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Committee on Development, Vice President
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To Mr Antonio Tajani, President of The European Parliament

September 15th, 2017

Honorable President

It is with great disappointment that I am addressing this letter to you, as I would like to inform you on an unfortunate and unprecedented censorship incident at the European Parliament (EP).

Together with MEP Patrick Le HYARIC (GUE/NGL), we are organising the artistic exhibition "EU turns 60: A Cartoon Party" to take place during the week of 25th-29th of September in one of the exhibition spaces at the EP. The purpose of the event is to exhibit, on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the Rome Treaty, humoristic political cartoons on EU, created and published by very well-known Greek and French cartoonists.

We have submitted to Ms Catherine Bearder, the Quaestor responsible for the cultural and artistic events sponsored by Members, all respective material, as requested. To our big surprise Ms Catherine Bearder has informed us that twelve (12) out of 28 cartoons, almost half of them, needed to be removed.

Ms Bearder used as an excuse Art 2, §3 of the *Rules Governing Cultural Events and Exhibitions on Parliament's Premises* which reads: "Cultural events and exhibitions shall under no circumstances be offensive or of an inflammatory nature or contradictory to the values on which the Union is founded or likely to give rise to disturbances in the designated exhibition areas."

In addition to this, Ms Bearder has presented the upcoming German elections as another argument for removing the 12 political cartoons.

I hereby attach some of the cartoons that we are asked to remove from our exhibition, so that you can witness yourself the lack of inflammatory or disrespectful content towards EU values. None of them falls in the categories of the aforementioned article as reasons not to allow them to be exhibited. We clearly consider this as an act of violent censorship. The right of artistic creation and freedom of expression are part of the European Union's fundamental values. This arbitrary decision violates them.

Political humour and satire are an essential part of democracy since Aristophanes' times. Only anti-democratic regimes do not tolerate them. Two years after the barbaric assassination of the Charlie Hebdo entire editorial team for some cartoons, our Parliament needs more than ever to strongly defend the right to satire and the right of all human beings to smile and laugh against all sorts of fanatics.

I also told Ms Bearder that I cannot see any kind of connection between the exhibition and the elections in Germany. Not to mention that the exhibition is going to take place after the German elections!

Together with MEP Patrick Le HYARIC we strongly believe that Ms Bearder's decision is extremely harmful both to democracy and the European Parliament. For all the aforementioned reasons, I urge you to revoke this decision and allow for our artistic exhibition to be presented complete, as scheduled.

Thank you for taking the matter into serious consideration.

Yours Truly,

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