

# MISSION LETTER

Brussels, 17 September 2024

Ursula von der Leyen  
President of the European Commission

**Michael McGrath**

## Commissioner-designate for Democracy, Justice, and the Rule of Law

Dear Michael,

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 Democracy, Justice, and the Rule of Law.**

Europe's democracy and economy relies on justice and the rule of law. It makes our society work and ensures that rights are defended, corruption is punished, and contracts are enforced. Europe's economy and sustainable prosperity is heavily dependent on effective justice system. Rule of Law ensures that citizens can have confidence in state power being exercised fairly and objectively. It is a prerequisite for upholding our fundamental rights and values and it is crucial for the smooth functioning of our single market. We must continuously strive to uphold and strengthen our core values and principles that underpin our Union, our societies and our economies. You will also be responsible for consumers.

### *Protecting our democracy*

- I want you to lead the work on a new **European Democracy Shield**, to address the most severe risks to democracy in the EU and build on the work already done on the European Democracy Action Plan and the Defence of Democracy Package.
- You will work with other Members of College to step up our fight against **foreign information manipulation and interference**. We must strengthen our situational awareness and bolster our collective ability to detect, analyse and proactively counter threats. You will coordinate the work on **disinformation** and work with other Members of College to step up work on digital and media literacy and on prevention through pre-bunking.
- You will oversee the work to preserve the **fairness and integrity of elections** and work with the Parliament and the Council to find agreement on proposals still on the table, notably on the **European Political Parties and Foundations** and the transparency of interest representation on behalf of third countries.
- You will work to better **protect the safety of political candidates and elected representatives** who face mounting threats to their security and undue pressure.
- You will also focus on the implementation of the European Media Freedom Act and put forward proposals to further support and **protect independent media and journalists**, building on the work done to protect them from abusive lawsuits (SLAPPs) and other acts of pressure and unethical behaviour.

- You will step up engagement with civil society on democracy, rule of law and related issues. You will build a **Civil Society Platform** to support more systematic civil dialogue and work to strengthen protection of civil society, activists and human rights defenders in their work.

### *Strengthening the rule of law*

- You will lead the work on consolidating the **Rule of Law Report**. You will coordinate the work in reporting on the four pillars related to judicial independence, anti-corruption, media freedom and other institutional checks and balances and following up on the implementation of recommendations with Member States. You will engage with the European Parliament on key findings.
- You will steer work to add a **Single Market dimension in the Rule of Law Report** to address rule of law issues affecting companies, especially SMEs, operating across borders. You will also coordinate work to ensure that further enlargement countries join the Rule of Law Report as and when ready.
- I would like you to engage with Member States to support them to resolve rule of law-related issues. You will ensure **effective enforcement** where appropriate and support effort for a reinforced application of the **Article 7 Mechanism**.
- You should develop a clear **EU approach to anti-corruption**. Working closely with the Commissioner for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration you will ensure that EU funding can be dedicated to national measures on fighting corruption and protecting the EU's financial interests.
- You will work with the Commissioner for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration to ensure that **respect for the rule of law continues to be a must for EU funds**. You will work to build a closer link between the recommendations in the Rule of Law Report and financial support under the EU budget. The future long-term budget will have strong safeguards on the rule of law – including the general regime of conditionality, applying to all funds.
- You will be responsible for monitoring the application of the **Charter of Fundamental Rights** through an annual report to the European Parliament and the Council.
- You will focus on **communication and awareness-raising to promote a rule of law culture** among European citizens, authorities and all stakeholders.
- You will also cooperate closely on rule-of-law issues with the Council of Europe and with other international organisations. You will take forward and conclude the EU's accession to the **European Convention on Human Rights**.

## Justice

- You will lead the work to build an EU-wide legal status to help innovative companies grow, taking the form of a **28th regime** to allow companies to benefit from a simpler, harmonised set of rules.
- I would like you to develop an updated common policy framework and present the next **Consumer Agenda 2025-2030**, notably looking at how to protect vulnerable consumers and assess the need to update legislation and ensure enforcement. As part of this, you should also propose a new **Action Plan on consumers in the Single Market** to ensure consumers do not face unfair discrimination, keep benefits when crossing borders and are protected when buying goods or services.
- I would like you to focus on the impact and opportunities of digital technologies on consumers and our justice system. You will develop a **Digital Fairness Act** to tackle unethical techniques and commercial practices related to 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 tackling challenges with **e-commerce platforms**, notably to protect consumers and ensure they benefit from a level playing field.
- You will also drive forward our efforts to modernise, implement and enforce **product safety policies**. You will ensure that the EU continues to be a **global standard-setter** in terms of consumer protection and product safety.
- You will develop a strategy on the use of **digital technologies**, including of AI, to make EU civil and criminal justice systems more efficient, resilient and secure.
- You will ensure that the **General Data Protection Regulation** (GDPR) remains in line with the digital transformation and responds to law enforcement and commercial needs. You will work to ensure full enforcement of GDPR across Member States and promote trusted data flows with international partners.
- You will strengthen the **European Arrest Warrant** to allow judicial authorities to work more closely and to step cooperation between Europol and Eurojust.
- You should reflect on areas in which the **European Public Prosecutors' Office** will need more powers to look at cross-border serious crime, in particular corruption that impacts Union funds and cannot be handled alone by Member States. This will also look at how to enhance the complementarity between EPPO and OLAF.

As a rule, you will work under the guidance of the Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy. The Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers 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*