

Greater Manchester Brussels Service

Briefing: New European Commission 2015-19

On 1st November 2014, the new group of European Commissioners started their term of office of five years. There are 28 Commissioners in all, one from each of the EU Member States. They include ex-Prime Ministers, ex-MEPs and some Commissioners serving a second term of office. **Jean-Claude Juncker** from Luxembourg will be the President of the Commission.

This briefing gives a brief highlight of the main priorities and some further information on the Commissioners most relevant to the work of Greater Manchester.

If you would like the GM Brussels Office to follow any of the issues highlighted in this Policy Briefing please contact a [member of the team](#).

Juncker's Ten Priorities



Juncker's brief biography [here](#).

In Juncker's first speeches as President-Elect he gave 10 main priorities for the next 5 years:

1. New Boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment

Strengthen Europe's competitiveness and stimulate investment for the purpose of job creation. One of Juncker's most ambitious packages is the creation a new [European Fund for Strategic Investment \(EFSI\)](#), guaranteed with public money to mobilise at least EUR 315 billion of additional investment over the next three years (2015 – 2017).

2. Connected Digital Single Market

Break down national silos in telecoms regulation, in copyright and data protection legislation, in the management of radio waves and in the application of competition law.

3. Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy

Europe relies too heavily on fuel and gas imports, Juncker therefore wants to reform and reorganise Europe's energy policy into a new European Energy Union. Pool resources, combine infrastructures and unite negotiating power vis-à-vis third countries. Diversify energy sources, and reduce the high energy dependency.

4. Deeper and Fairer Internal Market with a Strengthened Industrial Base

Build on the strength of the single market and to fully exploit its potential in all its dimensions. Complete the internal market in products and services and make it the launch pad for companies and industry to thrive in the global economy.

5. Deeper and Fairer Economic and Monetary Union

Continue with the reform of our Economic and Monetary Union to preserve the stability of the single currency and to enhance the convergence of economic, fiscal and labour market policies between the Member States that share the single currency.

6. Reasonable and Balanced Free Trade Agreement with the U.S.

Negotiate a reasonable and balanced trade agreement with the United States of America, in a spirit of mutual and reciprocal benefits and transparency. Abolish customs duties on each other's products and either recognise each other's product standards or develop transatlantic standards.

7. An Area of Justice and Fundamental Rights Based on Mutual Trust

The EU is a Union of shared values, which are spelled out in the Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Citizens expect their governments to provide justice, protection and fairness with full respect for fundamental rights and the rule of law. This also requires joint European action, based on Europe's shared values.

8. Towards a New Policy on Migration

Manage migration better, in all aspects.

9. Stronger Global Actor

A stronger Europe when it comes to foreign policy.

10. Union of Democratic Change

Review of legislation for the authorisation of GMOs. Inter-institutional agreement on a mandatory transparency register. Inter-institutional agreement on better law-making.

Juncker's Team - Main Commissioners to the work of Greater Manchester

On 22nd October the European Parliament confirmed the team following a series of hearings and some changes to portfolios and one replacement.

During this term the Commissioners will be organised into ‘teams’, with vice-presidents taking a coordinating role. It seems that the Vice-Presidents will have considerable influence and play an important role in this new style Commission.

A major player in the team will be Dutch **Frans Timmermans**. Timmermans was previously State Secretary for Foreign Affairs charged with European Affairs (2007–2010), and Minister of Foreign Affairs (2012–2014). He will be Juncker’s right hand (and as Juncker joked to the European Parliament “sometimes my left hand too!”).

Greater Manchester may also work with the following 12 commissioners and their staff.

Vice-President Energy Union



Name: Maros Sefcovic

Background: Slovakian. Second term in Commission (2010-14 Inter-institutional affairs). Former Slovak ambassador to EU.

Priorities: Sefcovic’s main priority will be the creation of an energy union under five pillars: security, solidarity and trust; competitiveness and the completion of the internal market; energy savings; decarbonisation; and research and innovation.

There will also be “new energy diplomacy” to avoid pressure from third countries.

Vice-President Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness



Name: Jyrki Katainen

Background: Finnish. Former Prime Minister (2011-14 - resigned)

Priorities: Katainen’s main priority will be the creation of the a new [European Fund for Strategic Investment \(EFSI\)](#), which is hoped to mobilise EUR 315 billion of investment over the next three years (2015 – 2017).

Vice-President Digital Single Market



Name: Andrus Ansip

Background: Estonian. Former Prime Minister for 3 terms from 2005-14

Priorities: Ansip’s main priority is to present, in May 2015, a strategy and a legislative agenda for rekindling investment in broadband networks and digitising the entire economy. He is also tasked to reform online copyright, to build an agreement on data protection and to break down national silos in telecoms regulation.

