

# MISSION LETTER

Brussels, 17 September 2024

**Ursula von der Leyen**  
President of the European Commission

**Raffaele Fitto**

## **Executive Vice-President-designate for Cohesion and Reforms**

Dear Raffaele,

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 Cohesion and Reforms.**

You will also be responsible for the portfolio of **cohesion policy, regional development and cities**.

### *Cohesion and reforms*

European cohesion is about bringing Europe closer to citizens and bring Europeans closer to each other. Strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU supports quality jobs, drives up our **productivity, innovation and competitiveness** and is essential to deliver on our goals linked to the twin green and digital transitions, including those in the European Green Deal. We must tackle disparities and help to improve the quality of life of Europeans. This is needed more than ever as Europe recovers together from a pandemic, lockdowns and other crises, which risked deepening divergences between citizens, regions, territories and different parts of our economies.

Your task will be to ensure that the EU continues to support long-lasting **reforms and investments** that directly contribute to strengthening European growth. We have started this work with NextGenerationEU, our recovery plan designed to make EU economies greener, digital and more resilient.

Delivering on the agreed reforms and investments set out in Member States' **Recovery and Resilience Plans** by the 2026 expenditure deadline will be a significant challenge and will require consistent efforts from all Member States and the Commission. I would like you to lead this work, together with the Commissioner for Economy and Productivity, and focus on the successful and full implementation of **NextGenerationEU**. I want you to pay particular attention to dialogue with stakeholders and the involvement of regional and local authorities.

This will be part of your work to help make European economies and societies more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for future challenges. You will ensure that people in Europe's regions – whether in **cities, coastal communities or rural areas** – have real opportunities to drive growth and productivity across Europe.

You will help guide this work, notably to strengthen the **competitiveness, resilience and sustainability** of the **food and farming** sector, to ensure that we support farmers who need it most, promote positive environmental and social outcomes and support the right

enabling conditions. As part of this, we need to understand the concerns of people in rural communities and come up with solutions that will make a real difference.

You will help bring people together by guiding the work on **sustainable mobility and tourism** to connect different parts of Europe and underpin a thriving Single Market. You will also help ensure our **fisheries** sector becomes more resilient, sustainable and competitive in the global market and guide the work on boosting a competitive and sustainable **blue economy**.

This will require **investment and reforms** across these sectors and many more and you will work with other Members of College and with Member States to instil this approach across our work to help strengthen European cohesion for a healthier future.

### *Supporting all regions through a stronger, modern cohesion policy*

In your responsibilities linked to the **cohesion, regional development and cities** portfolio, you will drive forward our commitment to promote economic, social and territorial cohesion and support the development of thriving, sustainable, and inclusive regions and cities. Investment in cohesion and a just transition can transform local communities. Your task is to ensure that Europe invests in and supports Member States, regions, local authorities and people in view of achieving upward economic and social convergence across the EU and that all citizens have an effective **right to stay** in the place they call home.

- You should work on designing a **strengthened, modernised cohesion and growth policy**, working in partnership with national, regional and local authorities. As part of the next EU long-term budget, cohesion policy should be aligned to wider EU priorities, be more focused, simpler and more impactful and help mobilise **reforms and investments**.
- You will strive for all citizens to have an effective **right to stay** in the place they call home by supporting what a community needs: public services and private activities, education and skills, health, transport and digital connectivity. You should **tackle regional disparities**, providing tailor-made solutions to regional and local challenges and supporting regions to catch up.
- You should also address the specific challenges facing people living in regions across Europe. In this context, you will contribute to the **European Affordable Housing Plan**, notably to inject liquidity into the housing market and allow Member States to double the planned cohesion policy investments in affordable housing. You will also contribute to the **New European Bauhaus**.
- You should contribute to the **Climate Adaptation Plan** and the European Water Resilience Strategy, paying close attention to the specific challenges of cities and regional areas.

- I want you to ensure the **effective implementation** of the Cohesion Policy, including by using the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund, and by supporting the implementation of the Just Transition Fund.
- To harness the potential of cities as innovation, growth and competitiveness engines, you should put forward an **ambitious policy agenda for cities**. This agenda should provide a clear vision for the future of the cities, looking at issues such as housing, climate action, digitalisation, mobility, social inclusion and equality.
- You should ensure that the specific economic and social challenges facing **islands** are taken into account, such as housing, transport, water and waste management and continue to address challenges facing **outermost regions**.
- I would like you to **increase the visibility of EU projects**. I expect you to visit projects, raise awareness, strengthen communication and speak with people on the ground to see how we can improve implementation and better cater for their needs.
- In view of facilitating the reunification of **Cyprus**, you should, through the Aid Programme, continue strengthening social and economic conditions of the Turkish Cypriot Community and monitor implementation of the Green Line Regulation.
- I would like you to work on providing support **the eastern border regions** most affected by Russia's aggression to address their specific challenges and support them in the reorientation of their local economy.
- I would like you to reflect on the future of cohesion policy in a larger Union and on how to accelerate institutional convergence for candidate countries. In this context, you will also contribute to the **pre-enlargement policy reviews**.

You will work under my guidance on all of the above issues. The Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy will support you in the work related to your portfolio on cohesion policy, regional development and cities.

## 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,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ursula v. d. L.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Ursula von der Leyen  
*President of the European Commission*

