

Guide to the new European Parliament and European Commission



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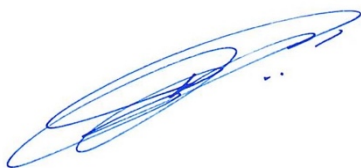
1. INTRODUCTION

Every five years, a new European Parliament is elected, and a new European Commission appointed. This year (23-25 May 2019), over 200 million Europeans voted to elect their Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). Once elected, one of the first orders of business for the European Parliament is whether or not to ratify the proposed new President of the European Commission, after what is usually a very tough hearing. The Parliament's power to approve or reject the candidate Commission President, gives democratic legitimacy to the post.

On 16 July, the European Parliament elected German ex-Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen as the new European Commission President, making her the first woman to hold the post. As the new President elect, her first job is to put together a College of Commissioners (one Commissioner per policy area). Each EU Member State will nominate their candidate Commissioner. Von der Leyen, however, has asked every national capital to nominate two aspirant Commissioners – one male, one female – as she aspires to have a gender-balanced Commission. It is up to her to choose which candidate will make the cut.

In late September/October, during a number of Parliamentary committee hearings, the European Parliament will 'grill' the Commissioners-designate, based on their competencies and abilities, to see whether they are fit for the job. Once this is done, the Parliament will vote 'in block' on the entire College of Commissioners by the end of October. Like the Commission President, the College gets its democratic legitimacy by means of this Parliamentary vote.

By means of this guide, we wish to inform you on the procedures, as well as the results and implications of the new European Parliament and the new European Commission. Do not hesitate to contact us, should you have any questions or inquiries.



Patrick Gibbels
Director

2. THE NEW EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The new European Parliament, also known as the 9th Legislature, met for the first time in Strasbourg on 2-4 July 2019. As its first order of business, the Parliament elected its President. Unlike the Parliament itself, which is elected for a term of five years, its President only serves for two-and-a-half years. New elections are held at mid-term. Alongside the Parliament's President, a total of 14 Vice-Presidents and 5 Quaestors are elected, equally for two-and-a-half years. The political groups decided who will have a seat in which Committees, which they announced during a plenary session. The Committees in turn elected their Chairs and Vice-Chairs (see Annex I).

2.1. The Bureau

The internal organisation of the European Parliament is managed by *the bureau*, which consists of the Parliament's President, his 14 Vice-Presidents and 5 Quaestors. The President is the legal representative of the European Parliament and is responsible for supervising its work. He also chairs the Plenary sessions. Some duties can be delegated to his Vice-Presidents. Financial and administrative matters that concern MEPs are handled by the Quaestors.

2.1.1. The European Parliament's President

This term, the Parliament elected Italian MEP David Sassoli (Socialists and Democrats) as President, who first joined the European Parliament in 2009. He will stay in power until the beginning of 2022.

In accordance with the Parliament's Rules of Procedure, a Presidential candidate can be put forward either by a political group or by 5% of Members of the European Parliament. Like the European Commission President, the Parliament's President is elected by secret ballot and by absolute majority (see Annex II).

2.1.2 The European Parliament's Vice Presidents

Like the President, the Vice-Presidents are elected for 2.5 years. The new VPs represent six political groups and ten Member States. They are elected in a single ballot, by absolute majority. If not all 14 candidates achieve the minimum required votes, a second ballot is held to fill the remaining positions, under the same conditions. Should a third vote be necessary,

these last seats are assigned under simple majority. There is a hierarchy amongst the 14 Vice-Presidents in order in which they are elected (number of votes) and, if there is a tie, by age.

The EP President can be substituted by the Vice-Presidents if needed. Alongside the rest of the Bureau, the Vice-Presidents draft the Parliament's preliminary budget. They also decide on matters of staff and administration as well as organisational matters.

2.1.3 The European Parliament's Quaestors

The European Parliament's Questors are elected right after the Vice-Presidents, in accordance with the same procedures. Political groups tend to ensure that the election of Vice-Presidents and Quaestors mirror the size of the groups as well as the outcomes of the President's election. Quaestors handle Financial and administrative matters that concern MEPs

2.2 Composition of the new European Parliament

Since the election outcomes were clear, the formation of the political groups has started. MEPs from all EU Member States organised themselves in these groups, based on their political affiliations.

