

MISSION LETTER

Brussels, 17 September 2024

Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Piotr Serafin

Commissioner-designate for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration

Dear Piotr,

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 me 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 Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration**.

The European budget is central to improving the lives of Europeans and delivering on our priorities. It has shown its true worth in helping to overcome a pandemic and energy crisis, saving millions of jobs during lockdowns, and investing in our clean and digital future. At the same time, there are many lessons that we can learn to make our budget better aligned with our priorities, more agile in tackling evolving challenges, and simpler in how it works, to provide more value for every euro invested.

You will lead the work to prepare the next long-term budget, lead the work to combat fraud and make sure the Commission is a high-performing and values-driven organisation that empowers staff to deliver for Europe.

Budget and Anti-Fraud

Your task will be to support me in preparing and negotiating the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for a **simpler, more focused and responsive budget delivering on our priorities** and in facilitating a smooth transition from the current budget to the next one. Your work will be central to our aim of being an Investment Commission.

- I want you to develop a new approach for a modern and reinforced EU budget, moving to a policy-based budget from a programme-based budget with at its core, working with other relevant Members of College.
 - A plan for each country **linking key reforms with investments** targeted to where EU action is most needed.
 - A **European Competitiveness Fund** establishing an investment capacity that will support strategic sectors critical to the EU competitiveness, including research and innovation, and Important Projects of Common European Interest.
 - A revamped **external action financing** to make it more impactful and targeted for our partners, and more aligned with our strategic interests.
 - I want you to develop a more impactful budget, ensuring a better use of our budget to **de-risk and leverage** further national, private, and institutional financing.
 - You will also lead the work to introduce **new own resources** and explore all sources of financing to ensure sufficient and sustainable funding for our common priorities as part of a modernised and strengthened revenue system.

- I would like you to consult and exchange broadly before the adoption of the MFF package and work closely with the European Parliament and Council throughout the negotiations to ensure a **swift and timely agreement**.
- You will continue to develop the **EU's role as an established issuer** in global financial markets.
- You will lead the work on a strengthened Commission framework and governance for **risk management of the EU financial activities**, including borrowing and lending operations, asset management and budgetary guarantees.
- You will lead the **preparation and negotiations of annual budgets** and ensure, with the support of other Members of College, that we continuously improve the overall performance of our budgetary spending. You will lead the Commission's work on the **annual discharge** process and coordinate the relations with the European Court of Auditors.
- You will also be responsible for the **protection of the EU budget and the fight against fraud**. In this regard, you will uphold accountability to the highest standards and protect the EU budget, notably against fraud, conflict of interests and rule of law breaches, including by coordinating the implementation of the **Conditionality Regulation**.
- You will ensure that the **respect of the rule of law will remain imperative for EU funds**, for both current and future budgets. You will build a close link between the recommendations in the Rule of Law Report and financial support under the EU budget.
- I would like you to lead a **review of the overall anti-fraud architecture** linked to the EU's financial interests. You will take into account the results of relevant ongoing evaluations and build on the work of Europol and the European Public Prosecutors' Office (EPPO).
- I would like you to develop a **framework for timely and effective information exchange** between the various investigative, prosecution and law enforcement bodies at EU level that currently cover the protection of the EU's financial interests.
- You will oversee and reinforce where necessary the preventive anti-fraud actions of the Commission. In this context, you will monitor the framework for the administrative investigations into irregularities by the **European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)** and assess the necessity to review OLAF's mandate in view of new tasks, such as support to the enforcement of EU law across Member States' borders.
- You will ensure **effective and efficient cooperation with the EPPO** to protect the EU budget and to ensure that the Commission can swiftly recover EU funds based on the outcome of the EPPO's investigations and prosecutions.

A modern public administration

Your task will be to ensure that Europe can draw on a modern, efficient public administration to deliver on our political priorities and make a difference for Europeans in their everyday life.

- I would like you to carry out a **large-scale review of the Commission's organisation and operations**, together with an external benchmarking exercise. You will be supported in this work by a High-Level reflection group on the future of the Commission's civil service.
- I want the Commission to be a truly **inclusive and sustainable place of work**. You will work with me on improving the geographical balance of our staff, consolidating the progress on gender balance achieved during the last mandate, and making our workforce better reflect European society. You will also ensure that our revamped anti-harassment policy contributes to a safe and respectful workplace.
- You will make proposals to **improve recruitment and talent management** to attract and retain a skilled, diverse, versatile, and motivated workforce at all places of employment. You will also ensure that the Commission implements an efficient and attractive mobility policy for its staff across the organisation.
- I want you to ensure that the Commission becomes **ever more agile**, by adapting its structures, working methods and resources to evolving needs and priorities.
- You will champion our twin transition, from reducing footprint to making use of new technologies. You will continue the move to **more collaborative working structures and methods**, including by adopting digital and knowledge management tools.
- You will **simplify, harmonise and speed up HR policies and processes**, including by making the modernisation of HR processes a priority. You will aim for increased cooperation and synergies with other EU institutions, agencies and bodies.
- In light of a future larger Union, you will assess the impact and preparatory work needed for the European public administration.

You will report directly to me on the above issues.

The Directorate-General for Budget, the Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security, the Directorate-General for Translation, the Directorate-General for Interpretation and OLAF will support you in your work. I would also like you to chair the Audit Progress Committee and be responsible for the Internal Audit Service.

You will also be responsible for the Office for the Administration and Payment of Individual Entitlements, the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels, the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Luxembourg, the European Personnel Selection Office and the European School of Administration.

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