

MISSION LETTER

Brussels, 17 September 2024

Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Maroš Šefčovič

**Commissioner-designate for Trade and Economic
Security**

**Commissioner-designate for Interinstitutional
Relations and Transparency**

Dear Maroš,

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 Trade and Economic Security.

You will also be Commissioner for Interinstitutional Relations and Transparency.

Trade, customs and economic security

Europe needs a new foreign economic policy. While we continue to greatly benefit from open and rules-based international trade, in today's world geopolitics and geoeconomics go together. **Free and fair trade** must continue to drive our prosperity but also drive down our dependencies and help develop sustainable partnerships around the world for the benefit of consumers and businesses. You will also work on an effective and modern **customs** system that can help protect citizens and support a level playing field for industry.

As we continue this work, we will take a more assertive stance on defending ourselves from unfair competition or security risks which affect Europe. Economic statecraft and **economic security** will be central priorities of this Commission.

- I would like you to design and implement an EU trade policy that enables Europe to reach its goals. With this in mind, trade policy should focus on the **core objectives of competitiveness, security and sustainability**.
- You should also continue to ensure Europe leads and improve rules-based trade, notably through a reformed and strengthened **World Trade Organization** and through its own network of trade agreements.
- You will work to **finalise trade agreements under negotiation**. You will lead the work to conclude ongoing negotiations, notably with countries in Latin America and the Indo-Pacific. You will also explore the scope for opening other bilateral negotiations with emerging economies and key growth centres.
- You will closely monitor the full enforcement of our trade agreements on market access and rules, notably on **climate, environmental and labour standards**.
- You will lead on **Clean Trade and Investment Partnerships** to bolster our competitiveness, diversify our supply chains and boost the economies of our partners. These should provide a template for striking other bespoke partnerships, for instance on critical raw materials or digital trade and data flows with trust, as part of a comprehensive offering to partner countries.
- You will work on managing and deepening our partnerships around the world:
 - You will be the Commission's lead on relations with the **United Kingdom**.

More broadly, you will work with the High Representative/Vice-President to strengthen relations with the UK on issues of shared interest. I would like you to debrief the Parliament and Member States regularly on the state of play. You will also be responsible for relations with **Switzerland** and other Western partners.

- You will work with the **United States** to enhance bilateral trade and investment ties and cooperate on issues of global concern.
- You will manage trade and economic relations with **China**, in line with our policy on **de-risking not decoupling**. For this, you will engage in existing fora of dialogue with a view to ensuring balanced economic relations based on reciprocity. You will address the spillover of non-market policies and practices, market distortions and harmful overcapacities. You will use our autonomous instruments as necessary.
- You will make a major contribution to developing a new **Strategic EU-India Agenda** and strengthen our economic links in the **Indo-pacific region**, as well with **Latin America and the Caribbean**. You will also continue work with **African partners** to facilitate trade and promote sustainable investments.
- At the same time, you will work with the High Representative/Vice-President to engage and seek to address the concerns of international partners impacted by European legislation.
- You will continue to ensure that EU businesses can compete on fair terms on an international level playing field. For this you will use all of our **trade defence instruments** where and when needed and reflect, together with our Member States and stakeholders, if further instruments are necessary to complete and reform our toolbox.
- You will also work on an effective and modern customs system that can help protect citizens and support a level playing field for industry. You will support the conclusion of negotiations on the **Customs Reform package** and lead on its implementation, most notably by preparing the setting up of a new **EU Customs Authority**.
- You will help tackle challenges with **e-commerce platforms** and strengthen measures to prevent non-EU-compliant products from entering the EU market.
- I want you to work closely with the Member States on finalising the transition process towards a **fully digital customs environment**.
- You will evaluate the **rules of origin** and autonomous tariff suspensions and quotas, which are essential for trade, security and sustainability.

- You will work with Member States to ensure the EU leads efforts in shaping the implementation of the World Customs Organization Green Customs Plan and a **reform of the Harmonised System**.

Europe's geopolitical and geoeconomic position is shaped by our capacity to secure and defend technological leadership, sustain shock-resilient production capabilities, resist economic coercion and manage different kinds of partnerships around the world. It is essential that a **security-oriented approach** should be embedded within our work.

- While continuing to implement and refine the instruments already at our disposal, I would like you to focus on deciding how and when to deploy them. You will lead the work on a **new economic security doctrine**, which outlines the strategic use of our economic security tools within the EU.
- Central to this work is the need for Europe to be more assertive in protecting our economy from key technology leakage and security concerns. I would therefore like you to **develop economic security standards** for key supply chains with our G7 and other like-minded partners as part of the economic security doctrine.
- You will lead on the implementation of the **European Economic Security Strategy**. You will work towards the swift entry into force of the revised Foreign Direct Investment Regulation and continue to deepen our discussions with EU Member States on how to better cooperate on **export controls** and on how to tackle risks associated with certain **outbound investments**.
- Based on the ongoing **Risk Assessments** on critical technologies, you will identify proportional and balanced mitigation measures to ensure our long-term economic security, including by adding, if and when necessary, new instruments to our toolbox.
- In the context of the EU's overall sanctions policy, you will work on the effective design and implementation of **trade sanctions**.
- You will also further deepen our **dialogues on economic security** with the broadest possible range of partners, whilst continuing strong cooperation within the G7.

Interinstitutional relations and transparency

I would also like to entrust you with the role of Commissioner for Interinstitutional Relations and Transparency.

- You will lead the Commission's work to revise the **Framework Agreement** on relations between the Parliament and the Commission. This will help strengthen our joint political responsibility, strengthen our dialogue, increase the flow of information, and ensure greater transparency.

- I want you to lead our efforts to **strengthen our dialogue with the European Parliament** and ensure that Commissioners will be systematically present in Committees and plenaries.
- The Commission is committed to responding to Parliament's resolutions under Article 225 TFEU with legislative proposals in full respect of subsidiarity, proportionality, and better law-making principles. You will have the lead in **strengthening our cooperation on Article 225 TFEU** by ensuring that Commissioners take part in structured dialogues with Parliamentary committees on these resolutions.
- In the exceptional and emergency circumstances when **Article 122 TFEU** is used, you will attend the Parliament with the relevant Commissioner to fully justify any use of Article 122 TFEU.
- You will also lead our work in strengthening our close relations with the Council. You will represent the Commission in the **General Affairs Council**.
- As Member of the Interinstitutional Ethics Body, you will work with all the institutions to swiftly develop the **common minimum standards for ethical conduct**.
- You will also coordinate the work on the **review of the Interinstitutional Agreement on the Transparency Register** of the Parliament, Council and Commission, due by July 2025.
- You will be in the lead of the Commission's **relations with national Parliaments, advisory bodies** and the European Ombudsman.

You will report directly to me on matters related to interinstitutional relations and transparency.

As a rule, you will work under the guidance of the Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy for your work as Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security. The Directorate-General for Trade and Economic Security will support you in these tasks. The Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union will support in your work on customs.

You will also be responsible for the Publications Office of the European Union.

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