



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

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## Mission letter

Brussels, 1 December 2019

**Margrethe Vestager**

### **Executive Vice-President for A Europe fit for the Digital Age**

Dear Margrethe,

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 Executive Vice-President for a Europe fit for the Digital Age.**

Over the next five years, Europe must focus on maintaining our digital leadership where we have it, catching up where we lag behind and moving first on new-generation technologies. This must cut across all of our work, from industry to innovation. At the same time, we must ensure that the European way is characterised by our human and ethical approach. New technologies can never mean new values.

In striving for digital leadership, we must focus on making markets work better for consumers, business and society, and must support industry to adapt to globalisation and the twin climate and digital transition. We need companies that compete on equal terms and consumers that can benefit from lower prices, greater choice and better quality.

As Executive Vice-President, you will have a dual function. You will set the strategic direction and chair the Commissioners' Group on a Europe fit for the Digital Age. In addition, you will also be responsible for the competition portfolio.

### *A Europe fit for the digital age*

The digital transition will have an impact on every aspect of our economy and society. Your task will be to ensure that Europe fully grasps the potential of the digital age and strengthens its industry and innovation capacity. This will be a key part of strengthening our technological leadership and strategic autonomy.

- I want you to co-lead our work on a new **long-term strategy for Europe's industrial future**, working together with the Executive Vice-President for an Economy that Works for People. In implementing the strategy you will work with the Member States and involve businesses of all sizes. You should maximise the contribution of investment in research and innovation in supporting our policy objectives.
- You will ensure cross-fertilisation between civil, defence and space industries.
- You will co-lead the work on a **new SME strategy**, working together with the Executive Vice-President for an Economy that Works for People. This should focus on supporting small businesses, entrepreneurs and start-ups, notably by reducing the regulatory burden and enabling them to make the most of digitisation.
- In the **first 100 days** of our mandate, you will coordinate the work on a European approach on **artificial intelligence**, including its human and ethical implications. This should also look at how we can use and share non-personalised big data to develop new technologies and business models that create wealth for our societies and our businesses. To this end, you will coordinate a **European strategy on data**.
- I want you to coordinate the work on upgrading our liability and safety rules for digital platforms, services and products as part of a new **Digital Services Act**. In this context, you should ensure the working conditions of platform workers are addressed.
- You will coordinate the work on **digital taxation** to find a consensus at international level by the end of 2020 or to propose a fair European tax.

### *Competition*

Your task over the next five years will be to ensure our competition policy and rules are fit for the modern economy, vigorously enforced and contribute to a strong European industry, both internally and on the global stage.

- Competition rules are only as effective as their implementation. I want you to focus on **strengthening competition enforcement** in all sectors. I want you to improve case detection, speed up investigations and facilitate cooperation with and between national competition authorities. You should also actively contribute to stronger global cooperation among competition authorities.
- You will evaluate and **review Europe's competition rules**. This will cover the antitrust regulations that will expire in the course of the mandate, the ongoing evaluation of merger control and the review of State aid rules and guidance.
- In the first part of your mandate, you should consider using the tool of sector inquiries into new and emerging markets that are shaping our economy and society.

- Competition will have an important role in our **industrial strategy**. The competitiveness of our industry depends on a level playing field that provides business with the incentive to invest, innovate and grow. EU State aid rules should support this where there are market failures and the need to strengthen value chains. As part of this, you should continue to work with the Member States to make the most of Important Projects of Common European Interest.
- As part of the industrial strategy, you should develop tools and policies to better tackle the distortive effects of **foreign state ownership and subsidies** in the internal market.
- While fully preserving the confidentiality of competition procedures, you will be expected to proactively share any relevant **general market knowledge** within the Commission, notably in the digital sector. This will help ensure new legislative proposals contribute to fair and open competition in the single market and support evidence-based policymaking.

You will work under my guidance on all of the above issues. The Secretariat-General will support you in your coordination tasks on a Europe fit for the Digital Age. For your tasks linked to the competition portfolio, the Directorate-General for Competition will support you in your work.

## 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

