

Ursula von der Leyen
Candidate for President of the European Commission

Brussels, 15 July 2019

*Ms Iratxe García Pérez
Member of the European Parliament
60, rue Wiertz
1047 Brussels*

Dear President García Pérez,

I want to thank you for welcoming me to your meeting of the Socialists and Democrats family in the European Parliament. Our honest, open and constructive debate pointed to a common understanding on the way forward for many of the issues facing our Union.

As I said in the meeting, I will always be open to discussing and exchanging with you. This is the way I have always worked and will continue working. I want to build a special relationship with the European Parliament, working closely with the House as a whole, the political groups and individual members.

This relationship will be all the more important in the next years. Europe faces many challenges and opportunities that will shape the future of our planet and our society. We can only get to grips with them if we rally around what unites us: our shared values and our commitment to building a more tolerant, fair and equal society. I am passionately committed to this cause and I know these are principles that you, and your group as a whole, hold dear.

My priorities as Commission President will draw on the contributions that I have received from the European Parliament's political groups, including the Socialists & Democrats, and on the European Council's Strategic Agenda for 2019-24. These will of course cover the entire range of policies that we will have to deliver on together: European Parliament, Council and European Commission.

As you know, I will present my detailed Political Guidelines for the next European Commission to the European Parliament in Strasbourg on Tuesday morning. But I would already like to respond to the topics you raised in your letter and indicate how

I would seek to address them if elected. The answers below are a snapshot of the ideas that I hope we will bring to life together. It is not an exhaustive list.

For ease of reference, I have grouped these by broad themes:

A climate neutral Europe

My main priority as Commission President will be to make Europe the first climate neutral continent by 2050. I will put this ambition into law in my first 100 days in office.

*We have to be **more ambitious** when it comes to our **2030 targets**. I want to reduce CO₂ emissions by **at least 50%** by 2030.*

*However to achieve real impact, the world has to **move together**. The EU will lead international negotiations to increase the level of ambition of other major emitters by 2021.*

*By this date, I commit myself to putting forward a comprehensive plan to increase the EU target for **2030 towards 55%** in a responsible way. The plan will be based on social, economic and environmental impact assessments that ensures a level playing field and stimulates innovation, competitiveness and jobs.*

*To reach our ambition, we need to use **all instruments and funds** at our disposal. This includes the extension of the **Emissions Trading System** and the introduction of a **Carbon Border Tax**.*

***We will leave no one behind as we move forward**. Our ambition can never come at the expense of our people and our regions. We must support them through this transition. Even if we share the same destination, we do not all have the same starting point. This is why we need tailored support for those most affected, notably through a new **Just Transition Fund**.*

*But public finance will not be enough. We also need to tap into private finance by putting green and sustainable funding at the heart of our investment chain and financial system. I will thus propose a **Sustainable Europe Investment Plan** and turn parts of the European Investment Bank in a **climate bank**.*

A more prosperous Union

*Europe's economy is now on a more stable footing. Jobs, growth and investment are back – or even beyond – where they were before the economic and financial crisis. But there is still a lot more to do to ensure that Europe is able to resist to any future external shocks. I passionately believe, that we need a more attractive investment environment and growth which creates **quality jobs, especially for young people.***

*In order to do this, I will prioritise the further deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union. We need to use all of the tools at our disposal. This is why, I will use the **full flexibility within the Stability and Growth Pact**, for a more growth friendly fiscal stance in the euro area while safeguarding fiscal responsibility. To support Member States' growth reforms and investments, I will help deliver a **Budgetary Instrument for Convergence and Competitiveness for the euro area.***

*Europe needs to do all it can to protect those most vulnerable when our economy takes a hit. In this spirit, I will propose a **European Unemployment Benefit Reinsurance Scheme.** This will protect our citizens and reduce the pressure on Member States' finances during external shocks. I will complete the **Banking Union** and its two missing elements, a **common backstop to the Single Resolution Fund** and a **European Deposit Insurance Scheme.***

*I firmly believe that Europe's economic policy coordination must go hand in hand with our social rights, our climate neutrality objective and our competitive industry. This is why, I will refocus the **European Semester** into an instrument that would take the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals** into account.*

