

# MISSION LETTER

Brussels, 17 September 2024

Ursula von der Leyen  
President of the European Commission

**Henna Virkkunen**

## **Executive Vice-President-designate for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy**

Dear Henna,

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 Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy.**

You will also be responsible for the **Digital and Frontier Technologies** portfolio.

### *Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy*

Security is fundamental for people's safety and peace of mind, trust in our **economies, societies and democracies**. Our competitiveness objectives – and our wider ambitions in the years ahead – rely on combatting **increasingly complex security threats**. These range from the war on our borders in Ukraine and the need for Europe to do more to defend itself, to hybrid and cyber threats, attacks on critical infrastructure, foreign information manipulation and interference, as well as the weaponisation of people and all types of policies.

Europe's security also depends on having **strong external borders**. Your task will be to guide the work to strengthen operational capabilities for border management and respond to threats at the EU's external borders, working closely with Member States. It will also be crucial to continue working with a fair and firm approach on migration, implementing the **Pact on Asylum and Migration** working with Member States and EU agencies to turn legal commitments into action and completing the work where necessary.

You should also help guide the work in strengthening our area of **freedom, security and justice**. I would also like you to guide the work on **strengthening our internal security**, supporting a tougher approach on crime and looking at organised crime and the high-risk criminal networks which damage lives, businesses and entire economies. We must sharpen our tools, ensure cooperation of law enforcement agencies and tackle the most harmful issues, such as the rise in drug trafficking.

You should also pay close attention to strengthening the resilience and the functioning of our democracy, notably through the new **European Democracy Shield** and work to counter harmful disinformation which can cause rifts in society and weaken our democracy.

The strength of our democracy will depend on the respect for our fundamental rights, values and the rule of law. You will help guide the work to **strengthen our approach to the rule of law** in areas such as judicial independence, **anti-corruption**, media freedom and other institutional checks and balances, while ensuring that we look at issues in the Single Market which affect the ability of companies to grow and do business across borders. We must always ensure that respect for the rule of law is imperative for EU funds.

You will help guide this work by bringing together our security action focused on threats both from outside our Union as well as on internal security matters. At the heart of this will be bringing the **European Defence Union** to life and I would like you to help guide the work in ensuring that this not only strengthens our security but also drives our **defence industrial competitiveness**. Building a single market for defence goods and services, ensuring innovation and private and public investment will be key in this regard.

I would like you to bring all of our work together to ensure high standards of **cybersecurity**. You will look at how digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence offer significant opportunities to enhance law enforcement capabilities and address these evolving threats effectively. This will be part of work to ensure that we strengthen our **digital competitiveness**. You will also work with the Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy to **boost productivity with digital tech** diffusion to help transform industries and develop new services and business models.

### *Digital and frontier technologies*

This digital transformation has proven to be a game-changer for society's ability to tackle major challenges, from productivity and growth, to fighting climate change or improving our public services. Digital technologies are at the heart of our progress and ambitions but we must address new challenges for our democracies, economies, societies.

Your task is to lead Europe's efforts in shaping a competitive, resilient and inclusive digital future. We must exploit our strengths in order to maintain or attain leadership in strategic technologies, to establish essential assets for technological sovereignty and resilience, and to foster commercialisation of deep tech innovation.

- You will oversee our path towards **reaching Europe's 2030 Digital Decade targets**. I would like you to lead the review of the implementation strategy and digital targets in 2026, looking at where updates are needed in light of technological developments, cybersecurity concerns and our wider productivity and sustainability goals.
- You will lead work on boosting **Artificial Intelligence** innovation, making it safer and more trustworthy. In the first 100 days, you will ensure access to tailored supercomputing capacity for AI start-ups and industry through the **AI Factories initiative**. You will develop, with Member States, industry and civil society, an **Apply AI Strategy** to boost new industrial uses of AI and improve delivery of public services. You will help set up a **European AI Research Council**.
- You will intensify our efforts and investments concerning the **next wave of frontier technologies**, in particular supercomputing, semiconductors, the Internet of Things, genomics, quantum computing, space tech and beyond.
- As part of boosting high performance computing and quantum, you will develop the proposal in the Draghi Report for an **EU Cloud and AI Development Act** to

increase computational capacity and create an EU-wide framework for providing 'computational capital' to innovative SMEs. You will also develop a **single EU-wide cloud policy** for public administrations and public procurement.

- You will follow up on the **Chips Act** to further support innovation potential, strategic industry segments, mainstream chips and equipment manufacturing. As proposed by the Draghi report, you should also develop a **long-term EU Quantum Chips plan**.
- I want you to take forward the Commission's work to improve access to **secure, fast, and reliable connectivity**, as part of a broader strategy for connected collaborative computing. To this end, you should work on a new **Digital Networks Act** to help boost secure high-speed broadband, both fixed and wireless. You should incentivise and encourage investments in digital infrastructure, taking into account responses to the Commission's White Paper of February 2024.
- You will contribute to strengthening **cybersecurity** to protect our industries, citizens and public administrations against internal and external threats, notably by improving the adoption process of European cybersecurity certification schemes. You will contribute to an action plan on cybersecurity of hospitals and healthcare providers.
- You will ensure the timely and predictable implementation of the **European Digital Rulebook** to boost productivity and protect our security and democracy. You will prioritise guidance and standardisation that facilitates compliance and assess, during the first year of the mandate, whether the expanded digital acquis adequately reflects the needs and constraints of **SMEs and small midcaps**.
- You will ensure the Commission takes rapid and effective enforcement actions under the **Digital Services Act** and the **Digital Markets Act** whenever necessary. You will establish long-term compliance dialogues with the regulated entities and contribute to the work on disinformation, notably as part of the **European Democracy Shield**.
- You will be responsible for **deploying digital public infrastructure**, notably by making the most of the **EU wallet**, and ensure businesses can fully use the technology to enable them to speed up and simplify operations and reduce administrative costs.
- You will present a **European Data Union Strategy** drawing on existing data rules to ensure a simplified, clear and coherent legal framework for businesses and administrations to share data seamlessly and at scale, while respecting high privacy and security standards.
- You will lead the work to tackle challenges with **e-commerce platforms**, working with other Members of College.
- You will help combat **unethical techniques online**, such as dark patterns, marketing by social media influencers, the addictive design of digital products and

online profiling, especially when consumer vulnerabilities are exploited for commercial purposes.

- You will contribute to the EU-wide enquiry on the **impacts of social media** and the action plan against **cyberbullying**.
- I want you to ensure an approach to the **media** which recognises its unique place in our democracies and culture, while also supporting its commercial development. You will consider the need to further improve the **copyright** framework to address new challenges raised by market and technology developments.
- You will work to promote **EU digital norms and standards internationally** and to ensure a leading role for the EU in global digital governance, in particular for AI and cybersecurity.
- You will ensure that the Commission becomes more **resilient to cybersecurity threats**, notably by reinforcing the security culture, protecting people and sensitive information, and ensuring the Commission is able to act during a crisis.
- I want you to accelerate the **digitalisation of the Commission**, notably by exploring how processes can be further automated, and how AI can improve delivery and inform policymaking in a safe and secure way. You will focus on the continuous improvement of staff's digital skills and the full use of data across the organisation.
- You will also work with the Commissioner for International Partnerships to support Global Gateway projects in partner countries, such as trustworthy digital communications networks.

You will work under my guidance on all of the above issues. The Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology and the Directorate-General for Digital Services will support you in your work on the digital and frontier technologies portfolio.

## 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*

