

**2 - 6 September 2024**

## I. Political and Policy Developments

1. New Commission puzzle taking shape
2. Draghi report expected on Monday
3. Macron appoints conservative Michel Barnier as Prime Minister
4. Scholz coalition weaker after far-right wins regional elections

## II. Key institutional milestones

### I. Political and Policy Developments

#### 1. New Commission puzzle taking shape

The new Commission lineup is beginning to take shape. A leak circulating in Brussels confirms the following executive vice presidencies:

- **Thierry Breton** (France, Renew Europe): Industry and Strategic Autonomy
- **Raffaele Fitto** (Italy, ECR): Economy and Post-Pandemic Recovery
- **Teresa Ribera** (Spain, S&D): Digital Green Transition
- **Maroš Šefčovič** (Slovakia, Independent): Inter-Institutional Affairs
- **Valdis Dombrovskis** (Latvia, EPP): Enlargement and Ukraine
- **Kaja Kallas** (Estonia, Renew Europe): High Representative for Foreign Affairs

Fitto, from the right-wing ECR, is expected to face opposition from centre-left parties, with Renew Europe leader Valérie Hayer calling his appointment unacceptable.

The EPP is set to dominate key portfolios: Wopke Hoekstra (Netherlands) for trade, Magnus Brunner (Austria) for competition, and Andrius Kubilius (Lithuania) for security. The competitiveness portfolio may go to Henna Virkkunen (Finland) or Jessica Roswall (Sweden), while Christophe Hansen (Luxembourg) or Maria Luisa Albuquerque (Portugal) are frontrunners for agriculture. The S&D and Renew Europe are expected to secure portfolios related to financial services, climate and equality.

Ursula von der Leyen will meet European Parliament leaders on 11 September to discuss the new Commission lineup, a necessary step before commissioner hearings can be scheduled. Reports suggest that these hearings may not take place before mid-October due to the Parliament's packed schedule and lengthy conflict-of-interest checks, pushing the confirmation vote to late November and the new Commission's start to early December.

#### 2. Draghi report expected on Monday

Mario Draghi, former ECB President and Italian PM, visited Brussels to preview his report on Europe's future competitiveness, due for release on 9 September. The report will include proposals on how to address key EU challenges including productivity, the energy transition and social inclusion. It is expected to call for a less strict competition policy when it comes to

creating European champions across key sectors including energy and telecoms, as well as for unrestricted EU funding for defence. The report is also expected to focus on the need for the EU to accelerate its digital transition and enhance self-sufficiency, highlighting issues such as reliance on critical minerals from China.

Draghi confirmed the report will shape the mission letters for Commissioner candidates, and called for unprecedented Member State cooperation and sweeping EU institutional reforms. MEPs, while eager for the full report, noted the briefing lacked details and concrete policy recommendations.

### 3. Macron appoints conservative Michel Barnier as Prime Minister

After two months of political deadlock, French President Emmanuel Macron has appointed Michel Barnier as Prime Minister. A key figure in the centre-right Republicans (LR), Barnier has held various high-profile roles, including EU Brexit negotiator and European Commissioner.

Reactions have been mixed. While LR and most of Macron’s bloc support the appointment, the leftist New Popular Front (NFP) opposes it and plans to file a no-confidence motion. The position of the far-right National Rally (RN) will be pivotal, as its support could provide the NFP with the votes needed to topple Barnier’s government. RN said that it will take a decision on whether to back the no confidence motion during Barnier’s first National Assembly address, emphasising priorities like purchasing power, immigration, and security.

### 4. Scholz coalition weaker after far-right wins regional elections

The result of last weekend’s regional selections, which saw far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) scoring major wins in two eastern German states, were a serious blow to Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s centre-left coalition.

The poor performance by coalition parties has fuelled internal tensions and calls for snap elections, with the Free Democratic Party (FDP) deputy leader Wolfgang Kubicki arguing the coalition has lost its legitimacy. This is likely to have impacts on the government’s political agenda, especially if the AfD continues to grow in popularity ahead of the 2025 federal elections. The AfD is critical of EU integration, opposes German military aid for Ukraine, and calls for a harder stance on immigration.

## II. Key institutional milestones

Date	Event
11 September	Presentation of organigramme & mission letters
Mid-October (exp)	European Commissioner-candidates hearings
25 - 28 November (exp)	European Parliament vote on the new Commission
1 December (exp)	New European Commission takes office
1 December	New European Council President takes office