



Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Mission letter

Brussels, 26 August 2023

Maroš Šefčovič

Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal, Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight

Dear Maroš,

At the last European elections, the people of Europe made their voices heard in record numbers. 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.

The events during recent years, notably the global pandemic and Russia's war of aggression, have deeply affected Europe and the world to its core, testing our societies and economies and our way of living and working together. 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 is 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 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 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 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 have empowered Vice-Presidents** to steer and coordinate thematic Commissioners' Groups on each of the Commission's priorities. They are supported in this role by the Secretariat-General. All Commissioners are in one or more Groups. The Commissioner for Budget and Administration reports directly to me. One of the Executive Vice-Presidents will chair the College in my absence.

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

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

half of the mandate. 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 behavior 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

This gender-balanced College 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 the European Green Deal, Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight.

Protecting our planet and our shared environment is our generation's defining task. It is an urgent moral, human and political obligation, which Europeans have resoundingly told us they want their Union to fulfil. It is also a long-term economic imperative: those who act first and fastest will be the ones who grasp the opportunities from the ecological transition.

The European Green Deal has become Europe's hallmark. At the heart of it is our commitment to being world's first climate-neutral continent. It requires continued collective ambition, political leadership and a just transition for the most affected.

As Executive Vice-President, you will continue in this strategic direction and chair the Commissioners' Group on the European Green Deal. In leading the work on the European Green Deal, you will work together with the responsible portfolio Commissioners and ensure all policy dimensions are fully taken into account.

A European Green Deal

To make a real step change, we must look at everything from how we use and produce energy, foster innovation, unlock private investment and support new clean technologies, all the way through to the transport we use and the packaging we throw away.

You will be responsible for bringing the **European Green Deal to the next level** with the ambition it requires and for accelerating its concrete roll-out as Europe's growth strategy.

- Along with our climate-neutrality commitments for 2050, we have to ensure consistent implementation of our agreed **2030 emission reduction target** and a coordinated **preparation of the 2040 target**.
- You will intensify the dialogue with **industry** and key stakeholders like **forest owners** and **farmers** on the European Green Deal.
- You will lead the work to strengthen **clean industrial innovation and competitiveness**.
- You will coordinate the speeding up of the **energy transition**, including by upgrading our grids and infrastructure.
- You will also coordinate work to **increase access to Critical Raw Materials** and on strengthening the **circular economy**,
- The European Green Deal can only work if it brings people along and supports the most affected, such as those in industrial, coal and energy intensive regions. In this spirit, you will accelerate, together with the Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, the deployment of the **Just Transition Fund**.
- Europe must lead the world when it comes to **protecting our biodiversity**. You will ensure we mainstream biodiversity priorities across all policy areas, notably trade, industry, agriculture and maritime affairs. To do this, you will ensure implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.
- You will be responsible for coordinating ongoing work on our **zero-pollution** and **resource efficiency ambition**. This requires a wide-ranging approach looking at air, water, and noise pollution from transport, agriculture and food production, water quality, hazardous chemicals and other key areas.
- You will coordinate the work on reducing the carbon footprint of our **transport** sector, notably of heavy duty vehicles, and ensuring the **blue economy** contributes to decarbonisation.

Cutting across all of the above issues is the need to focus on **enforcement and implementation** of legislation on climate, energy, environment and all other relevant policies.

You will remain responsible for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight

Europe moves forward when it works together. As our objectives become more ambitious, so does the need to improve the way we collectively design, negotiate and implement policies and laws become more urgent.

I want you to lead the Commission's work on interinstitutional relations, better policymaking and strategic foresight. At the heart of this is the need for the European Union to act together where it matters the most and where it can provide the most added value. To do this, we need to strengthen evidence-based policymaking and identify long-term trends on which we need to act and about which we need to know more. As part of this work, I want you to play an active role in the Conference on the Future of Europe.

You will co-chair and represent the European Union in the Partnership Council, established by the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement entered into force on 1 May 2021. While it by no means match the level of economic integration that existed while the UK was an EU Member State, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement goes beyond traditional free trade agreements and provides a solid basis for **preserving our longstanding friendship and cooperation**.

You will also be responsible for relations with the other non-EU Western Europe countries, namely Andorra, Iceland, Monaco, Norway, Liechtenstein, San Marino and Switzerland.

Interinstitutional relations and better regulation

The EU's institutions need to work together to ensure that its policies deliver impact and results. Policies need clear goals, buy-in from Europeans and thorough scrutiny to ensure it delivers where it counts.

- You will support me in strengthening the **special partnership with the European Parliament**. You will ensure that the Framework Agreement between the two institutions is respected, and you will be responsible for relations with the Conference of Committee Chairs.
- In light of my support for a **right of initiative for Parliament**, and my commitment that, when Parliament, acting by a majority of its members, adopts resolutions requesting that the Commission submit legislative proposals, the College will respond with a legislative act, in full respect of the proportionality, subsidiarity and better law making principles. I want you to work closely with all other Commissioners on Parliament resolutions requesting that the Commission submit legislative proposals.
- You will be responsible for the overall implementation of the **Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making**, and will lead the interinstitutional discussions on annual programming.

- You will be in charge of **relations with national Parliaments, advisory bodies** and the **European Ombudsman**.
- In the same spirit, I want you to coordinate the Commission's work on **better regulation**. You will ensure that Commission proposals respect the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.
- To help **alleviate the regulatory burden** for people and for business, you will apply the new 'One In, One Out' principle. You should also work closely with the Member States to avoid unnecessary additional red tape when transposing EU legislation into national law.
- You will chair the **REFIT Platform**, bringing together representatives from the Member States and other stakeholders to look at how to improve existing EU legislation.
- You will **reduce unnecessary administrative and reporting obligations** by 25%.
- You will represent the Commission in the General Affairs Council and in discussions on cross-cutting issues in the Parliament.

Putting foresight at the heart of better policymaking

As part of our commitment to designing laws that better address our needs, I want you to lead efforts to strengthen our culture of **evidence-based policymaking**. You will ensure that we make full use of the knowledge, information and research within the Commission.

This will be particularly crucial to supporting our work on the twin digital and climate transitions. It should also feed into the debates of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

- I want you to lead the Commission's work on **strategic foresight**. You will focus on long-term trends and identify areas in which policy, research and technological developments are most likely to drive societal, economic and environmental progress. This will help us better design our laws and initiatives, as well as helping us develop future-oriented policies.
- As part of this, you will coordinate the Commission's work on the **European Battery Alliance**, working closely with Member States and stakeholders.
 - Drawing on the work of the Commission's Joint Research Centre, you will produce a **yearly foresight report** to help us adapt and improve our priority setting. As part of this, you will look at how we can better link policies in different areas so they work towards the same objectives.
- To ensure this approach is fully embedded in our work, you will support me in developing the annual **Commission work programme**.

You will work under my guidance on all of the above issues. The Secretariat-General will support you in your coordination work on the European Green Deal and Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight. The Directorate-General for Climate Action will support you in your climate-related 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 this Commission's term of office. On all of these issues, I will ask you to work closely with me, and with other Members of the College.

In parallel to a full and timely implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement, we are ready to pave the way for an ambitious and strategic partnership with the United Kingdom, by **exploiting the potential of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement**. 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

