

MISSION LETTER

Brussels, 17 September 2024

Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Hadja Lahbib

**Commissioner-designate for Preparedness and Crisis
Management**

Commissioner-designate for Equality

Dear Hadja,

The Commission we will serve in together will be called upon to make choices that will shape our Continent and our Union for years and decades to come. In a time of great global instability and great expectations of Europeans, we must live up to that responsibility. **We must deliver and lead from the front**, working closely with the people and regions of Europe and the parliaments, governments and institutions that serve them.

This was the spirit of the Political Guidelines which I presented to the European Parliament in July 2024 – our common plan for European strength and unity. It focuses on ensuring our **security** in every sense in a more dangerous and turbulent world, on supporting people and citizens by strengthening our **prosperity**, our social market economy, green and digital transitions and sustaining our unique quality of life. We will strengthen our **democracy**, rally around our values and ensure that we are stronger at home. We will work with our partners and better assert our interests around the world.

Together, we will respond to the real and legitimate concerns and expectations that Europeans expressed at the last elections. We will be closer to people and businesses where it really matters with practical support and sustained investment. We will strive to **make Europe faster and simpler** in the way that we act – and in the way we interact with people. And we will work towards European unity at every turn, starting from within our College.

I am convinced that your experience, motivation, and European commitment will be an essential part of this team. This letter sets out my expectations for our collective work, as well as for your own mission.

New Commission, new approach

The priorities that I have set out in the Political Guidelines are not standalone areas of work. They are all connected and they will all impact each other. The same will be true for the work of the College as a whole and for each of its Members working together in a spirit of **collegiality**. I expect every Member of College to take **full ownership** of what is agreed.

Every Member of College is equal and every Member of College will have an equal responsibility to deliver on our priorities. With this in mind, I expect cooperation at all levels and for you to take an active role across all priorities and to facilitate access to your services where other Commissioners' responsibilities require it.

You will work with myself and the Commissioner for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration for a **simpler, more focused and responsive long-term budget** that reflects European strategic priorities and our ambition to be an **Investment Commission**.

Given the transformative nature of the next long-term budget – and in order to adapt to our modern approach and new spending priorities – **I will review the structure of the College and the missions** of each Member of College.

I would also like you all to play an active role in **supporting candidate countries to prepare for joining our Union** in your respective policy areas. I count on you when it comes to the pre-enlargement policy reviews and for our broader **ambitious reform agenda**.

I expect you to all contribute to achieving our agreed climate objectives, notably those set for 2030 and the climate neutrality goal for 2050.

As we head to 2030, each Member of College will ensure the delivery of the EU targets and objectives defined for that year, as well as of the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals** within their policy areas. The College as a whole will be responsible for the overall implementation of the Goals.

Beyond what is listed in your individual mission below, I would like all Members of College to draw on recent or upcoming reports. This notably includes the **Draghi Report** on the

future of European competitiveness, the **Niinistö Report** on how to enhance Europe's civilian and defence preparedness and readiness, the report from the **Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture**, as well as the **Letta report** on the future of the Single Market.

Working together for Europe, working closer to Europeans

To ensure trust and confidence of Europeans, I also want the College to lead when it comes to openness, transparency and representation.

First, **this Commission will strengthen its relationship with EU institutions**. I expect all Commissioners to be present in the European Parliament, both in plenary debates, in Committee meetings and in trilogues. Equally, I expect all Commissioners to engage with Member States and participate in the relevant Council formations. This is essential for ensuring accountability and better communicating our work and our planning.

I will ask you to organise a **structured dialogue** with your respective Parliamentary Committee to chart a way forward for any Article 225 Resolutions adopted by the Parliament calling for legislative proposals. This will be part of our work in ensuring **transparency and information flow** with the Parliament and Council, notably before major events and at key stages about international negotiations.

Second, this Commission will be **more present on the ground, more often and in more regions**. I would like you to visit Member States regularly. I encourage you to go local, visit places and meet Europeans from across our Union, including in cities, rural and sparsely populated areas. Our network of Representations will support you in this. You should meet with representatives from regional or local areas, notably relying on our network of EU Local Councillors, and to give **more visibility to EU projects** making a difference to people's lives on the ground. When engaging with our international partners you will also be supported by our network of EU delegations around the world.

I expect you to **actively communicate** on the Commission's actions and decisions and explain the benefits and opportunities stemming from our work. You should also help **tackle disinformation**, notably by providing clear and accurate information at all times.

Third, this Commission will start **a new era of dialogue** with citizens and stakeholders. You should organise a first edition of the **annual Youth Policy Dialogues** within the first 100 days so that young people can be heard and can help shape your work.

