



Ursula von der Leyen

President of the European Commission

Mission letter

Brussels, 1 December 2019

Dubravka Šuica **Vice-President for Demography and Democracy**

Dear Dubravka,

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, our economy and our 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 this new 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 Vice-President for Democracy and Demography.

European citizens must play a leading and active part in building our Union. The turnout in this year's European elections shows the appetite to have greater say in how our Union will evolve and what it should focus on.

At the same time, it is clear that, beyond voting in elections, there is a need to improve participation in our democracy. We need to ensure that people can make their voice heard and are listened to. This is why I have been a strong supporter of the idea of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

We also need to address some of the deeper changes in our society that have led to a loss of faith in our democracy on the part of some people. Those who feel left behind by progress and transition are the ones most likely to become disaffected. The root cause of this for many is more about demographic change than democratic structures.

This is why I want you to lead the Commission's work on ensuring that Europe understands and responds to one of its deepest lying challenges: demographic change. This affects every part of our society: from the economy to healthcare, from migration to the environment. It also shapes our politics, society and culture, and has an impact on our place in the world.

Conference on the Future of Europe

Europeans must have their say on how their Union is run and what it delivers on. This is why I believe we need a Conference on the Future of Europe, to start in 2020 and run for two years. This should bring together citizens of all ages from across our Union, as well as civil society and European institutions. We need a wide debate, clear objectives and a tangible follow-up on what is agreed.

I want you lead the Commission's work to make the Conference on the Future of Europe a tangible success.

- As a first step, you should work closely with the European Parliament and the Council to **agree on the concept, structure, timing and scope** of the Conference.
- You will ensure the widest possible participation in the Commission's Citizens' Dialogues to ensure that Europeans can shape the outcome of the Conference. You should explore ways to **make participation in person or online as easy and accessible as possible**.
- You will work closely with the Vice-President for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight and the Vice-President for Values and Transparency to **ensure the follow-up on what is agreed** by the Conference.

Supporting Europe through the demographic transition

You will lead the Commission's work on responding to challenges and making the most of the opportunities brought by demographic change. Your task will be to look at how we can do more to support different groups affected, including children, those trying to reconcile work and family, our ageing workforce and our rural and urban areas.

I want you to work with all Commissioners to ensure that our tools and policies take account of the implications and impact of demographic change.

- I want you to draw on the work of Eurostat, the EU's statistical office, to analyse the **impact of demographic change on different groups** in society and on areas and regions disproportionately affected. You should produce a report in the first 6 months of our mandate to help identify actions.
- As part of this, you will work closely with Member States and regions to undertake an extensive **mapping** exercise and look at how best to support those regions most in need of targeted reforms or investment, notably to improve infrastructure and access to services.
- I would like you to coordinate the work on a **long-term vision for rural areas**. We need to enable them to make the most of their potential and support them in facing up to their own unique set of issues, from demographic change to connectivity, the risk of poverty and limited access to services. This should be done in close consultation with people living in rural areas, as well as local and regional authorities.
- You should look at ways to facilitate the exchange of best practices between different parts of Europe that are facing the same challenges. As part of this, I want you to look at ways to support areas most affected by '**brain drain**', including through the Youth Guarantee.

- You should present a **Green Paper on ageing**, launching a wide debate on long-term impacts, notably on care and pensions, and on how to foster active ageing. As part of this, you should assess whether our social protection systems are fit to deal with the needs of an ageing population.
- As part of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, you will coordinate the work on better **reconciling work and family** and supporting people throughout their careers.
- We need to **invest more in the future of our children**. You will coordinate the work on the future Child Guarantee, ensuring that children have access to the services they need and are supported through to their adult lives.
- As part of this work, you will be the Commission's lead for **protecting children's rights**. You will prepare a comprehensive strategy on the rights of the child. It should include actions to protect vulnerable children, protect their rights online, foster child-friendly justice and prevent and fight violence.

You will work under my guidance on all of the above issues. The Secretariat-General will support you in your coordination work on Democracy and Demography. You can also draw on the Directorate-General for Communication in relation to the Conference on the Future of Europe.

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

