



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

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## Mission letter

Brussels, 1 December 2019

**Josep Borrell**

### **High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission**

Dear Josep,

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

**You will be the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission.** I would like to entrust you with the following responsibilities in your role as Vice-President of the Commission.

While the world around us becomes ever more unsettled, the need to work together with our partners continues to grow. We share many common challenges and opportunities, and are all affected by many of the same changes to our environment, economies and societies.

Cooperating and working with others is what our Union is all about. We believe in multilateralism because it works. It makes us safer, more prosperous and better able to make the most of the major transitions of our times. This is why Europe will always lead the way when it comes to upholding and, where necessary, updating the rules-based global order.

At the same time, the need for European leadership in the world is more pronounced than ever before. This is both a responsibility and an opportunity for our Union. We must use our diplomatic and economic strength to support global stability and prosperity, as well as making ourselves more competitive and better able to export our values and standards. The respect for human rights and the rule of law should be the foundations for our international cooperation.

I will extend my support to you in your role as Commission Vice-President in charge of coordinating the external action of the European Union, in line with Article 18(4) of the

Treaty. You will also support me in coordinating the external dimension of all Commissioners' work and ensure that we link better the internal and external aspects of our policies.

You will chair the **Commissioners' Group on a Stronger Europe in the World**.

### *A more strategic, more assertive and more united Europe in the world*

We must also be aware that our internal and external work are two sides of the same coin. What we do at home will affect our place in the world and will shape relations with our strategic partners and competitors. This is why we must be a **Geopolitical Commission**.

- The European Union needs to be **more strategic, more assertive and more united** in its approach to external relations. You should seek to strengthen the Union's capacity to act autonomously and promote its values and interests around the world.
- To be a global leader, the Union needs to take decisions in a **faster and more efficient** way. We must overcome unanimity constraints that hamper our foreign policy. When putting forward proposals, you should seek to use the clauses in the Treaties that allow certain decisions on the common foreign and security policy to be adopted by qualified majority voting.
- You will also have an important role in ensuring we **better link the internal and external aspects of our policies**. You will work closely with all Members of the College to achieve this. In this spirit, you will have your office in the Commission's Berlaymont building.
- I would like you to provide a weekly update on foreign policy to the College. This will help frame our discussions and ensure our external action becomes a **systematic part of our decision-making process**.
- We need to take further bold steps in the next five years towards a genuine **European Defence Union**. You will ensure that all of our work linked to defence is coherent and consistent, working closely with the Executive Vice-President for a Europe fit for the Digital Age.
- I would like you to work with all relevant Commissioners to ensure our **external financial instruments** are used strategically, contribute to our wider political aims and enhance Europe's leadership and influence in the world

As Vice-President of the Commission, you will work under my guidance on all of the above issues. The Secretariat-General will support you in your role as Vice-President and will continue to be the main interface for the European External Action Service. The Service for Foreign Policy Instruments will also 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