For a political group to be in accordance with the European Parliament's rules of procedure, there is a requirement of at least 25 MEPs, who must represent at least 25% of Member States. MEPs are free to choose not to belong to any of the political groups. As it stands, 57 MEPs have chosen this option. These Members are described as NI (non-attached).

The most visible change compared to the previous European Parliament (8th Legislature) is the name-change from the ALDE group (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats) to *Renew Europe*. The inspiration for the name came from the slogan used during the election campaigns of the seven main candidates of 'Team Europe'. The new group counts 108 MEPs from 22 countries.

3. THE NEW EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Similar to the European Parliament, the European Commission is renewed every five years. The European Commission has the right of initiative, which means it can propose new EU legislation, for the European Parliament to scrutinize (and amend) and for the European Council to ratify (or reject). The Commission is led by its President, who is in charge of compiling and managing her cabinet of Commissioners. She will choose from a selection of candidates, put forward by the Member States. There will be two Executive Vice-Presidents, a number of Vice-Presidents and Commissioner. Together they are the political driving force, overseeing the European Commission's Directorates-General.

3.1. European Commission: President

Based on the European election results, the European Council President consults with the European Parliament regarding a potential candidate for the post of European Commission President. Once these consultations are done, it is the European Council President who proposes a candidate to his own Council, which must agree by Qualified Majority Voting (QMV). QMV is reached by the following options:

- Majority of countries: 55% (comprising of at least 16 of them)
- Or 72% if acting on a proposal that was tabled neither by the European Commission nor the High Representative
- And, by majority of population: 65%

Once the Council has accepted the candidate, it is up to the European Parliament to ratify or reject the candidate Commission President, after examining or 'grilling' her.

After being elected and approved, the Commission President Elect will start forming her cabinet. The Commission is set to take office on 1 November.

3.1.2. The new European Commission President: Ursula von der Leyen

On 16 July, the European Parliament elected German ex-Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen as the new European Commission President, making her the first woman to hold the post. As the new President elect, her first job is to put together a College of Commissioners (one Commissioner per policy area). Each EU Member State will nominate their candidate Commissioner. Von der Leyen, however, has asked every national capital to nominate two aspirant Commissioners – one male, one female – as she aspires to have a gender-balanced Commission. It is up to her to choose which candidate will make the cut.

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3.2 Ursula von der Leyen’s political priorities.

On 16 July 2019, the new European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, made a speech in which she set out her main priorities for her five-year term. Given that she needed to ‘win over’ the left and the socialists, her priorities reflect this to some extent:

- A European Green Deal;
- An economy that works for people;
- A Europe fit for the digital age;
- Protecting our European way of life;
- A stronger Europe in the world;
- A new push for European democracy

Naturally, the European Commission will adapt and adjust policy when and where needed, during the course of its term, but these will remain the main principles.

3.2.1 A European Green Deal

Von der Leyen wishes for Europe to become the first climate-neutral continent. She vowed to propose a European Green deal in her first 100 days in office, including *the 2050 climate neutrality target enshrined into law*. Von der Leyen will also propose to *extend the Emissions Trading System*, as well as introducing a *Carbon Border Tax*, avoiding carbon leakage. She also wishes to steer Europe into becoming a world leader in *Circular Economy*, *by introducing a New Circular Economy Action Plan*. To keep up with the transformations, *Cohesion Funds* will play an important role. As not all EU Member States start from the same point, a *Just Transition Fund* will be created, in order for less advanced countries to keep up. Via a *European Climate Pact* – a cooperation between regional and local communities, civil society, industry and schools, Von der Leyen wants to educate and motivate citizens as well as companies into a change in behavior.

Through a Sustainable Europe Investment Plan, the European Commission will invest record amounts (over €1 trillion of investment over the next ten years) into research and innovation. There will also be a *strategy for green financing* and *parts of the European Investment Bank will be turned into Europe’s climate bank*.

There will be more ambitious targets for 2030 (55%), and the EU aims to increase this level of ambition in other major emitters.

