



**Ursula von der Leyen**  
*President of the European Commission*

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## Mission letter

Brussels, 1 December 2019

**Margaritis Schinas**

### **Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life**

Dear Margaritis,

Earlier this year, the people of Europe made their voices heard in record numbers at the European elections. They presented us with a mission to be decisive and ambitious on the big issues of our time that are shaping the future of our society, economy and planet.

Changes in climate, digital technologies and geopolitics are already having a profound effect on the lives of Europeans. We are witnessing major shifts all the way from global power structures to local politics. While these transformations may be different in nature, we must show the same ambition and determination in our response. What we do now will determine what kind of world our children live in and will define Europe's place in the world.

Our job as the European Commission will be to lead, to grasp the opportunities and to tackle the challenges that these changes present, working hand in hand with people from across Europe and with the governments, parliaments and institutions that serve them.

This is the guiding principle behind my Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024, which I presented to the European Parliament on 16 July 2019. I outlined six headline ambitions on which I want the European Commission's work to focus. These priorities are interlocking and are part of the same picture. In this spirit, I have put together a College in which we will all work, decide and deliver together.

## An open and inclusive way of working

This approach reflects the open, inclusive and cooperative way of working that I will instil throughout the Commission, as well as in our relationships with others.

### *The College: One team*

The European Commission functions on the **principle of collegiality**. This means we are one team: we all work together following a whole-of-government approach, we all have our say, we all decide collectively and we all take ownership of what is agreed.

To help us deliver on our ambitions and commitments, **I will empower eight Vice-Presidents** to steer and coordinate thematic Commissioners' Groups on each of the Commission's priorities. They will be supported in this role by the Secretariat-General. All Commissioners will be in one or more Groups. The Commissioner for Budget and Administration will report directly to me.

Of the eight Vice-Presidents, the **three Executive Vice-Presidents** will have a dual function. As Vice-Presidents, they will lead a Commissioners' Group and be supported by the Secretariat-General. In addition, they will also manage a policy area and have a Directorate-General under their authority for this part of their job. One of the three Executives, First Vice-President Timmermans, will chair the College in my absence.

The High Representative/Vice-President will support me in coordinating the external dimension of all Commissioners' work. To ensure our external action becomes more strategic and coherent, it will be systematically discussed and decided on by the College. To support this, all services and Cabinets will prepare the external aspects of College meetings on a weekly basis, mirroring the process already in place for interinstitutional relations. This should also better align the internal and external aspects of our work. This will be a **'Geopolitical Commission'**.

I believe that we need to **speak and listen more to one another**, starting from within the Commission. College meetings will be places of open and honest discussion. As President I will set the agenda, but all College decisions will be taken collectively. In line with our commitment to fully digitalise the Commission and the need to use resources conscientiously, College meetings will be paperless and digital.

Each Commissioner will ensure the delivery of the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals** within their policy area. The College as a whole will be responsible for the overall implementation of the Goals.

### *Interinstitutional relations and better policy making*

Along with our close relations with the Council, I want to strengthen the Commission's **special partnership with the European Parliament**. This priority must cut through the work of each Member of the College, starting with myself.

I will expect you to ensure the European Parliament is regularly briefed, notably before major events and at key stages of international negotiations. In light of my support for a right of initiative for the Parliament, you should work closely with the relevant Committees, and be active and present during the preparation of resolutions requesting that the Commission legislate.

The more we build a consensus when designing policy, the quicker it can become law and make a difference to people's lives. This is why we need an **open and cooperative approach throughout the legislative process**, from policy design to final agreement. I will expect you to attend all political negotiations, known as trilogue meetings, with the other institutions.

We need to ensure that regulation is targeted, easy to comply with and does not add unnecessary regulatory burdens. The Commission must always have the leeway to act where needed. At the same time, we must send a clear signal to citizens that **our policies and proposals deliver and make life easier** for people and for businesses.

In this spirit, the Commission will develop a new instrument to deliver on a **'One In, One Out' principle**. Every legislative proposal creating new burdens should relieve people and businesses of an equivalent existing burden at EU level in the same policy area. We will also work with Member States to ensure that, when transposing EU legislation, they do not add unnecessary administrative burdens.

Proposals must be evidence based, widely consulted upon and subject to an impact assessment reviewed by the independent Regulatory Scrutiny Board. You will ensure that they respect the principles of **proportionality and subsidiarity** and show the clear benefit of European action.

Given that any legislation is only as good as its implementation, I want you to **focus on the application and enforcement of EU law** within your field. You should provide support and continuous guidance to Member States on implementation, and be ready to take swift action if EU law is breached.

### *Bringing Europe closer to home*

I want to **strengthen the links between people and the institutions that serve them**, to narrow the gap between expectation and reality and to communicate about what Europe is doing.

We must engage with all Europeans, not just those who live in the capitals or are knowledgeable about the European Union. I will expect you to **visit every Member State within the first half of our mandate** at the latest. You should meet regularly with national parliaments and take part in Citizens' Dialogues across our Union, notably as part of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

A stronger relationship with citizens starts with building trust and confidence. I will insist on the **highest levels of transparency and ethics** for the College as a whole. There can be no room for doubt about our behaviour or our integrity. The Code of Conduct for Commissioners sets out the standards and the rules to follow.

