



Ursula von der Leyen

President of the European Commission

Mission letter

Brussels, 1 December 2019

Věra Jourová

Vice-President for Values and Transparency

Dear Věra,

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, our economy and our 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 this new 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 Values and Transparency.

I want you to lead the Commission's work on values and transparency. At the heart of this is the need for the European Union to have a strong and vibrant democracy, and to uphold the values and the rights which unite us and give us the freedoms we cherish.

Our diversity and our openness are the core of our strength, and we cannot allow others to exploit and weaken them, whether they come from within or from outside our Union. Underpinning all of this is the rule of law, which should be upheld and respected throughout our Union without any compromise.

To help us achieve this, I want you to chair the Commissioners' Group on a New Push for European Democracy and to play an active role in the Conference on the Future of Europe. You will also lead our efforts to protect our democratic system from external interference.

Strengthening democracy and transparency

Europe's democracy depends on the faith and trust of citizens in how it works and in their ability to hold to account the people and institutions that serve them.

Your task over the next five years will be to work with Europeans and the other EU institutions to strengthen our democratic systems and to make them more open and transparent. You will also maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.

- You will broker discussions between the European Parliament and the Council on improving the **lead candidate system** and on the issue of **transnational lists**. You will represent the Commission in the Conference on the Future of Europe on this topic, which should come forward with proposals by summer 2020 at the latest.
- You should coordinate the follow-up of such proposals where the Commission has the competence to act, and should support the European Parliament in amending the **electoral law** and securing its agreement in the Council.
- I want you to coordinate the work on a **European Democracy Action Plan**, with the aim of addressing the threats of external intervention in our European elections. It should include legislative proposals to ensure greater transparency in the area of paid political advertising and clearer rules on the financing of European political parties.
- You will coordinate the work on **building the resilience of our democratic systems**. You will work with all relevant Commissioners on countering disinformation and fake information, while preserving freedom of expression, freedom of the press and media pluralism. You should closely monitor the implementation of the Code of Practice and stand ready to propose regulatory intervention if necessary.
- **Media pluralism and media freedom** are essential parts of our democratic system. You should make use of the Media Pluralism Monitor to identify risks to plurality in the media sector, and should propose cross-border projects to support independent and diverse journalistic activities.
- I want you to work with the other institutions to bring **more transparency to the legislative process**. You will lead the negotiations on behalf of the Commission for a Transparency Register for the Parliament, Council and Commission.
- I want you to work together with the European Parliament and the Council on an **independent ethics body common to all EU institutions**.
- Europeans should have a greater say in decision-making, and more of an ability to influence it. In this spirit, you will be responsible for improving the way the **European Citizens' Initiative** works. The registration of every new Citizens' Initiative will be discussed by the College, and any decisions taken will be fully explained.

Upholding Europe's values and rights

It is more important than ever to promote, strengthen and defend the EU's rights and values as part of sustaining open, democratic and inclusive societies. At the heart of this, equality in all of its senses must always be fought for. I want you to coordinate our work in this area.

- You will coordinate the Commission's work on upholding the **rule of law**, working closely with the Commissioner for Justice.

- You will lead the Commission's efforts to ensure the European Union's accession to the **European Convention on Human Rights**.
- You will be responsible for monitoring the application of the **Charter of Fundamental Rights**, and should report annually.
- I want you to pay special attention to the protection of the **right of peaceful assembly and the freedom of association**.
- You should coordinate all efforts and initiatives that **promote European identity**. You should make use of the Rights, Equalities and Citizenship Programme to increase awareness about **European citizenship** and the rights it confers.
- You will coordinate the work on inclusion and building a genuine **Union of equality and diversity**.

You will work under my guidance on all of the above issues. The Secretariat-General will support you in your coordination work on Values and Transparency.

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