Lastly, the President will steer the EU into Preserving Europe's natural environment by presenting a Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, by means of a new Farm to Fork Strategy on sustainable food; by preserving and investing into rural areas; and by becoming a leader on the issue of single-use plastic.

3.2.2. An economy that works for people

Von der Leyen's agenda is one of social fairness and prosperity, in which she wishes to strengthen the social market economy. One of the ways she intends to achieve this is by *Supporting small business*, focusing on innovation and technology and putting forward a *dedicated SME strategy*. The Commission will create a *private-public fund specializing in Initial Public Offerings of SMEs*, in support of the *completion of the Capital Markets Union*.

A Deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union will be undertaken, via a *Budgetary Instrument for Convergence and Competitiveness for the euro area*. Von der Leyen will make *full use of the flexibility allowed within the Stability and Growth Pact*, whilst focusing on *completing in the Banking Union*. To ensure people's peace of mind, there will be a *European Deposit Insurance Scheme*. The *European Semester should be refocused to integrate the UN's Sustainable Development Goals* and the *European Parliament should have a louder voice in the EU's economic governance*.

Social and Market should be reconciled. Von der Leyen will develop an action plan which will fully implement the *European Pillar of Social Rights*. Within the first 100 days of her mandate, the President will propose a legal instrument to ensure that *Every worker in the EU has a fair minimum wage*. She wants to keep the *Social Dialogue* (employer groups and unions) alive and wishes to *improve labour conditions of platform workers*, as well as setting up a *European Unemployment Benefit Reinsurance Scheme*, protecting citizens from external shocks, whilst reducing the pressure on public finances. To *fight poverty* and support every child in need, Von der Leyen proposes to set up a *European Child Guarantee* as well as fully implementing the *Work-Life Balance Directive*. She will back this up with investment from the *European Social Fund+*. Lastly, the President will establish a *European plan to fight cancer*.

Von der Leyen aims to create a *Union of Equality*, with *Anti-discrimination legislation* and a new *European Gender Strategy*, including *binding pay transparency measures* and *gender balanced Board rooms*. *Domestic violence should be prevented and victims protected*. *Violence against women should be on the list of EU crimes defined in the Treaty*.

Fair Taxation is a key foundation of the social market economy. The *EU and international corporate tax systems are in urgent need of reform*. *Taxation of big tech companies* will be one of Von der Leyen's priorities. *If by the end of 2020 there is still no global solution for a fair digital tact, the EU should act alone*. *A common consolidated corporate tax base* would provide businesses with clear rules to calculate their corporate tax base in the EU. Lastly, the *fight against tax fraud will be intensified*.

3.2.3. A Europe fit for the digital age

The new Commission wants to fully grasp the opportunities of the digital age in a safe and ethical manner. Europe's leading role in setting telecoms standards will be continued by *developing joint standards for its 5G networks and by achieving technological sovereignty*. Similarly, *joint standards will be defined for a new generation of technologies that will become the global norm*, i.e. blockchain. In her first 100 days in office, von der Leyen *will put forward legislation for a coordinated European approach on the human and ethical implications of Artificial Intelligence*, prioritizing investments through the Multiannual Financial Framework as well as public-private partnerships.

An upgrade of Europe's liability and safety rules for digital platforms, products and services, will be achieved through a new *Digital Services Act* and by completing the Digital Single Market. A *Joint Cyber Unit* should speed up information sharing. It also serves as a means of protection. Further, von der Leyen will drive the digitalization of the European Commission itself.

Lastly, she aims to *Empower people through education and skills*. The *European Education Area should be a reality by 2025*. The goal is to get Europe up to speed on digital skills by updating the *Digital Education Action Plan* – digital literacy for all. The President supports the Parliament's idea to *triple the Erasmus+ budget as part of the next long-term budget*.

3.2.4. Protecting our European way of life

Von der Leyen envisions better protection of the Union's citizens and its values. The EU is a *Community of Law, leaving no compromise when it comes to defending its core values*. She intends to *make the rule of law an integral part of the next Multiannual Financial Framework*.

The President wants *Strong borders and a fresh start on migration*, proposing a *New Pact on Migration and Asylum* and a *Common European Asylum System*. The EU needs strong external borders. Therefore, the ambition is to create a *reinforced European Border and Coast Guard Agency*. This will allow the EU to *return to a fully functioning Schengen Area*.

