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“Questions and Answers from Robert Madelin. September 2017.

1. What specific services are provided by Madelin Innovation?

Madelin Innovation sprl is a Belgian startup offering professional services. It provides pro bono as well for-profit consultancy on a very wide range of public policy, public affairs, management and organisation issues, as well as moderating, speaking, writing, mentoring, conceptual, horizon-scanning and management advice.

2. Can you specify which sectors and clients you work or will work on?

These are still early days in my post-Commission life, so things can evolve.

Services are offered to all sorts of organisations: corporations, startups, trades unions, academia, civil society, think tanks. There are no sector or client or geographical limitations in the Madelin Innovation statutes. As a matter of policy, the business done must match my own outlook on life, and my sense of capability. So tobacco clients are off-limits, as are aspects of public policy for which I am not able to offer real value added. Madelin Innovation’s clients are reported on the Transparency Register.

3. In May this year Fipra International announced you were to accumulate the functions of Chief Strategist with those of Chairman. Is this new role also performed as a consultant?

Yes, these labels describe some aspects of the work I do with Fipra.

These are all contract consultancy “activities”. They are not tenured “positions” in the sense understood in an administration, or in company law.

Madelin Innovation, a Belgian limited company, has a service contract with Fipra International, a UK limited company. My work with Fipra is booked hour by hour and invoiced to Fipra, for whom I am a consultant, by Madelin Innovation, of whom I am an employee.

This differs, in my overall portfolio of activities, from other personal functions and positions: for example, Director of a company, or pro bono adviser to a

non-profit network, where I am indeed appointed to a position and not working under Madelin Innovation.

4. What specific tasks do your roles at Fipra include? Will you work directly with Fipra's clients? If so, which?

I have a varied set of client and non-client tasks, which evolve as needs emerge. This makes it harder to predict the shape of any working day than when one has a set "job description" in a full-time position.

There are no a priori restrictions on which Fipra clients I work with, and Fipra clients are all listed in the Transparency Register. I also advise Fipra as a firm on business strategy, convene Fipra internal management, and take part under the Fipra logo (on both a pro bono and a fee-paid basis) in policy seminars and public speaking events.

Today, for example, I had a five- or six-hour day, seeing one trade association and one non-Brussels think-tank, neither of them clients, for general exchanges on current issues such as the future of Europe, and spent the rest of the time on internal training of junior managers and coaching of senior managers on change issues. On other days, the hours can be longer, and involve more client work, and there are of course days and weeks when I do nothing for Fipra.

5. Will your work for Madelin Innovation or Fipra cover issues related to the Digital Single Market and/or Brexit?

There are no wholesale subject exclusions imposed on Madelin Innovation as part of the Commission cooling off. So, all broad areas can be in scope.

The two subjects that you mention affect every aspect of public policy: everything is digital now; and like any enlargement of the EU, the departure of a Member State will surely affect all aspects of our EU life.

Whatever the policy area, there are limitations, as I explain in questions 2 and 7 and 9, on what work I can and cannot do up to end-September 2018, covering specific files falling under the leadership of the Commission teams I managed during my last three years of service.

6. Do you perceive there to be any overlaps between your current roles and your previous work at the European Commission?

I see overlaps, yes:

-I see the professional pursuit of the common good as a goal common to my three careers: as a British civil servant, as an EU official and as an employee of Madelin Innovation.

-I have a second overlapping goal. I continue, outside tax-funded public service as in past lives, to identify for myself, and to help others find, sustainable societal answers to intractable questions.

Hitting these two goals in our complex world requires a lot of input and a lot of effort from all sorts of stakeholders: it usually takes a village to make a change.

In particular, the evidence shows that corporations which are well-aligned with broad societal goals serve everyone (including but not only their shareholders) better than a company which misses the broader picture. In this century, with climate and sustainability challenges looming, the socially aware corporate actor is going to be indispensable for the huge changes needed in society.

The evidence also shows that civil society often needs more and better help and support than it gets in order to make sure both that its specific concerns are framed widely enough, and that they too are plugged in to the policy process.

Good public policy depends on all these actors getting their voice heard, and that requires engagement skills that are sometimes absent in even large corporations, as well as smaller players of all sorts. So it is good both to solicit input as a policy-maker and to offer inputs to policy on behalf of all other interested parties.

That is how I hope that my current activities in public affairs contribute to advance EU public policy. But I am not naïve, and nor are my old colleagues. No single set of representations should be taken alone and nothing should be given face value without deliberation and a public servant's independent (scientific) assessment.

7. Are there any specific issues which you have agreed with Fipra or other clients that you will not work on due to the risk of conflicts of interest with your former role at the European Commission?

Fipra recognises and respects the cooling off rules, as do clients. I chose to work with Fipra precisely because Fipra bases all its work relationships on a specific Code of Conduct: it is this insistence on explicitly ethical public affairs that makes Fipra an attractive business partner, and a successful player, in Brussels and globally.

This is important to me, precisely because there ARE limits.

I am bound as a former British civil servant by the UK Official Secrets Act and as a former EU official by the EU Staff Regulations. I have given life-long commitments to loyalty, discretion and confidentiality. The respect of such constraints is therefore integral to all my activities, pro bono or paid, including with Fipra.

More specifically, the Commission clearance for my activities under Madelin Innovation defines the appropriate constraints for a full two-year cooling off period. In addition to the standard statutory constraints, I am asked, quite rightly, not to advise clients on specific policy or research files dealt with by the Commission teams that I managed during my last three years of service. This is a real, and sensible constraint.

