

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: President von der Leyen Nominates New EU Commissioners

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Report Highlights:

On September 17, 2024, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen unveiled her list of EU Commissioners-designate for 2024-2029. Christophe Hansen from Luxembourg is the Commissioner-Designate for Agriculture and Food, Olivér Várhelyi from Hungary is the Commissioner-Designate for Health and Animal Welfare, and Jessika Roswall from Sweden is the Commissioner-Designate for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy.

On September 17, 2024, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who was elected for a second mandate over the summer, unveiled her list of the EU Commissioners-designate for 2024-2029. She also unveiled the [mission letters](#) for the new commissioners setting out their priorities for the new mandate.

Six of the new Commissioners-designate were nominated to act as Executive Vice-Presidents (EVP). While EVPs manage some specific portfolios, they largely play a coordinating role to advance broad strategic priorities within the College of Commissioners.

Figure 1: The structure of the 2024-2029 Commission



Source: European Commission

President von der Leyen explained that the new Commissioners will work toward new Commission-wide priorities built around prosperity, security, democracy, and a key focus on competitiveness including “building a competitive, decarbonized and circular economy, with a fair transition for all.”

Commissioner-Designate for Agriculture and Food

Christophe Hansen from Luxembourg is the Commissioner-Designate for Agriculture and Food. This is the first time “food” is added to the title of the Agriculture Commissioner. Mr. Hansen has a master’s degree in Geosciences, Environmental Sciences and Risk Management from the Louis Pasteur University, Strasbourg. He has been a member of the European Parliament since 2018, where he was the rapporteur for the EU Deforestation Regulation.

In his mission letter from President von der Leyen, Mr. Hansen is tasked with strengthening the competitiveness, resilience, and sustainability of the agricultural sector based on the recommendations of the [Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture](#) published in early September 2024. To do so, the new Commissioner for Agriculture and Food will propose, within the first 100 days of the von der Leyen II Commission, a **Vision for Agriculture and Food** which will assess the competitiveness and sustainability of the EU farming sector, including the promotion of new technologies and emerging products in the agrifood sector.

Other priorities of the new Agriculture and Food Commissioner include:

- Reforming the Common Agriculture policy with an emphasis on small-scale farmers and positive environmental and social outcomes.
- Ensuring that farmers have a fair and sufficient income, including through a reform of the Unfair Trading Practices Directive.
- Developing a proposal on an EU-wide benchmarking system for sustainability.
- Strengthening EU food sovereignty through the diversification and reduction of imports of critical inputs and commodities. This is to be done through more reciprocity and a level playing field in international trade.
- Reviewing agricultural policies in view of future enlargement, including Ukraine.

The Commissioner for Food and Agriculture will assume responsibility for the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development.

Commissioner-Designate for Health and Animal Welfare

Olivér Várhelyi from Hungary is the Commissioner-Designate for Health and Animal Welfare. The phrase “food safety” has been dropped from the Commissioner’s title, but it remains a part of his portfolio. Mr. Várhelyi holds a Law degree from University of Szeged. He was European Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement in the previous von der Leyen Commission (2019-2024) and before that he was Permanent Representative of Hungary to the EU.

In his mission letter, he is tasked with building on the One Health approach that was launched during the last mandate. He is the first Commissioner to be directly tasked with managing animal welfare issues, which has been a long-standing request of animal welfare non-governmental organizations.

Other priorities of the new Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare include:

- Continuing work on anti-microbial resistance.

- Modernizing the rules on animal welfare, including new standards that take into account sustainability, ethics, scientific and economic considerations as well as citizens expectations.
- Improving the sustainability, safety and affordability of EU food production and consumption throughout the food chain.
- Accelerating the use of bio-controls in food production.
- Increasing controls on imported products and enforce food safety standards.

The Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare will assume responsibility for the Directorate General for Health and Food Safety.

Commissioner-Designate for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy

Jessika Roswall from Sweden is the Commissioner-Designate for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy. Ms. Roswall has been the Swedish Minister for EU Affairs since 2022. She holds a law degree from Uppsala University.

In her mission letter, she is tasked with helping preserve the environment and ensure future policies prioritize sustainability and biodiversity. She will also work on developing a more circular and competitive economy. She will lead the EU's efforts on water resilience, which aim to ensure water access, while also tackling catastrophic flooding and water shortages, which is a big priority under the new mandate.

Other priorities of the new Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy include:

- Proposing an EU-wide Bioeconomy Strategy
- Implementing existing legislation related to environment and biodiversity, including the EU Deforestation Regulation and the Nature Restoration Law.
- Proposing a European Water Resilience Strategy to strengthen water security in the EU.
- Finalizing a Global Plastic Treaty.
- Working with the Commissioner for Agriculture and Food on the Vision for Agriculture and Food.

The Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy will assume responsibility for the Directorate General for Environment.

Next steps:

The Commissioners-designate will now appear in public hearings at the European Parliament. The hearings are likely to be scheduled in the first two weeks of October. After the hearings, each committee will evaluate the Commissioner-Designate's suitability to be a member of the Commission and to manage their assigned portfolio. However, no formal vote is taken at the Committee level. The Commission as a whole needs to be approved in a single vote of consent by the European Parliament during a Plenary meeting.

Following the Parliament's vote, the European Council, acting by qualified majority, will formally appoint the Commission's new leadership.

Once the College of Commissioners is officially appointed, a reshuffle of the Commission services is expected, including reorganizations within Directorate Generals.

Attachments:

No Attachments.