

European Commission press release on its new composition (12 August 2004)


Caption: On 12 August 2004, José Manuel Barroso, President-designate of the European Commission announces to the press the policy portfolios he has allocated to each member of his team and the main changes that have been introduced to the new Commission.

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President-designate Barroso unveils his team

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Today, José Manuel Barroso, President-designate of the European Commission, announced the policy portfolios he has allocated to each member of his team. The decisions follow detailed consultations with each nominee Commissioner and aim to build a strong team-spirit. The new Commission is solid and politically experienced. It brings together people from across the political spectrum and contains more women than ever before. All Commissioners will have strictly equal powers as Members of the College. Mr Barroso has introduced certain organisational adjustments with the express purpose of achieving key political priorities.

A high-quality and political team

The attribution of portfolios builds on the high-quality political experience and the diverse professional expertise of the Commissioners-designate. José Manuel Barroso stated: "I have organised this strong team to ensure we work efficiently and achieve the goals we set ourselves. I attach great importance to team players committed to the European general interest. Commissioners will work together and deliver real benefits for EU citizens". Mr Barroso's decision to regroup all Commissioners' offices in the Berlaymont building underlines his commitment to working as a team.

The new Commission consists of people with in-depth experience in various policy areas. Its members have acquired a profound knowledge on EU policies and institutions. They are former Prime Ministers and Ministers and current Commissioners. Some were in charge of negotiating their country's accession to the European Union. Some were members of the constitutional Convention.

It is a very balanced team. It has the highest proportion of women ever in the European Commission and draws on experience from across the political spectrum.

The role of each Commissioner is not limited to managing portfolio business. The Commission acts as a College and decides collectively on all issues. Each Commissioner will be strictly equal in the process of collective decision-making. There will be no delegation of powers to Commissioners' groups. Mr Barroso said: "I do not want first- and second-class Commissioners. All Commissioners are equally important. I want my authority to be based on solid team work".

To further enhance collegiality the Commission will hold more informal brainstorming sessions and will improve cooperation between departments and Commissioners' private offices. To react quickly to events and set the agenda, the Commission needs a flexible organisation. Where appropriate, Commission work will be prepared in advance by thematic groups and task forces. These will draw together Commissioners whose portfolios relate to a particular policy challenge.

Changes to achieve political priorities

The new Commission has been designed to achieve clear results for the European Union's people and to give Europe a stronger voice in the world. Its organisation builds upon many elements of the current Commission. Mr Barroso felt no need for a revolutionary shake-up of the Commission's departments. Where he has made changes to departments and portfolios, his aim is mainly to improve the capacity to deliver policies and to achieve political priorities.

Mr Barroso stated: "I attach particular importance to communicating Europe. The apathy shown in the last European elections is worrying. I have asked a Vice-President to work specifically on a communication strategy. What Europe does and why it does it must be communicated to people more clearly". The same Vice-President will also be in charge of institutional relations. She will look beyond EU institutions to

national Parliaments and citizens.

The Lisbon strategy to make Europe the world's most competitive economy by 2010 is suffering an implementation deficit. The Commission and Member States must deliver better results. Mr Barroso will personally coordinate all efforts to revitalise the Lisbon strategy. He has appointed a Vice-President to represent a coherent Commission view in the Competitiveness Council.

Mr Barroso decided to reinforce equal opportunities by clearly attributing this task to the Commissioner in charge of employment and social affairs, who will chair the group of Commissioners for equal opportunities.

On foreign policy, Mr Barroso emphasises the need for efficient coordination. He will chair the group of Commissioners on external relations. An important priority is given to EU neighbourhood policy by allocating that responsibility to the Commissioner in charge of external relations. One aim of the group of Commissioners is to prepare for the arrival of the new Foreign Affairs Minister in the Commission and to implement the European Diplomatic Service. Upon joining the Commission the Foreign Affairs Minister is set to become Vice-President in charge of external relations.

The Commission's management reform is an on-going process, not a one-off event. Mr Barroso has decided to nominate a Vice-President to oversee "administration, audit and anti-fraud". This Vice-President will ensure sound management and provide clear reporting to the European Parliament.

Next steps

The team will meet for the first time for an informal session on Friday 20 August in Brussels. It must gain the confidence of and win approval from the European Parliament before 1 November. Commissioners will appear in individual hearings before Parliamentary committees. These will take place in the two weeks beginning 27 September. Once the Parliament has given its approval, the team will work on developing its political vision and a detailed programme for the next five years.

Background note to editors

The main changes to the current situation introduced by José Manuel Barroso are:

- The President personally chairing the group of Commissioners on external relations and on the Lisbon Strategy.
- A new job of Vice-President for institutional relations and communication strategy
- A Vice-President ensuring a coherent Commission approach in the Competitiveness Council
- The highest proportion of women Commissioners ever
- Split of current portfolios: transport and energy; agriculture and fisheries; internal market and taxation
- A greater use of task forces to anticipate policy issues
- Grouping Commissioners in the same building (Berlaymont)
- Separating financial control from budgetary affairs and appoint a Vice-President to oversee sound management

The new Commission will take office on 1 November, subject to a vote of approval by the European Parliament. The European Parliament can only vote on the whole body and not on individual Commissioners.

According to the Treaty establishing a European Constitution, the EU Minister for Foreign Affairs will enter into the Commission as Vice-President upon ratification of the Constitution.

The Treaty gives the President of the Commission the powers to allocate and reshuffle policy responsibilities. The following is the text of article 217 currently in place:

- 1. The Commission shall work under the political guidance of its President, who shall decide on its internal organisation in order to ensure that it acts consistently, efficiently and on the basis of collegiality.*
- 2. The responsibilities incumbent upon the Commission shall be structured and allocated among its Members by its President. The President may reshuffle the allocation of those responsibilities during the Commission's term of office. The Members of the Commission shall carry out the duties devolved upon them by the President under his authority.*
- 3. After obtaining the approval of the College, the President shall appoint Vice-Presidents from among its Members.*
- 4. A member of the Commission shall resign if the President so requests, after obtaining the approval of the College.*