

MISSION LETTER

Brussels, 17 September 2024

Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Christophe Hansen

Commissioner-designate for Agriculture and Food

Dear Christophe,

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 Agriculture and Food.

Europe's farmers and food sector delivers safe, high quality and diversified food products at affordable prices. Food and farming is embedded in the identity, values and cultural traditions of local communities and **rural areas**.

Farmers and the food system are facing pressures and challenges, from the effects of climate change and environmental degradation to unfair global competition, stresses on **food security**, low generational renewal and the wider context of higher cost of living and energy. Farmers are both on the front line of climate change and the best allies in the path to decarbonisation and net-zero. It will be your task to address these complex and interconnected issues.

Your priority is to strengthen the **competitiveness, resilience and sustainability** of the agricultural sector. We need to understand the concerns of people in rural communities and come up with solutions that will make a real difference. I want you to ensure this is a collective effort, with all voices heard, following up on report and recommendations from the **Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture in the EU**.

- Building on the recommendations of the Strategic Dialogue and in consultation with the future European Board for Agriculture and Food, you will prepare in the first 100 days a **Vision for Agriculture and Food**, working under my guidance and in coordination with other Members of College. This should look at how to ensure the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of our farming and food sector within the boundaries of our planet. It should also look at food waste and promotion of cutting-edge science, innovative technologies and emerging products in the agri-food sector.
- As part of this, you will **ensure that our future common agricultural policy is fit for purpose** in order to provide targeted support to farmers who need it most, notably small-scale farmers, promote positive environmental and social outcomes through rewards and incentives for ecosystem services and to support the right enabling conditions for **thriving rural areas**. You will ensure the efficient and effective **implementation** of the policy to ensure it is simpler, targeted and finds the right balance between incentives, investments and regulation.
- In all of your work will ensure that farmers have a **fair and sufficient income**. You will engage to strengthen farmers' position within the food value chain and **protect farmers against unfair trading practice**, notably to ensure they are not forced to systematically sell their products below production costs.
- You will design and deploy **a new approach to deliver on sustainability** to support farmers in decarbonisation and preserving biodiversity. As part of this, you

will propose an **EU-wide benchmarking system** in the agri-food sector, as recommended by the Strategic Dialogue. You will also explore possibilities to support the **organic farming** sector.

- To support the competitiveness of our entire food value chain, you will work closely with Member States, farmers and industry to foster **investment and innovation**. You will work in partnership with Member States and financial institutions, such as the European Investment Bank, to **leverage and de-risk private capital**.
- You will present a **strategy for generational renewal in agriculture**, notably supporting family farms and young farmers to access capital.
- To prepare for the future, you will also contribute to developing of appropriate instruments for **climate risk preparedness** and crisis management and you will ensure that the needs of rural areas are specifically catered for. In this context, I expect you to contribute actively to the Climate Adaptation Plan and the **European Water Resilience Strategy**.
- As part of work to strengthen Europe's **food sovereignty**, I would like you to work closely with other relevant Members of College to look at ways to further diversify and reduce imports of critical inputs and commodities. You will work with the Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security towards reciprocity and an international level playing field.
- As part of your work in addressing the specific challenges of **rural areas**, I would like you to focus on addressing the targeted spread of disinformation in rural areas.
- You will contribute to the **pre-enlargement policy reviews** and work closely with the Commissioner for Enlargement, Member States, candidate countries and stakeholders to discuss the future of agriculture in a larger Union.

As a rule, you will work under the guidance of the Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms. The Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development will support you in your 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