This will be part of our work in embedding **citizen participation** in our work. We will build on the Conference on the Future of Europe to instil a true and **lasting culture of participative democracy**. We will choose policy areas and proposals where recommendations from a European Citizens' Panel would have the greatest value and follow up on their proposals.

Fourth, every Member of College must show a **true European commitment** beyond doubt and be fully independent in their action. I expect full adherence to all applicable

integrity, impartiality and ethical rules from all, starting with the **Code of Conduct**. You will ensure that the rules on transparency and meetings with interest representatives are fully respected, including for your staff and services. We will **strengthen our transparency system** by extending the requirements of the Transparency Register to all managers.

Fifth, we will ensure that the Commission becomes **more representative** of the people we serve. We have made a lot of progress in terms of gender balance across management but there is clearly more to be done. Reflecting the EU's strength in diversity, your Cabinet should ensure **gender and geographical balance**.

While the Berlaymont will remain your primary headquarters, you will also have an office within your Directorate-General and be expected to be present on a regular basis to **work closely with your staff and services**. We will collectively ensure that the Commission is an inclusive, respectful and safe workplace.

Making Europe simpler and faster

The success of this new Commission will be measured against our ability to meet the targets and objectives we set, notably as part of the **European Green Deal**.

You will be responsible for the delivery of the policy objectives and targets within your portfolio. To achieve this, you should make full use of all instruments for implementation and enforcement, including infringement proceedings.

You will ensure that existing rules are fit-for-purpose and focus on reducing administrative burdens and simplifying legislation. You must contribute to reducing reporting obligations by at least 25% – and for SMEs at least 35%. You should leverage the power of digital tools to deliver better and faster solutions. We must listen to all companies and stakeholders who work on a daily basis to comply with EU legislation. You will organise at least two **Implementation Dialogues** per year with stakeholders to align implementation with realities on the ground. You will prepare an **Annual Progress Report on Enforcement and Implementation** for your respective Parliamentary committees and Council formations.

You will also work to **stress test the EU acquis** and table proposals to eliminate any overlaps and contradictions and be fully digitally compatible, while maintaining high standards.

New legislation must ensure that our rules are simpler, more accessible to citizens and more targeted. You will ensure the principles of **proportionality, subsidiarity and Better Regulation** are respected, including through wide consultations, impact assessments, a review by the independent **Regulatory Scrutiny Board** and a new **SME and competitiveness check**. Proposals must be evidence-based and the Joint Research Centre, our internal scientific service, can support you in that work.

Your mission

I would like to entrust you with the role of Commissioner for Preparedness and Crisis Management.

You will also be Commissioner for Equality.

The rapid evolution of security risks, whether linked to defence, economy, technology, or the impacts of climate change and health crises, creates new vulnerabilities. We have seen how quickly these can lead to full-scale and cross-sectoral crises with detrimental effects on our security, the well-being of citizens and the functioning of society and economy. This new reality requires a more robust approach to European crisis management and **civil preparedness**. We need to shift from reaction to proactive readiness. This is a matter of credibility and strength – and it cannot be outsourced to any actors outside Europe.

The EU shows solidarity to protect its citizens and the environment, by reacting swiftly to crises within the EU. As crises are increasingly complex, a more comprehensive and **integrated approach to crisis management** is also required.

On the global stage, this means Europe must also continue projecting its values of humanity and solidarity globally. Together with its Member States, the EU has a responsibility to alleviate the suffering of those most in need, in compliance with the humanitarian principles and **international humanitarian law**.

- I want you to enhance the capacity of the Union to better anticipate, prevent and prepare for crises inside and outside Europe. You will oversee the development and implementation of an **EU Preparedness Union Strategy** following whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches.
- This will build on the **Niinistö report** on civilian and defence preparedness and readiness. In leading this work, you should **foster a culture of preparedness and resilience**. You will decode the crises of today and anticipate the threats of tomorrow, building strategic foresight and anticipation and strengthen early warning, detection, and analysis capabilities.
- I want you to continue to look at how Europe can better prevent and prepare for emergencies and develop and carry out a **regular EU comprehensive preparedness exercise**, stress-testing high-level decision making and operational coordination during crises and emergencies. On this basis, you will assess the need for a future **EU Preparedness Law**, setting joint standards and guidelines, aligning EU and national efforts where possible.
- You will work towards a **European Civil Defence Mechanism** looking at all facets of crisis and disaster management and community resilience building and the **Union Civil Protection Mechanism**.