8. What contacts, if any, did you have with Fipra while you were still working in the Commission?

Some. Also with others among Madelin Innovation's clients and my wider pro bono contacts.

As a DG my meetings were published and on the record.

As a public servant, I have never been in difficulty as a result of hearing from and meeting with EU stakeholders. I have had greater difficulty with those from business or civil society who did not want to engage, for whatever reason, in open, collective deliberation around the EU's current challenges, be that the sustainability impact of trade and investment liberalisation or the pursuit of improved public health.

As a policy wonk these last 40 years, I have known for rather a long time, often as friends, many if not most of my contemporaries around the public affairs/political science worlds in Brussels and London, and some way beyond: it is a small and shrinking world.

9. What contact have you had or do you plan to have (formally or informally) with the European Institutions or member states' governments on behalf of Madelin Innovation, Fipra or their clients?

In respect of my cooling off period, the guidance on professional contacts is clear. For the first year, to end-September 2017, I undertake no lobbying or advocacy vis à vis the Commission as a whole, and for two years, to end-September 2018, shall refrain from business contacts with my former teams. I am also committed to take no part in Horizon 2020 calls and projects for at least 18 months following my retirement.

After a year, I can say that these constraints are real, in the sense that they do have the effect, desired by myself as well as by the institutions, of avoiding certain substantive discussions which might seem inappropriate. I think I can also say that these formal constraints are pretty well aligned with my own sense of what would be ethical or not. Certainly, the Commission approach (although not the administrative mechanisms) resembles the way that cooling off is managed also in Whitehall.

I have nonetheless had some substantive contacts with the Commission, notably on the basis of agreement by DG CONNECT that I personally should contribute as an 'active senior' to the development and chairing of a recent EP-hosted summit on the future Internet. This engagement on a DG CONNECT subject area was authorised under a rather good Commission scheme allowing DGs to work with (but not pay) retired officials where they see the involvement of the retired official as a good thing. The engagement was both fun and useful.

Finally, and also as a Commission alumnus, I do not hesitate to introduce to my old colleagues young talent, visiting speakers or researchers who could be helpful, as I see it, to my old institution. How the Commission colleagues pursue some if any of these ideas is of course up to them. But I am sure that it is a strength for the institutions to have a diaspora of retirees driving new connections into the Brussels (and Luxembourg) bubble.

10. How do you respond to concerns that your move from being a senior Commissioner official to becoming a Director of Madelin Innovation and Chairman of Fipra could provoke the risk, perception or actuality of conflicts of interest?

My short response would be that working is in itself desirable, and it is no harder, even for an ex-official, to behave ethically as a private actor than it is to be an ethical senior official. There are always pressures and you always need a moral compass.

No one has in fact expressed any such concern of conflict to me. Perhaps that is politeness. But it is clear that the avoidance of conflict is a prime goal for me as a “retiring” official, and I can mention four reasons why I have not had any worries on this score.

First, I am responsible for Madelin Innovation, and work only with entities which share my ethical business values. Fipra ticks that box, as do the other for-profit, startup, academic, NGO organisations and individuals with whom Madelin Innovation engages.

Second, my vision of European values is of a society where law-abiding actors, in whatever walk of life, are fully legitimate and respected players in the future of our society.

Multi-stakeholder deliberation is a good thing: there is not enough of it, and it is not yet systematically conducted in accordance with the 2001 Prodi vision of open and inclusive and accountable governance, or with the very similar guidelines set out in the 2015 Timmermans Package on better law-making and regulation. Personally, I am proud of my role in the last twenty years in developing the practices captured in that set of guidelines. I am equally proud to contribute, in the current post-Commission phase of my life, to their realisation.

Third, I have lived all my professional career with a strong awareness of the issue of ‘interests’, of the need for interests of individuals always to be transparent (hence the Transparency Register) and of the need for any possible scope for conflict to be managed carefully by the authorities.

Finally, I have an equally clear sense of confidentiality, and know how to keep secrets secret.

11. Do you have any other comments to make about these issues?

Yes. I want to add a dimension that may otherwise be missed: on the value of, and the right to, work. Even for former public servants.

The 21st century is an era of the “Hundred-Year Life” and life-long activity as well as life-long learning. We need an ethic of the public sphere that allows space for an ethic of active working.

I grew up in a family where life-long effort was a value. I have been inspired by that example. I have been fantastically lucky, born to a hard-working family of coal-miners, cooks and artisans, soldiers, sailors and factory-workers, to have been able to live their work ethic in my own sphere of public policy.

When it was clear that I should be leaving the Commission before my 60th birthday, it was equally clear to me that continuing activity was the goal: not just to cover my living expenses, but to be useful. My own father had often had to look for new work, but had been lucky enough always to find it, and had always found time to contribute to his community, too. I want to go on trying to follow that example.

I have spent my career to date trying to nurture UK and wider European society, to build a cooperative and rules-based global economy on our single planet. I have done that in cooperation with all stakeholders: industry and business, civil society, research, innovation and learning. Now, I am seeking to contribute still to the same goals of health and sustainability, growth and jobs, in ways that could be a natural extension of my professional know-how. To continue to contribute is not only a right but a duty.

So while I respect that some see only issues and concerns, I am sure that readers will also consider the rights and the opportunities that exist when a fellow citizen faces the question what to do with their life, and makes a considered and mature choice.”