

15 - 19 July 2024

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### I. Political and Policy Developments

#### 1. von der Leyen re-elected as Commission President

Ursula von der Leyen has been confirmed as Commission President by the European Parliament with 401 votes in favour, 284 against, and 22 blank or invalid.

Von der Leyen presented her [Political Guidelines](#) ahead of the vote. While she tried to strike a balance among political groups, addressing multiple requests from different sides of the aisle, she clearly sought support from the Greens, defending the merits of the Green Deal.

The votes from Green MEPs proved decisive, while support from the right was lower than expected, notably with Italian PM Giorgia Meloni's MEPs voting against. The influence that the Greens will have on the new Commission agenda will be a key thing to watch over the coming weeks and months.

#### Key takeaways

- **Competitiveness will be a key theme of the new Commission.** VDL announced a *European Competitiveness Fund*, to finance strategic technologies like AI or clean tech, and said the next Commission will have a strong focus on cutting red tape, with a Commission Vice President in charge of overseeing efforts to cut red tape. VDL also highlighted the need for a new competition policy approach, with easier merger approvals and faster assessment of national subsidies, and painted a new "Economic Foreign Policy" based on the EU's Economic Security Strategy, with a focus on trade defence measures, including review of FDI screening regime, and critical raw materials.
- **The Green Deal is still alive, but needs pragmatism.** VDL committed to ambitious emission reduction goals, namely a 90% GHG emission reduction by 2040, highlighting the importance of climate preparedness and the need to drive away from fossil fuels. At the same time, she stressed that the Green Deal should be implemented "with pragmatism, technology neutrality and innovation". She announced a *Clean Industrial Deal* focused on enabling investment in infrastructure and energy intensive sectors, as well as a *New Circular Economy Act*, to "create

market demand for secondary materials and a single market for waste, notably in relation to critical raw materials.”

- **New focus on defence, housing and migration.** VDL called for a *Defence Union*, with increased and streamlined defence spending. The new Commission will have a Commissioner for Defence, who will present a White Paper. VDL put a lot of focus on housing, announcing that the issue will be under the remit of a commissioner. VDL also floated a new policy approach on migrant returns, and said the new Commission will work on tripling the staff of Frontex, as well as doubling Europol's. She also announced a Commissioner for the Mediterranean.

Von der Leyen will now work on the puzzle of the new Commission over the summer, informally negotiating portfolios with national governments.

## 2. European Parliament elects top officials, appoints committees members

During the plenary session, Roberta Metsola was re-elected as President of the European Parliament with 562 votes in favour. Her only competitor, former Spanish Equality Minister Irene Montero (The Left), received 61 votes.

Fourteen vice-presidents were elected: six from the Socialists and Democrats (S&D), three from the European People's Party (EPP), two from European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), and one each from Renew Europe, the Greens, and The Left. The far-right Patriots for Europe (PfE) failed to secure any positions - this confirms the continuation of the *cordon sanitaire*, an informal agreement among centrist forces to prevent the far-right from assuming senior posts.

Notable appointees include former Polish PM Ewa Kopacz (EPP), former German Justice Minister Katarina Barley (EPP), former Romanian Minister for European Affairs Victor Negrescu (S&D) and former Belgian PM Sophie Wilmès (Renew).

MEPs also elected five quaestors, and appointed members of its standing committees and subcommittees. Constitutive meetings will take place on July 23, where members will elect their Chair and vice-Chairs for a two-and-a-half year mandate.

## 3. Šuica set for another term

MEP Peter Liese, the EPP's environment coordinator, suggested outgoing Commission Vice President Dubravka Šuica as the next Health Commissioner, citing her health-related work. However, Šuica declined interest in the position, with her government reportedly aiming to retain the demography portfolio or secure a role related to cohesion, enlargement, or funding.

## 4. Kallas resigns as Estonian PM

Estonian PM Kaja Kallas formally resigned from her post, with a view to becoming the EU's next High Representative for Foreign Affairs. Estonia's ruling coalition is negotiating to form

a new government, expected to take office in early August. Kallas and other commissioner candidates will be grilled by MEPs after the summer recess.

### 5. French government steps down; new National Assembly President elected

French President Emmanuel Macron [accepted](#) PM Gabriel Attal's resignation, initiating a transition period where the outgoing administration will serve as a caretaker government. The duration of this transition is uncertain. Despite winning the most seats, the leftist New Popular Front (NFP) has yet to agree on a candidate for the next PM.

In an important political development, centrist MP Yaël Braun-Pivet was re-elected as President of the National Assembly with 220 votes, defeating André Chassaigne (NFP) and Sébastien Chenu (National Rally). Her victory, secured by an alliance between Macron's centrist bloc and the "Republican Right" (formerly The Republicans), weakens the NFP and increases the likelihood of Macron appointing a centrist premier.

## II. Key institutional milestones

Date	Event
22-25 July	Formation of European Parliament committees
July-August	Commission President receives commissioner-candidates
2 September	Presentation of organigramme & mission letters
20 September	European Parliament sends questionnaires to Commission
29 September	Commissioner replies to questionnaires
30 September - 4 October	European Commissioner-candidates hearings
21 October	European Parliament vote on the new Commission
1 November	New European Commission takes office
1 December	New European Council President takes office