



Ursula von der Leyen

President of the European Commission

Mission letter

Brussels, 1 December 2019

Nicolas Schmit

Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights

Dear Nicolas,

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 Jobs and Social Rights.

Thanks to Europe's unique social market economy, people living in the European Union benefit from some of the highest social protection and welfare standards in the world. Improving working conditions, living standards and access to opportunities is part of our founding mission and is as important today as ever before.

The economic and financial crisis had a lasting and profound impact on our society and the lives of Europeans. It exposed gaps in our social and welfare systems and left too many people stranded without work or adequate protection. Today, employment is at a record high and unemployment continues to drop, even if it is unevenly spread and disproportionately high for young people.

There is still a lot more work to do to address some of the issues laid bare by the crisis at a time when our societies, economies and world of work are undergoing deeper transformations.

Strengthening Europe's social dimension

Your task over the next five years is to strengthen Europe's social dimension and ensure those in work are supported to earn a living and those out of work are supported to find a job and gain the skills they need. At the heart of this, is the need for dignity, fairness and prosperity for Europeans.

- Our best instrument to deliver on this is the **European Pillar of Social Rights** and its 20 principles. I want you to develop an action plan to implement the Pillar, working closely with the Member States and fully respecting the subsidiarity principle.

- We must ensure that work pays and provides a decent living. You should put forward a legal instrument to ensure that every worker in our Union has a **fair minimum wage**. This can be set through collective agreements or legal provisions, depending on each country's traditions.
- Dignified, transparent and predictable working conditions are essential to our economic model. I want you to closely monitor and enforce existing EU law in this area and to look at ways to improve the labour conditions of **platform workers**.
- You should contribute to the design of a **European Unemployment Benefit Reinsurance Scheme** to protect our citizens and reduce the pressure on public finances during external shocks, working closely with the Commissioner for the Economy.
- You should help establish and support the work of the new **European Labour Authority**.
- You should promote **social dialogue** and engage with social partners at the EU level across all of our priorities.
- I want you to ensure we make the most of the potential of the future **European Social Fund+**. It should be operational on day one and help create employment, improve productivity at work and enhance labour mobility.
- You should work closely with Member States to **strengthen social protection systems** in Europe, notably by using the European Semester to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement.
- We must do more to give children and young people the care, education and opportunities they need. You should reinforce the **Youth Guarantee** and lead the work on developing a European **Child Guarantee** as a tool to fight poverty and ensure children have access to basic services.
- You will develop a **European Action Plan for Social Economy** to enhance social innovation.
- You will lead the work on implementing and **updating our skills agenda**, focusing on identifying and filling skills shortages and supporting reskilling as part of the just transition. You should explore the idea of individual learning accounts for people of working age, enabling adults to accumulate training entitlements and use them for quality-assured training.

As a rule, you will work under the guidance of the Executive Vice-President for an Economy that Works for People. The Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ursula v. der Leyen', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Ursula von der Leyen

President of the European Commission

