

## MEPs weigh up additional answers from Olivér Várhelyi

Written by Martin Banks on 18 November 2019 in News  
News

The Hungarian commissioner-designate will have until Monday afternoon to answer additional questions from MEPs following his hearing with members of the foreign affairs committee last week.



*Photo credit: European Parliament Audiovisual*

Olivér Várhelyi, Hungarian commissioner-designate for the Neighbourhood and Enlargement portfolio in Ursula von der Leyen's new Commission, has been ordered to provide more information before MEPs are prepared to approve his appointment.

After his initial hearing, MEPs demanded more reassurances from him because they say this crucially-important portfolio must be in the right hands.

Tonino Picula, S&D coordinator in the committee on foreign affairs, said, "Várhelyi is certainly a very experienced diplomat, but he did not fully convince us today. We want to see a clear vision towards

our Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods in these challenging times.”

---

#### RELATED CONTENT

- [Hungarian Commissioner-designate rebuts questioning of impartiality](#) [1]
  - [Von der Leyen changes contentious portfolio names after backlash](#) [2]
  - [Civil society groups urge changes in new Commission portfolios and nominees](#) [3]
  - [Orban nominates EU ambassador as commissioner-designate](#) [4]
  - [Poland's commissioner-designate ordered to pay back MEP expenses](#) [5]
  - [Parliament should have right of initiative, Šefčovič tells hearing](#) [6]
- 

“The Socialists and Democrats remain the strong supporters of the EU enlargement process and we want to make sure that this crucially important portfolio is in the right hands.

He went on, “The fact that he will be under the supervision of the High Representative Josep Borrell is already a guarantee. Nevertheless, we would like a written commitment that the actions that Várhelyi undertook in his previous capacity as Permanent Representative of Hungary to the EU will not compromise his future responsibilities.”

“It means he has to draw a clear line between his previous functions, and what he wants to do.”

“Várhelyi is certainly a very experienced diplomat, but he did not fully convince us today. We want to see a clear vision towards our Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods in these challenging times” **Tonino Picula MEP**

Further comment came from colleague Kati Piri, S&D vice-president for foreign affairs, who added. “From the beginning, we had concerns about the choice of Várhelyi as the Hungarian Commissioner-designate for Neighbourhood and Enlargement. We set, as a red line, that he needed to clearly and fully distance himself from Viktor Orbán and his government’s actions that breached core EU laws and values on multiple occasions and have been the cause of the Article 7 procedure launched by the European Parliament.”

“At his hearing he said that he will not take instructions from Hungary and that he will be acting in the general interest of the European Union, quoting the respective article of the Treaty. However, to ensure the support of our group, Várhelyi should explain in writing that he is a genuinely committed European.”

“This is crucial, considering that as a Commissioner responsible for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, he would have to be the proponent and the guardian of the European values and laws in the Western Balkans, Turkey, Eastern Europe, North Africa and in the Middle East.”

“He also made it very clear that as European Commissioner, he will act in the European interest and will not accept any instructions from outside” **Michael Gahler MEP**

The EPP group has thrown its weight behind Várhelyi, saying he “has shown that he is fit for the job.”

German member Michael Gahler, group spokesman on Foreign Affairs, said Várhelyi at his hearing had presented “his ambitious agenda” for EU enlargement to the Western Balkans and for the EU’s relationship with our neighbours in the East and South.

Gahler said, “He also made it very clear that as European Commissioner, he will act in the European interest and will not accept any instructions from outside.”

## About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

## Tags

[Enlargement](#) [7]

[European Commission](#) [8]

[Justice and Rights](#) [9]

## Categories

[Western Balkans strategy](#) [10]

[Public order, justice and rights](#) [11]



Parliament Magazine is a Dods Group plc title

---

## Site Sections

- [Home](#)
- [Content](#)
- [Policy](#)
- [Magazines](#)
- [PM+](#)
- [Thought Leader](#)
- [Climate Crisis](#)
- [Editorial Calendar](#)
- [Policy Events](#)
- [Event Coverage](#)
- [MEP Awards 2020](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

## Services

[Dods PeopleDods](#)

[MonitoringDods](#)

[ResearchDods](#)

[EventsDods](#)

[Training](#)

## Media &

## **publishing titles**

[Politics Home](#)  
[The House](#)  
[The Parliament](#)  
[Magazine](#)  
[Holyrood](#)  
[Total Politics](#)  
[Public Affairs](#)  
[News](#)  
[Civil Service](#)  
[World](#)  
[Public](#)  
[Technology](#)  
[Training](#)  
[Journal](#)  
[Dods](#)  
[Parliamentary](#)  
[Companion](#)  
[Vacher's](#)  
[Quarterly](#)  
[The European Union and](#)  
[Public Affairs](#)  
[Directory](#)

## **Dods events**

[Westminster](#)  
[Briefing](#)  
[Digital Health & Care](#)  
[Scotland](#)  
[MEP Awards](#)  
[The Skills Summit](#)  
[Scottish Public Service](#)  
[Awards](#)  
[Public Sector Procurement](#)  
[Summit](#)  
[Public Sector ICT](#)  
[Summit](#)  
[Cyber Security](#)  
[Summit](#)  
[Cyber Security 2017](#)  
[Training](#)  
[Journal Awards](#)

## **Partnership events**

[The Health and Care Innovation](#)  
[Expo](#)  
[Civil Service Live](#)  
[Civil Service Awards](#)  
[Chief Nursing Officer for](#)  
[England's Summit](#)  
[Women into Leadership](#)  
[The](#)

[Youth Justice  
ConventionSocitm  
Spring  
ConferenceNHSCC  
Annual Members'  
EventDods at Party  
Conference](#)

---

[Privacy PolicyTerms & ConditionsAdvertisingSponsorship Subscriptions](#)

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/meps-weigh-additional-answers-oliv%C3-A9r-v%C3%A1rhelyi>

#### **Links**

- [1] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/hungarian-commissioner-designate-rebuts-questioning-impartiality>
- [2] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/von-der-leyen-changes-contentious-portfolio-name-after-backlash>
- [3] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/civil-society-groups-urge-changes-new-commission-portfolios-and-nominees>
- [4] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/orban-nominates-eu-ambassador-commissioner-designate>
- [5] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/poland%E2%80%99s-commissioner-designate-ordered-pay-back-mep-expenses>
- [6] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/parliament-should-have-right-initialive-%C5%A1ef%C4%8Dovi%C4%8D-tells-hearing>
- [7] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/enlargement>
- [8] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/european-commission>
- [9] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/justice-and-rights>
- [10] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/western-balkans-strategy>
- [11] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/public-order-justice-and-rights>