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## Daily Notebook: 15-09-99(1)

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### New Commission approved

#### New Commission approved

Parliament approved the appointment of Romano Prodi as Commission President and the new Commission to run until 22 January 2005 by 414 to 142 with 35 abstentions. In a series of separate votes, Mr Prodi's term of office to replace the existing Commission to run until 22 January 2005 was approved by 446 to 126 with 23 abstentions while the appointment of the Commission to run for the same term was approved by 427 to 138 with 29 abstentions. In two other votes, the appointment of Mr Prodi as President from 23 January 2000 to 22 January 2005 was approved by 426 votes to 134 with 32 abstentions while the appointment of the Commission for the same period was approved by 404 to 153 with 37 abstentions.



### Tampere Summit - Progress on freedom, security and justice

#### Tampere Summit - Progress on freedom, security and justice

Wednesday 15 September - Opening this morning's debate, Finland's Foreign Minister Tarja Halonen, outlined preparations for the forthcoming Tampere Summit to be held on 15 and 16 October. The Summit will look at ways of making the EU's commitment to free movement along with provisions to ensure security of citizens and developments towards "a European legal area" a reality. This was a priority for Mrs Halonen, who saw it as a logical extension to the single market. As she put it, EU citizens were anxious to benefit from provisions on free movement and at the same time ensure that their security was not threatened. Progress in this area has been slow, one of the reasons being the need for unanimous agreements by the member states, under the so-called "third pillar" arrangements of the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties. Mrs Halonen told MEPs that she did not want this procedural structure to slow down progress and indeed there are provisions for policy-making to be gradually transferred to the Community, a move which Mrs Halonen strongly supported. Two key things she mentioned were a common policy towards immigration and tackling cross-border crime. She also emphasised the need to involve applicant member states in the discussions. There was also a need to guarantee respect for human rights and indeed individual rights as well as transparency, Mrs Halonen added, although it is interesting to note that Council has not released documents showing the details of proposals to be discussed at Tampere. Mrs Halonen's



## Votes: The new Commission approved

### Votes

#### The new Commission approved

Wednesday 15 September - Prior to the approval vote, MEPs voted 508 to 51 with 28 abstentions in favour of a resolution calling for the establishment of an inter-institutional agreement to confirm the new code of conduct between the Commission and Parliament as set out by Mr Prodi in his earlier address to political group leaders. In his acceptance speech, Mr Prodi readily agreed to this. MEPs want a member of the Commission to be suspended from office immediately and consideration to be given to his or her resignation in the event of any serious criminal charges, especially anything involving corruption being brought against a member of the college. While Mr Prodi accepted this in principle, he did say that it was not completely within his power to ensure this. The resolution also requests the regular attendance of Commissioners at Parliamentary meetings, access to documents, consultation on the code of conduct governing Commissioners, and the immediate announcement of Commission decisions to Parliament. The Commission in general should also accept Parliament's legislative amendments.

In accepting the points laid out in Parliament's resolution designed to put in place a new relationship governing closer cooperation between the two institutions, the new Commission President Romano Prodi reaffirmed his commitment to transparency, efficiency, reporting to Parliament and accountability. This would be the basis for a fresh start, he said, and while he once again emphasised the importance of "collegiality", he did say that this would not be used as a shield to avoid responsibility by individual Commissioners. The challenge now was to establish a close dialogue with Europe's citizens and this he intended to do with the submission of policy guidelines in January. He particularly emphasised the need to restore consumer confidence on such issues as food safety and promote sustainable development. The European Parliament will be involved in preparations for the forthcoming IGC to decide on the necessary reforms for enlargement and as a basis for issues to be discussed. He had commissioned a report by three experts. All Europe's citizens must benefit from the EU, he said, emphasising the importance of creating jobs and reforming the welfare system. Enlargement too was a priority that needed urgent attention. He also assured Parliament that proper protection would be given to civil servants or whistle blowers seeking to expose wrong doings.

Political group leaders then explained their position on the Prodi resolution with Hans-Gert Poettering (D, EPP/ED) frankly admitting that while some doubts had been raised on the new Commissioners by some members in the group, the vast majority were in favour of endorsing the new team. Looking forward to building closer relations with the Commission, Enrique Barón Crespo (E, PES) said almost all PES members were in favour of the new Commission. While Pat Cox (Munster, ELDR) too said that there was unanimous support within the Liberal group. He saw the new era as "a milestone in the democratisation of EU politics". Unanimous support was also forthcoming from the Greens explained Paul Lannoye (B) who looked forward to an enhanced EU role in the world with a green slant. It was left to Francis Wurtz (F) to reaffirm the opposition of the EUL/NGL group to the new Commission. For the UEN, Gerard Collins (Munster) said his group would divide on national lines. Irish members would be supporting the new team and he felt the process, although straining relations, now enabled a new era based on proper accountability to come into play. For Jens-Peter Bonde (Dk, EDD), the institutional argument had now developed to the stage where the Commission was becoming an independent government of Europe outside the control of

the member states. He underlined a need for more transparency and openness.