Regional Policy



Name: Corina Cretu

Background: Romanian. Former MEP since 2005. Vice-President of Romanian Social Democratic Party.

Priorities: Corina's two distinct priorities are simplification and the need to improve the administrative capacities of the Member States, in close liaison with the willingness to improve the absorption of funds. However quality of programmes takes precedence above all.

Digital Economy and Society



Name: Gunther Oettinger

Background: German. Second term in Commission (2010-14 Energy). Former Minister-President of Baden-Wurtemberg

Priorities: Gunther's first three months will be devoted to "assessing what needs to be regulated or deregulated". The evaluation will cover, among other things, the media directive and obligations on telecoms operators and internet giants, the so-called 'over the top' firms. The future reform of copyright legislation would be preceded by consultations with MEPs, ahead of its adoption by the College of Commissioners

Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility



Name: Marianne Thyssen

Background: Belgian. Former MEP (since 1991) & vice-chair of EPP.

Priorities: Thyssen's main proposal concerns the 'European semester': she intends to give more weight to social indicators, currently considered secondary at best. There will be a 'targeted revision' of the Posted Worker Directive and a focus on youth employment.

Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs



Name: Elzbieta Bienkowska

Background: Polish. Former minister for regional development 2007-13. Then deputy prime minister.

Priorities: Bienkowska's aim is not to present new initiatives, but speed up implementation of existing legislation. She will present a road map for a renewed industrial policy in March 2015.

Transport



Name: Violeta Bulc

Background: Slovenia. Brought in after previous candidate rejected. Entrepreneur and former deputy prime minister.

Priorities: Bulc's main priority will be the European Railway Traffic Management System (ERTMS), which the Commission wishes to see in place on the entire Trans-European Transport Network.

Climate Change and Energy



Name: Miguel Arias Cañete

Background: Spanish. Aristocrat and politician (centre-right) and former minister for Agriculture, Food and Environment. Elected MEP in 2014.

Priorities: Cañete's immediate priority is to ensure gas supplies to the EU, by boosting energy efficiency, reducing dependency on suppliers and exploring more possibilities for liquefied natural gas (LNG). Continue the fight against climate change, including the ambitious 2030 energy and climate framework, will also be part of his plan.

Research, Science and Innovation



Name: Carlos Moedas

Background: Portuguese. Former banker and investment manager. Elected as social democrat to Parliament in 1995.

Priorities: Moedas will monitor the implementation of the €80 billion Horizon 2020 programme. He will also have the mission of stimulating the creation of the European Research Area (ERA), getting better alignment between the national research agendas, and tackling duplication and fragmentation. Member States have to present a road map on these issues by mid-2015.

Health and Food Safety



Name: Vytenis Andriukaitis

Background: Lithuanian. Former Heart Surgeon, lecturer in health law and Minister for Health. Part of anti-Soviet resistance as younger man in underground social democrat movement.

Priorities: Andriukaitis's main priorities will be health promotion, protection and prevention, but also encouraging investment on health and food safety – especially as regards the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). He remains vague on GMO issues, but there will be a review on GMO decision making in his first six months in office

Competition



Name: Margrethe Vestager

Background: Danish. Deputy Prime Minister 2011-14.

Priorities: Vestager has to deal with all issues that come her way but will do so by listening to everyone, including “small and large companies, stakeholders, and citizens,” and carry out inquiries “without distinctions as to the size of companies, or, for state aid, the size of the member state”.

Work Programme 2015

The Work Programme was presented on Tuesday 16th December in Strasbourg and Parliament will vote its resolution on it in January 2015.

As a brief summary, job creation and economic growth is clearly the focus of the next 12 months. One of the most ambitious actions will be the creation of a new [European Fund for Strategic Investment \(EFSI\)](#), guaranteed with public money, to mobilise at least EUR 315 billion of additional investment over the next three years (2015 – 2017). Part of this Investment Plan is the development of a pipeline of infrastructure investment projects with each Member States.

Other headline plans for 2015 include:

- A Digital Single Market Package
- The creation of a European Energy Union
- A Fairer Approach to Taxation
- A new European Agenda on Migration

However the Work Programme also removes a total of 80 proposals which were planned to be launched in 2015. Amongst the most prominent proposals to be withdrawn is the circular economy package which included proposals for amending the Directives on Waste, Landfill, Packaging, end-of-life vehicles, batteries and WEEE. The Commission intends to replace the package by “a more ambitious proposal by end 2015”.

A separate European Briefing on the Work Programme will be produced in January 2015.

New Economy

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