

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Cabinet of First Vice-President Frans Timmermans

Head of Cabinet

Brussels,
Ares (2016)6991483

Dear Mr Fassoulas,

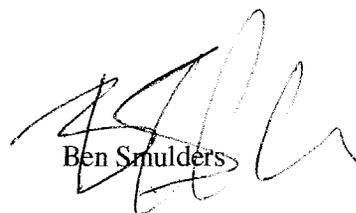
Thank you for your letter concerning a Union Pact for Democracy, the Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights. The First Vice-President of the European Commission, Mr Frans Timmermans, has asked me to reply.

The Commission welcomes the objective underlying the report on the establishment of an EU mechanism on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, which is to ensure that the EU common values and rules are respected and enforced¹. In particular, the Commission supports an inclusive approach with all stakeholders and the establishment of an inter-parliamentary dialogue between the European Parliament and national parliaments. Such a dialogue is important because national parliaments are involved in many of the problems related to the rule of law that we have witnessed in some Member States.

At the same time, the Commission has doubts about the feasibility of the mechanism as envisaged in the Resolution. It considers that the best possible use should be made of existing instruments, while avoiding duplication. A range of existing tools and actors already provide a set of complementary and effective means to promote and uphold common values. This being said, the Commission is continuously assessing how existing instruments can best be used to promote and uphold the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights, and is ready to continue the dialogue with the European Parliament, Member States and civil society.

Finally, I would like to underline the important role that NGOs can play in upholding the rule of law and fundamental rights in Member States, in particular by providing information on current developments in Member States.

Yours faithfully,



Ben Smulders

¹ European Parliament plenary debate of 25 October 2016.

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