With regards to asylum, *responsibility and burden needs to be shared*. This responsibility starts in the home countries of those who come to the EU, as they often feel they do not have any other options. By *investing in the improvement of the perspectives of the young generation in their countries of origin*, we reduce the need and willingness of these people to their risky journeys. *Criminals trafficking human beings, should not be given the opportunity to do so. Cooperation with third countries is key.* ^

Internal security will also be one of von der Leyen's pillars. Every person in the EU has the right to feel safe. Cross-border cooperation is necessary to fight crime and terrorism. *The European Public Prosecutor's Office should have more muscle and authority and be able to*

investigate and prosecute cross-border terrorism. The Customs Union must be advanced, fighting money laundering and terrorist financing.

3.2.5. A stronger Europe in the world

The President wants *Europe to be a responsible global leader*, by means of multilateralism and by *safeguarding the rules-based global order*.

A strong, open and fair trade agenda will strengthen Europe's responsible leadership role even further. Trade is incredibly important for the EU, making up more than a third of the EU's GDP. Von der Leyen will work towards strengthening relations with trade partners whilst *ensuring the highest level of transparency, as well as protecting climate and environment and having a zero-tolerance stance on child labour*. Von der Leyen will appoint a *Chief Trade Enforcement Officer*, who will report regularly to the European Parliament. Europe will keep a strong anti-dumping policy and *intends to lead efforts on reforming the World Trade Organization*.

To defend Europe, the Commission wants to take serious steps towards a genuine European Defense Union in the next five years.

3.2.6. A new push for European democracy

It is von der Leyen's ambition to strengthen European democracy. In 2020, a *Conference on the Future of Europe* will be launched, bringing together citizens, civil society and European Institutions. The Conference will run for two years.

Von der Leyen intends to *strengthen the partnership between the European Commission and the European Parliament, thereby supporting a right of initiative for the European Parliament*. Parliamentary resolutions requesting legislative action from the Commission, and which are carried by a majority of the members, von der Leyen will respond with a legislative act, whilst respecting the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity. European Commissioners will furthermore be asked to *Brief the European Parliament at all stages of all international negotiations*. The President is also willing to *revive the tradition of a Question Hour*. The EU must *move towards full co-decision power for the European Parliament and away from unanimity for climate, energy, social and taxation policies*.

Von der Leyen wants to *improve the way EU leaders are elected* – the *Spitzenkandidaten* system. The aforementioned Conference on the Future of Europe should propose legislative proposals on this subject by mid-2020 at the latest and should lead to *new rules well before the European Elections of 2024*.

An independent ethics body should be established, overseeing all EU Institutions and the President believes there should be more transparency throughout the legislative process.

The EU should must protect its democracy from external interference. Disinformation and online hate-speech must be stopped. Von der Leyen will put forward a *European Democracy Action Plan*.

The priorities outlined by Von der Leyen will form the basis for the first ever Multiannual Programme to be agreed by the three Institutions in 2019.

Do not hesitate to contact us, should you have any inquiries.

ANNEX I: THE BUREAU

WHO's WHO

THE BUREAU



DAVID SASSOLI
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT PRESIDENT

The president is elected for a renewable term of two-and-a-half years

14 Vice-presidents

They chair debates when the president is not in the chamber.
The president can also delegate duties to them.



**MAIREAD
McGUINNESS**
FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT



**PEDRO
SILVA PEREIRA**



**RAINER
WIELAND**



**KATARINA
BARLEY**



**OTHMAR
KARAS**



**EWA
KOPACZ**



**KLARA
DOBREV**



**DITA
CHARANZOVA**



**NICOLA
BEER**



**LIVIA
JÁROKA**



**HEIDI
HAUTALA**



**MARCEL
KOLAJA**



**DIMITRIOS
PAPADIMOULIS**



**FABIO MASSIMO
CASTALDO**



5 Quaestors¹

They are responsible, under the Bureau's instructions, for administrative
and financial matters of direct concern to Members.