A social, fair and equal Europe

*I am proud of our unique social market economy. But we can never rest when it comes to making it stronger. This is why I will set out an action plan for the **full implementation of the European Pillar of Social rights.** Amongst other things, this will include:*

- *A legal instrument to ensure that every worker in our Union has a fair **minimum wage** that allows them a decent living in the country they work in.*
- *The setting up of a **European Child Guarantee** to help ensure that every child in Europe at risk of poverty or social exclusion has access to the most basic of rights.*

- *A **Youth Guarantee** turned into a permanent instrument to fight youth unemployment, with an increased budget and regular reporting.*
- *Improving the **conditions of platform workers** and ensuring that we keep pace by focusing on skills.*
- *Revitalising the European **anti-discrimination directive**.*

*As part of these efforts, I will make equality one of the major priorities of my Commission. I will propose an **EU gender equality strategy**, which will include measures to introduce **binding pay transparency measures**.*

*To break the glass ceiling, we need to set **quotas for gender balance on company boards**. I will seek a way forward to unblock the **Women on Boards directive**. And I will start this by getting our own house in order: I will form a **fully gender equal College of Commissioners**. By the end of my mandate, I will ensure we have full equality at all levels of Commission management. I will accept nothing less.*

*We must also do more to prevent **domestic violence**, to protect victims and to punish offenders. I firmly believe the EU should join the **Istanbul Convention** on fighting domestic violence. I will propose to **add violence against women on the list of EU crimes** defined in the Treaty.*

*Our society can only move forward if it is fair. The same applies to our single market. I will stand for tax fairness right across our economy. I will ensure that **taxation of big tech companies is a priority**. I will work hard to turn the proposals currently on the table into law. Where profits are generated, taxes and levies must also contribute to our social security systems, our education system and our infrastructure.*

*A **common consolidated corporate tax base** would provide businesses with a single rulebook to compute their corporate tax base in the EU. It is a longstanding project of the European Parliament. I will fight to make it a reality.*

Upholding the rule of Law

*The **respect of the rule of law** is central to my vision for a Union of equality and social fairness. There can be no compromise when it comes to our core values.*

*I will ensure that we make the most of our **full toolbox at European level**. I support an additional **comprehensive European Rule of Law Mechanism**. This should have an*

EU-wide scope and should include objective annual reporting. The monitoring approach will be the same in every Member State. None of us is perfect on this issue.

*The Commission will do this **monitoring in close dialogue with national authorities on the basis of law**, notably the recent case-law set by our independent Court of Justice. I will also ensure a **greater role for the European Parliament in the rule of law mechanism**.*

*This approach brings transparency. It allows early detection. It offers targeted support to resolve any issues at an early stage, without ruling out an effective, proportionate and dissuasive response as a last resort. I intend to focus on **tighter enforcement**, using recent **judgements of the Court of Justice** showing the impact of rule of law breaches on EU law as a basis.*

*I stand by the proposal to make the rule of law an integral part of the next **Multiannual Financial Framework**.*

A fresh start on migration

*I want to make migration a topic that brings us back together. I will propose **New Pact on Migration and Asylum**, including the relaunch of the Dublin reform. **We need a new way of burden sharing. We need a fresh start.***

*We can only have **strong external borders** if we give enough **support to Member States who face the most pressure because of where they are on the map**. We all need to help each other and contribute.*

A central part of this ambition is a reinforced European Border and Coast Guard Agency. We should not wait until 2027 to reach a standing corps of 10,000 Frontex border guards. We should have this done by 2024.

*We also need a more sustainable approach for **search and rescue**, as well as a clear policy towards those that abuse the system and need to be returned. We must **disrupt and dismantle the organised criminality of smugglers and traffickers**. This will also enable us to move forward on **legal migration** and help us bring in the people with the skills and the talents that we need.*

An open and fair trade agenda

I believe we can strengthen Europe's role as a global leader and standard setter through a strong, open and fair trade agenda. We believe in trade because it supports 36 million jobs and accounts for over a third of our Gross Domestic Product.

*But with the increased wealth that trade generates, comes a greater responsibility. I will ensure that every **new trade agreement** concluded in my mandate has a **dedicated sustainable development chapter** and respects the highest standards of climate, environmental, and labour protection with a zero tolerance policy on child labour.*

*I will appoint a **Chief Trade Enforcement Officer** to improve the **compliance and enforcement** of our trade agreements, and regularly report back to the European Parliament.*

*In the same vein, I will ensure my Commissioners debrief the European Parliament at all stages of international negotiations, following the mould set by the Brexit negotiations. Moreover, my Commission will always propose that **provisional application** of trade agreements takes place only once the European Parliament has given its consent.*

Neighbourhood policy

*European leadership in the world also means working hand in hand with our neighbours and our partners. I want to reaffirm the **European perspective of the Western Balkans**. I believe this can play an important role in the continued reform process across the region. I fully support and stand behind the proposal to open negotiations with **Albania and North Macedonia**.*

Giving Europeans a greater say

I want Europeans to build the future of our Union. They should play a leading and active part in setting our priorities and our level of ambition.

*I want citizens to have their say at a **Conference on the Future of Europe, to start in 2020** and run for two years. The Conference should bring together citizens, including a strong role for young people, civil society, and European institutions as equal partners.*

The Conference should be well prepared with a clear scope and clear objectives, agreed between the Parliament, the Council and the Commission.

I am ready to follow up to the main issues that will emerge from the Conference, including by legislative action. I am also open for Treaty change. You have my full support should there be a proposal for the Conference to be led by a Member of the European Parliament.

Strengthening Europe's democracy

As Commission President, I will be the European Parliament's greatest advocate. As the House of the people, it should have a stronger role in shaping and designing our future. In a democracy ours, this is a must.

***I support a right of initiative for the European Parliament.** When Parliament, acting by a majority of its members, adopts resolutions requesting the Commission to submit legislative proposals, I commit to responding with a legislative act, in full respect of the proportionality, subsidiarity and better law making principles.*

I will ask my Commissioners to work hand-in-hand with the European Parliament at every stage of designing and debating resolutions. This will help make the process as smooth and effective as possible.

During the last week, I spent time with Members from across the House. I have sensed the palpable frustration with the way our Union chooses its leaders. We must address this together.

*To rebuild trust and confidence, I propose to broker discussions on this issue between the European Parliament and the European Council. We should improve the **Spitzenkandidaten** system to make it more visible to the wider electorate. We should also address the issue of **transnational lists** in the European elections, as a complementary tool of European democracy.*

The Conference on the Future of Europe should come forward with legislative and other proposals on these matters by no later than summer 2020.

The Commission will follow up on these proposals where it has competence to act, and will support the European Parliament in amending the electoral law and in securing its agreement in Council. The new rules should be in place well in time for the European elections of 2024 to ensure greater transparency and democratic legitimacy.

*More broadly, I will work with the European Parliament on our shared goal of a more democratic and efficient Union. We need to move towards **full co-decision** power for the European Parliament and away from unanimity for climate, energy, social and taxation policies. In the same vein, **qualified majority** should become the rule for external affairs.*

Our partnership with the United Kingdom

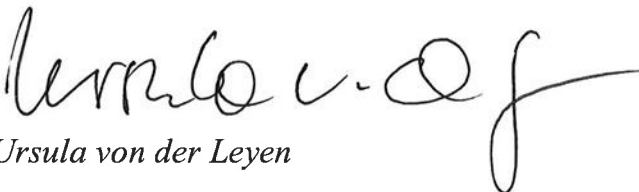
Last but not least, I want to explain my thinking on Brexit. This was an issue that was raised by several Members from your Group.

*I very much regret that the United Kingdom has decided to leave the European Union. But I fully respect this decision. Brexit creates uncertainty for citizens' rights, for economic and territorial actors, and for the stability and peace on the Island of Ireland. The **Withdrawal Agreement** negotiated with the United Kingdom is the best and only deal possible for an orderly withdrawal.*

If elected, I am ready to pave the way to the ambitious and strategic partnership we want to build with the United Kingdom. Should more time be required, and should there be good reasons provided, I will support a further extension if good reasons are provided.

I trust the snapshot I have presented in this letter answers the points which I know you hold dear. I want to thank you and the Members of your Group for your strong European commitment. I look forward to presenting these ideas and many more on Tuesday when I present my Political Guidelines. I stand ready to work with you for a positive agenda for a better and stronger Europe.

Best regards,



Ursula von der Leyen