You will ensure budgetary spending represents value for taxpayers and follows the principles of sound financial management.

### *Making the most of our potential*

The College which takes office today is the **most gender-balanced to date**. It makes good on my pledge to put together a Commission that is more representative and draws on all of our potential. This is a good start, but there is plenty more work to be done.

I expect you to **draw on all of Europe's talents** when it comes to setting up your own Cabinets. That means striking an appropriate balance in terms of gender, experience and geography.

The Commission should also lead by example when it comes to ensuring better representation and a diversity of voices in our public life. With this in mind, all public events organised by the Commission should aim to feature gender-balanced panels and a broad range of perspectives from across Europe.

## Your mission

**I would like to entrust you with the role of Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life.**

Promoting our European way of life requires making sure workers are equipped to thrive in our evolving labour market. A declining workforce and a digital and basic skills gap brings into sharp focus the need to equip people with the tools and knowledge they need. It also highlights the need for well-managed legal migration, a strong focus on integration and ensuring our communities are cohesive and close-knit. This is both an opportunity and a necessity for Europe.

The European way of life is built around solidarity, peace of mind and security. We must address and allay legitimate fears and concerns about the impact of irregular migration on our economy and society. This will require us to work together to find common solutions which are grounded in our values and our responsibilities. We must also work more closely together on security, notably on new and emerging threats that cut across borders and policies.

You will chair the Commissioners' Group on Promoting our European Way of Life.

### *Skills, education and integration*

Europe needs an economy and a labour market that have the people with the right skills to ensure that we preserve our European way of life and our competitiveness. We need a focus on education, labour mobility and integration, as well as on fairness and equality. The European way of life is built on the principle of human dignity and respect for different beliefs, religions and cultures.

- To support this work, you should harness the full potential of **culture and sport** to bring our communities closer together. You should ensure young people can gain new experiences, skills and opportunities to participate in society, making full use of the European Solidarity Corps and DiscoverEU programmes.
- You will coordinate the work on an ambitious **education** agenda, focusing on making education more accessible and inclusive, on lifelong learning and on cross-border learning. You will coordinate the work on making the European Education Area a reality.
- You will draw upon the contribution of the Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights to identify and fill **skills** shortages and support reskilling as part of the just transition.
- You will lead the Commission's work on making our communities more united and cohesive. As part of this, you will coordinate the work on improving the **integration of migrants and refugees** into society.
- In line with Article 17 of the Treaty, you will lead the Commission's **dialogue with churches and religious associations or communities**, and with **philosophical and non-confessional organisations**.
- You will lead the Commission's **fight against the growing scourge of antisemitism**. The newly established team on Antisemitism will report directly to you.

### *Finding common ground on migration*

Building a consensus for a fresh start on migration will require outreach, consultation and close cooperation right across our Union. I want you to lead this work by focusing on building bridges between those most entrenched and focusing on how we can unite around our common values and our shared responsibility and solidarity.

You will work closely with the European Parliament and the Member States with the aim of finding the common ground we need.

- You will coordinate our overall approach and work on a **New Pact on Migration and Asylum**. We need to look at all aspects, including external borders, systems for asylum and return, the Schengen Area of free movement and working with our partners outside the EU.
- As part of this, I want you to focus on creating pathways to **legal migration** to help us bring in people with the skills and talents our economy and labour market need. You should draw on the work of the Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights to improve the matching of jobseekers and vacancies.
- You will work with the High Representative/Vice-President and the other relevant Commissioners to ensure the coherence of the **external and internal dimensions of migration**.

## Security Union

Given the complex, cross-border and ever evolving nature of threats, Europe needs an integrated and comprehensive approach to its security. We need to ensure better cooperation and information sharing, as well as looking at both the internal and external dimensions together.

- We need to take further bold steps in the next five years towards a genuine **European Security Union**. You will coordinate the Commission's work in this area and ensure the coherence of all security-related policies.
- As part of this, you will work closely with the High Representative/Vice-President to **better link our work on internal and external security**. You should jointly look at ways to embed a culture of cooperation between the two dimensions. This should take into account the links between international terrorism and internal security.
- You will coordinate the Commission's work to enhance the EU's ability to **prevent, detect and respond to hybrid threats**. You should work in a holistic way, building resilience across sectors and exercising coordinated responses.

You will work under my guidance on all of the above issues. The Secretariat-General will support you in your coordination work on Promoting our European Way of Life.

## The way forward

The mission outlined above is not exhaustive or prescriptive. Other opportunities and challenges will no doubt appear over the course of the next five years. On all of these issues, I will ask you to work closely with me, and with other Members of the College.

Once there is more clarity, we should be ready to pave the way for an ambitious and strategic partnership with the United Kingdom.

I look forward to working closely together at what is an exciting and testing time for our Union. You can of course count on my full personal and political support throughout our mandate.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Ursula von der Leyen

President of the European Commission