**ANNE
SANDER**



**MONIKA
BEŇOVÁ**



**DAVID
CASA**



**GILLES
BOYER**



**KAROL
KARSKI**




¹Pursuant to Rule 24 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the
Quaestors are members of the Bureau in an advisory
capacity



ANNEX II: HOW THE BUREAU IS ELECTED

ELECTION



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

HOW TO ELECT...



THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT


A renewable term of two-and-a-half years

ELECTION PROCEDURE

The candidate who obtains an absolute majority of the votes cast in a secret ballot is elected president. If an absolute majority cannot be obtained after three ballots, the fourth ballot will be confined to the two members who obtained the highest number of votes in the third ballot.

DUTIES

- The president directs Parliament's activities, chairs plenary sittings and declares the EU budget finally adopted.
- The president represents Parliament in the outside world and in its relations with the other EU institutions.



14 VICE-PRESIDENTS

Elected on a single ballot

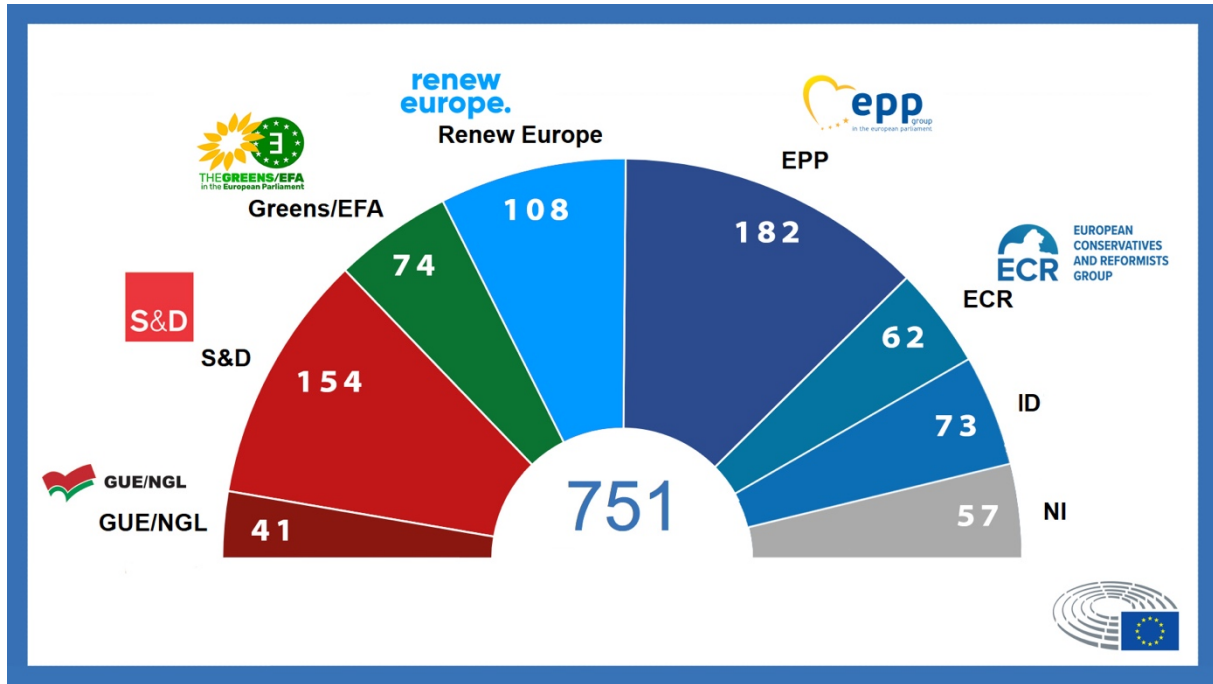
DUTIES

They chair plenary sessions in the absence of the President, who may also ask them to represent Parliament at external events

Source: European Parliament's rules of procedure



ANNEX III: COMPOSITION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



- **EPP** - Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)
- **S&D** - Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament
- **ECR** - European Conservatives and Reformists Group
- **Renew Europe** - Renew Europe group
- **GUE/NGL** - Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left
- **Greens/EFA** - Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
- **ID** - Identity and Democracy
- **NI** - Non-attached Members

ANNEX VI: ELECTING THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT

