



Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Mission letter

Brussels, 1 December 2019

Stella Kyriakides

Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

Dear Stella,

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 Commissioner for Health and Food Safety.

Europeans expect the peace of mind that comes with access to healthcare, safe food to eat and protection against epidemics and diseases. Europe has some of the world's highest standards on animal and plant health, as well as the most affordable, accessible and high-quality health systems to deliver on these expectations.

At the same time, we are becoming an older society and need more complex and expensive treatments. This brings into sharp focus the need to support the health sector and the professionals working within it, to invest in new technologies, to promote healthy lifestyles and to cooperate better within the EU.

Protecting and promoting public health

Your task over the next five years is to support Member States in constantly improving the quality and sustainability of their health systems. You should find ways to improve information, expertise and the exchange of best practices for the benefit of society as a whole.

- I want you to look at ways to help ensure Europe has the **supply of affordable medicines** to meet its needs. In doing so, you should support the European pharmaceutical industry to ensure that it remains an innovator and world leader.
- I want you to focus on the effective implementation of the new regulatory framework on **medical devices** to protect patients and ensure it addresses new and emerging challenges.

- We need to make the most of the potential of **e-health** to provide high-quality healthcare and reduce inequalities. I want you to work on the creation of a **European Health Data Space** to promote health-data exchange and support research on new preventive strategies, as well as on treatments, medicines, medical devices and outcomes. As part of this, you should ensure citizens have control over their own personal data.
- Many of today's epidemics are linked to the rise or return of highly infectious diseases. I want you to focus on the full implementation of the European One Health Action Plan against **Antimicrobial Resistance** and work with our international partners to advocate for a global agreement on the use of and access to antimicrobials.
- I want you to prioritise communication on **vaccination**, explaining the benefits and combating the myths, misconceptions and scepticism that surround the issue.
- I want you to put forward **Europe's Beating Cancer Plan** to support Member States to improve cancer prevention and care. This should propose actions to strengthen our approach at every key stage of the disease: prevention, diagnosis, treatment, life as a cancer survivor and palliative care. There should be a close link with the research mission on cancer in the future Horizon Europe programme.

Food safety and animal and plant health

Your work on food safety, animal welfare and plant health will play an important role in delivering on the European Green Deal.

- I want you to lead on a new **'Farm to Fork' strategy for sustainable food**. This will cover every step in the food chain from production to consumption, and feed into our circular economy objectives. It should combine regulation with communication and awareness campaigns and have full buy-in from local, regional and sectoral actors, as well as Member States and European institutions.
- As part of delivering on our **zero-pollution ambition** and 'Farm to Fork' strategy, I want you to work on protecting plant health, reducing dependency on **pesticides** and stimulating the take-up of low-risk and non-chemical alternatives. You should help protect citizens from exposure to **endocrine disruptors**.
- Part of your work will be to focus on **improving consumer information**, notably by looking at ways to address demands for more visible and complete information, especially on the health and sustainability of food products.
- **Animal health and welfare** is a moral, health and economic imperative. You will ensure Europe is equipped to prevent and fight against animal diseases that can be transmitted. You should also ensure the enforcement of animal welfare legislation, review our current strategy and promote European standards globally.
- I want you to **focus on the implementation and enforcement** of the extensive legislation in the areas of food safety and animal and plant health.

Audits will be a crucial tool for this, notably to ensure that food imports meet our safety standards.

- You should work with the Member States to develop a **strategy with concrete measures against food fraud**, drawing on the work of the European Anti-Fraud Office in this area.

As a rule, you will work under the guidance of the Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal on food safety, animal and plant health, and the Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life on public health matters. The Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety 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

