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## Von der Leyen: “Europe, our pole star.” New portfolios: defense, Mediterranean and housing

Six executive Vice-Presidents, eleven women out of 27 Commissioners (40%), new portfolios (Defence, Mediterranean, Demography, Housing, Animal Welfare), signalling a general shift of the College towards conservative positions, perhaps also linked to the results of the June elections for the renewal of the European Parliament. These, in a nutshell, are the main features of the new EU Commission headed by **Ursula von der Leyen**, whose composition was presented on Tuesday 17 September in Strasbourg, first to the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament and then to journalists attending the plenary meeting. In accordance with the Treaties, all the Commissioners-designate will undergo a hearing - an actual exam - before the European Parliament's committees, where they will have to demonstrate their "pro-European" attitude, their competence in the field of their mandate, their teamwork spirit and their communication skills. **From the Green Deal to defence.** “Our core priorities are built around prosperity, security and democracy. The backdrop is: competitiveness in the Green and digital transitions.” In keeping with the Draghi Report, “we need more coordination between the common policies,” said Ursula von der Leyen as she introduced the College of Commissioners. “The fundamental message is that we all have to work together. Europe's interest is our guiding star.” Speaking to journalists, von der Leyen explained that the last Commission was created with climate change and the Green Deal as its top priorities: “The same challenge exists today, but we are faced with other key priorities, such as war, security and competitiveness.” Von der Leyen's speech and the content attributed to the individual portfolios point to a specific agenda. In fact, the President stressed the need to “strengthen our tech-sovereignty, security and democracy.” She called for “a competitive, decarbonised and circular economy, with a fair transition for all.” Commitments include: designing a bold industrial strategy with innovation and investment at its heart; boosting European cohesion and regions; “supporting people, skills and our social model; ensuring Europe can assert its interests and lead in the world.” **Six Vice-Presidents.** Ursula von der Leyen then announced the list of Vice-Presidents with their respective portfolios, before moving on to the remaining twenty Commissioners. She pointed out, among other things, that “20 countries had asked for mandates on the economy...”. Von der Leyen thus announced that **Teresa Ribera** will be Executive Vice-President “of a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition.” She will also be responsible for Competition policy. “She will guide the work to ensure that Europe stays on track for its goals set out in the European Green Deal.” **Henna Virkkunen** will be the Executive Vice-President for Tech-Sovereignty, Security and Democracy. She will also be responsible for the portfolio on digital and frontier technologies. “I will ask Henna – von der Leyen remarked - to look at the internal and external aspects of security. But also to strengthen the foundations of our democracy, such as the rule of law, and protect it wherever it comes under attack”. **Stéphane Séjourné** will be the Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy. He will also be responsible for the Industry, SMEs and the Single Market portfolio. “As you already know, **Kaja Kallas** will be our High Representative and Vice-President. We are in an era of geostrategic rivalries and instability. Our foreign and security policy must be designed with this reality in mind.” “I am also very happy to entrust the role of Executive Vice-President for People, Skills and Preparedness to Roxana Mînzatu. She will have the responsibility for skills, education and culture, quality jobs and social rights”, with special attention to demography. “Roxana will notably lead on a Union of Skills and the European Pillar of Social Rights.” **Raffaele Fitto** “will be Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms. He will be responsible for the portfolio dealing with cohesion policy, regional development and cities. We will draw on his extensive experience to help modernise and strengthen our cohesion, investment and growth policies.” Von der Leyen reiterated Fitto's specific competence stating that “Italy is an important country.” Fitto's appointment - hailed by the Italian government as a very good signal (“Italy is back in the limelight”) - sparked questions from

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journalists and some remarks from MEPs about the fact that the Italian Commissioner is a member of a government and a political party that failed to give Von der Leyen a vote of confidence. **All the Commissioners-designate.** Following the announcement of the six Vice-Presidents, Ursula von der Leyen presented the other twenty Commissioners. **Maroš Šefčovič** will be Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security: "This is a new portfolio which includes customs policy." Von der Leyen added: "I have also entrusted him with a second role: Commissioner for Interinstitutional Relations and Transparency. **Valdis Dombrovskis** - the other senior member of the Commission - will have a double role as Commissioner for Economy and Productivity and Commissioner for Implementation and Simplification. **Dubravka Šuica** will be the Commissioner for the Mediterranean. "I am entrusting her with this new role. She will also be responsible for the wider southern neighbourhood." **Olivér Várhelyi** will be Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare. "He will be responsible for building the European Health Union and continuing the work on beating cancer." **Wopke Hoekstra** will be the Commissioner for Climate. **Andrius Kubilius** will be the Commissioner for Defence and Space. **Marta Kos** (Slovenia, awaiting the green light from the national parliament) will be Commissioner for Enlargement. **Jozef Šikela** will be the Commissioner for International Partnerships. **Costas Kadis** will be the Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans; **Maria Luís Albuquerque** will be the Commissioner for Financial Services and the Savings and Investment Union; **Hadja Lahbib** will be the Commissioner for Preparedness and Crisis Management. Furthermore, **Magnus Brunner** will be the Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration; **Jessika Roswall's** portfolio includes Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy; **Piotr Serafin** will be the Commissioner for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration; **Dan Jørgensen** will be the Commissioner for Energy and Housing; **Ekaterina Zaharieva** will be in charge of Research and Innovation; Michael McGrath will be Commissioner for Democracy, Justice and the Rule of Law; **Apostolos Tzitzikostas** will be Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism; **Christophe Hansen** will be the Commissioner for Agriculture and Food; **Glenn Micallef** will be Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Culture, Youth and Sport.

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