- You will support Member States and work with all relevant Members of College to **strengthen civil-military coordination** frameworks and joint planning.
- You should develop a new **strategy to support medical countermeasures** against public health threats, to harness tools such as joint procurement, stockpiling or using innovative financial instruments to support the development of medical countermeasures from research to manufacturing. This should be part of your work in preparing for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats. You will support this by developing a wider **EU stockpiling strategy**.
- You will work to **boost societal awareness and invest in citizens' risk education**. This can be done through information campaigns, education and media literacy, notably for online and AI generated content.
- You will lead on strengthening the **Emergency Response Coordination Centre** as the EU's crisis coordination hub and enhance synergies with the European External Action Service and Member States.
- You will reinforce **rescEU** and the EU's humanitarian emergency response tools to ensure that we have the right amount and type of assets, knowledge and expertise to align with new realities.
- I want you to look at how to **strengthen the international cooperation dimension** of civil protection and disaster risk management, leveraging on the EU's leadership and partnerships, including through a closer link with NATO.
- I want you to **boost efforts on humanitarian diplomacy** to promote the respect of the international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, safeguard the humanitarian space, protect critical infrastructure and civilians, including humanitarian and health workers.
- I want you to explore ways to bring about a **more equitable responsibility among donors**. I also want you to develop a more strategic approach to the humanitarian supply chains, encouraging joined-up approaches and cost-savings.
- You should work with other Members of College on a **Commission-wide integrated approach to fragility**, ensuring that humanitarian, development, peace and other policies all work together to better link urgent relief and longer-term solutions.
- You will contribute to other initiatives where a preparedness approach will be needed, notably the **Climate Adaptation Plan**.

A Union of Equality

Striving for equality for all and equality in all of its senses will continue to be central to the Commission's work throughout the next five years. This reflects both the progress made across many areas as part of the Union of Equality but also the very real challenges and obstacles that still exist and persist for too many people in Europe.

By promoting equality and inclusion, and by defending and upholding the rights of minorities, Europe can not only create a fairer society and social model, but also draw on all of its talent and potential to build a sustainable, prosperous and secure future.

- You will develop a **Roadmap for Women's Rights** for International Women's Day 2025, setting out the key gender equality policy principles for the years ahead.
- This will help frame the work for a **new Gender Equality Strategy**, updating action on all issues affecting women, from the **fight against gender-based violence** to the economic empowerment of women, their participation in politics and addressing discrimination in health, education, housing, social protection and in the supply of goods and services. You will also look at the challenges facing women in the labour market, online violence and work life balance.
- You will also propose a **renewed LGBTIQ Equality Strategy for post-2025**. This should notably focus on the continued and persisting hate-motivated harassment and violence, including online, and banning the practice of conversion therapy.
- You will present a **new Anti-Racism Strategy**, with the aim of ensuring that all people are able to live lives free of the barriers that racism creates. You will put forward resolute actions to address discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes.
- I would like you to work on **safeguarding the rights of persons belonging to minorities** in Europe.
- You will spearhead the implementation of the **EU Strategic Framework for Roma equality, inclusion and participation** and improve the lives of marginalised Roma communities in Europe.
- You will lead on the full implementation of the **Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** and ensure that people with disabilities can exercise their rights, autonomy and participation. You will also lead on the EU's implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.
- You will ensure the full implementation of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating **violence against women and domestic violence**.
- You will lead the work on **mainstreaming equality considerations** in EU policies, legislation and funding programmes as appropriate.
- You will work towards **more and better equality data** to improve data collection, including data comparability across the EU, in cooperation with the Member States.

- You will contribute to the action plan on **cyberbullying** and the EU-wide enquiry on the broader impacts of social media.

As a rule, you will work under the guidance of the Executive Vice-President for People, Skills and Preparedness on work related to preparedness and to the High Representative/Vice-President on humanitarian aid. The Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations will support you in your work and you will be able to draw on the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority.

As a rule, you will work under the guidance of the Executive Vice-President for People, Skills and Preparedness in your role as Commissioner for Equality. A Taskforce on Equality will support you in this work.

Way forward

The actions listed in this letter will shape your work. However, we will need to complete and adapt as we go along and I count on your ideas and expertise in this regard. In addition to College meetings and our continuous discussions, I will invite you every six months for a structured reporting meeting to discuss progress and challenges in delivering on your mission.

Reflecting the evolving nature of political priorities, the Commission must remain agile in allocating staff where most needed. I expect you to play a collegial role in this, by working with your services to identify efficiencies and contributing to corporate redeployment efforts across the Commission.

Given the scale of the challenges and the many issues in our in-tray, we must **hit the ground running on day one**. I invite you to take contact with your future services to prepare your hearing and the work ahead.

I look forward to working closely together for Europe.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission