

Beat: Politics

EP re-elects Ursula von der Leyen as President of the European Commission

She presents their objectives

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USPA NEWS - With 401 votes in favour, the European Parliament elected Ursula von der Leyen as President of the European Commission in a secret ballot on 18 July. This will be Ursula von der Leyen's second term as Commission President. She was first elected by MEPs in July 2019. Parliament is currently composed of 719 MEPs, so the necessary majority was 360 votes. The vote was held by secret paper ballot. 401 MEPs voted in favour, 284 against, and 22 cast blank or invalid votes.

Ahead of the vote, Ursula von der Leyen presented her political priorities for the next five years during a debate with MEPs. Von der Leyen put forward her vision for a stronger and more prosperous Europe. Key initiatives include a new Clean Industrial Deal to drive decarbonisation and industrial growth, and a European Competitiveness Fund to boost innovation. She announced that she would boost security by doubling Europol's staff and tripling the number of European Border and Coast Guards to 30 000. She proposed a European Democracy Shield for countering foreign information manipulation and interference, and a European Affordable Housing Plan.

Von der Leyen also suggested a plan for agriculture to address the need to adapt to climate change and a Roadmap for Women's Rights. Saying that "we must enable young people to make the most of Europe's freedoms", she highlighted the importance of the Erasmus+ programme, mental health, and tackling issues related to screen time and social media, including addictive practices.

She put significant focus on defence, proposing to create a new post of Commissioner for Defence to drive the European Defence Union and calling for a comprehensive aerial defence system – a European Air Shield – to protect EU airspace and "as a strong symbol of European unity in defence matters". Von der Leyen reiterated the EU's unwavering support for Ukraine, reaffirming that "Europe will stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes".

The Commission President-elect will now send official letters to member state heads of state or government inviting them to put forward their candidates for European Commissioner posts. Parliament will then organise nominee hearings in the relevant committees after the summer. The full college of Commissioners then needs to be endorsed by Parliament.

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