.

CEO of Finavia **Kimmo Mäki** said: "As the number one networked hub in the Nordic region, our aim is to offer passengers good and smooth connections worldwide. We want to stand out by providing an exceptionally good customer experience and sustainable operations at Helsinki Airport."

Apart from creating employment during the construction phase, once completed the entire airport expansion is expected to contribute to the creation of up to 5 000 permanent jobs at Helsinki Airport.

### **Background information:**

Finavia is the public limited company responsible for maintaining and developing Finland's airport network. It oversees 21 airports around the country, and is owned by the Finnish Government. In 2018, 25 million passengers used Finavia's airports, with Helsinki Airport, Finavia's main airport, accounting for 20.8 million of those. Helsinki Airport is an important transfer hub in Northern Europe, especially for Asian transit passengers.

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## **[EMCDDA Best practice portal update](#)**

### **Neurostimulation techniques for the treatment of substance use**

The continuous research on the treatment of substance use dependence has [identified the potential of some neurostimulation techniques to reduce substance use](#) and cravings. Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), for instance, is a non-invasive and relatively painless procedure that uses magnetic fields to stimulate small regions of the brain to treat or improve a variety of symptoms and conditions. Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) is increasingly used in the treatment of substance use dependence, particularly of nicotine, but also of alcohol and illicit substances. Yet its effectiveness remains undetermined.

A recent systematic review of several rTMS protocols has found [no conclusive evidence of effectiveness on reduced substance use or cravings](#), even though some particular protocols showed promising results. Evidence summaries are available at the [Best practice portal](#).



## **Gabapentin in the treatment of substance use disorders**

Gabapentin (GBP) is an anticonvulsant medication used in the treatment of seizures, restless legs syndrome and other conditions. Although an increasing number of studies propose the use of GBP for the treatment of substance use disorders, a recent systematic review found [no significant evidence of effect of GBP for substance use dependence](#).

## **Brief interventions for cannabis use**

Brief interventions (BIs) are short interventions consisting of one of several sessions, each taking between 5 to 60 minutes, usually conducted individually and in-person. In the new round of updates to the Best practice portal, we found there were [insufficient data to conclude that brief interventions \(BIs\) for cannabis use in postsecondary settings are either effective or ineffective](#).

## **Spiritual/religious interventions**

Spiritual/religious interventions are interventions that include a key component of spirituality or religiosity. Prayer, Rites of Passage, and 12-step interventions are some examples. In this new round of updates we found [no evidence of effect of spiritual/religious interventions in the treatment of substance use disorders](#).

*This content was published in the [Best practice portal update briefing on 08.11.2019](#)*

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# **[SP2025 Public Consultation](#)**

November 08, 2019 [About the EUIPO](#)

SP2025 Public Consultation



The Office has just completed its public consultation for the Strategic Plan 2025 (SP2025) and the contributions were both insightful and comprehensive. This public consultation on the draft SP2025 – from June 25 to September 17 – followed a first [consultation](#) on the three strategic drivers, which was held at the beginning of the year.

As with the first consultation, this public consultation allowed interested parties to have their opinions heard and for the Office to further refine the SP2025 draft. The information is being reviewed and all contributions are being considered as to how they can play a part in the SP2025.

The Office would like to thank the National Intellectual Property Offices, User Associations, and all other stakeholders for their valuable contributions. The collaborations between the EUIPO and stakeholders helps to shape the future of the Office in a way that reflects upon the positive work carried out by all.

The contributions received with consent for publishing, can be accessed via [this link](#).