

Outcome of the special European Council meeting of 30 June-2 July 2019

After a lengthy meeting, lasting from 30 June to 2 July with interruptions, the European Council agreed on a package of candidates for the EU high-level positions. The German Defence Minister, Ursula von der Leyen, was proposed as candidate for European Commission President, now subject to election by the European Parliament.

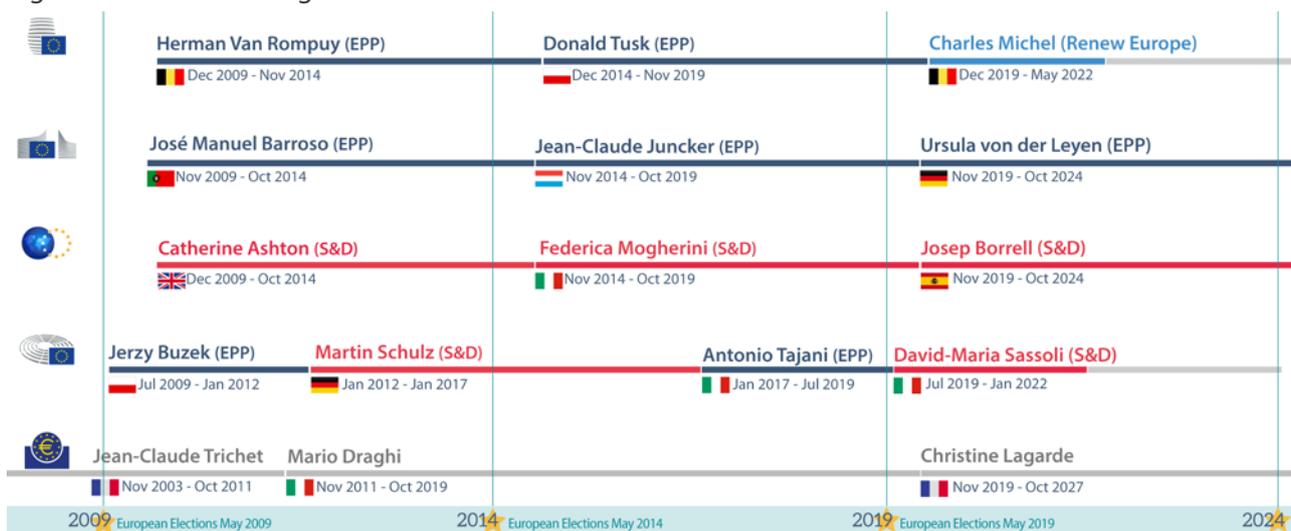
The package of candidates proposed by the European Council

The special European Council meeting started late on 30 June and went on, with interruptions for individual discussions (bilaterals) and a break for reflection, until early evening on 2 July.

The package the European Council finally agreed upon includes:

- Ursula von der Leyen (Germany) for European Commission President;
- Charles Michel (Belgium) for European Council President;
- Josep Borrell (Spain) for High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
- Christine Lagarde (France) for President of the European Central Bank

Figure 1: Overview of high-level office-holders since the 2009 EP elections



The offices of President of the European Commission and of the European Central Bank would, for the first time, be held by women (see Figure 1). The office of President of the European Council will for the second time go to a Belgian national, but for the first time to the Renew Europe (ex ALDE) political family.

The President of the European Council, Donald Tusk [underlined](#) that, although Germany abstained on the candidate for Commission President, the package of EU high-level positions was agreed on without a dissenting vote and moreover achieves 'a perfect gender balance'. At the [informal meeting](#) in Sibiu on 9 May, when outlining a procedure for the appointments, he had stressed that these nominations should [reflect](#) the EU's demography and geographical balance, but also gender and political balances. He had also indicated that these decisions were to be taken by consensus, if possible, but that he 'would not shy away from putting [them] to the vote' if needed.

Addressing the European Council, the outgoing President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani, [reiterated](#) the Parliament's position in support of the *Spitzenkandidaten* principle. However, earlier proposals for a package, taking into account the 'lead candidate' process, did [not gather](#) the necessary qualified majority support (i.e. at least 72 % of the Member States representing 65 % of the EU's population).

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President Tusk [recalled](#) that the *Spitzenkandidaten* procedure was not a legal obligation, but that the European Council had attempted to respect the process in its reflections. He also stressed that ‘the European Council took note of Ursula von der Leyen’s intentions to nominate Frans Timmermans and Margrethe Vestager as highest ranking Vice-Presidents of the Commission’.

Regarding the election of the Parliament’s President, Antonio Tajani, had [pointed out](#) that the choice was completely independent from the proposals made in the European Council. This notwithstanding, President Tusk did indicate that the EU leaders had recommended the election of a European Parliament President coming from the S&D family, and also suggested a person from central and eastern Europe, who would then be followed in the second half of the term by someone from the EPP group. However, on 3 July, the European Parliament finally elected an Italian, David-Maria Sassoli (S&D), as its new President. The [other candidates](#) were Ska Keller (Greens/EFA, DE), Sira Rego (GUE/NGL, ES) and Jan Zahradil (ECR, CZ).

Specific procedures for each appointment

The procedures set out in the Treaties for appointing the various high-level office-holders differ according to the position concerned (see Table 1). The only person having been effectively ‘elected’ on 2 July was Charles Michel, whose two-and-a-half-year mandate (renewable once) as European Council President will begin on 1 December. He was also elected, by the Heads of State or Government of the contracting parties to the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union whose currency is the euro, as President of the Euro Summit for the same term.

The candidate for President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, was ‘nominated’ by the European Council, and still needs to be elected by the European Parliament, by a majority of its component members (Article 17(7) TEU). Regarding the other positions, the [conclusions](#) of the European Council only mention that the European Council ‘considers Josep Borrell Fontelles to be the appropriate candidate for the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy’, since the choice needs to be formally agreed by the President-elect of the Commission. Similarly, for President of the European Central Bank, the European Council ‘considers’ Christine Lagarde to be the appropriate candidate. Before formally appointing her, it needs to receive a recommendation from the Council, after consultation of the European Parliament and the Governing Council of the European Central Bank.

Table 1: Treaty-based roles of the European Council and the European Parliament for high-level appointments

Position	Treaty article	European Council role	European Parliament role
President of the European Commission	17(7) TEU	Propose candidate	Elect candidate
President of the European Council	15(5) TEU	Elect	None
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy	18(1) TEU	Appoint (with agreement of the President of the Commission)	Part of the approval of the college of Commissioners
President of the European Central Bank	283(2) TFEU	Appoint	Consulted

Next steps

The European Parliament is expected to vote on the candidate for Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, on 16 July. At this stage, her election is not guaranteed, as [some political groups](#) have reiterated the European Parliament’s [attachment](#) to the *Spitzenkandidaten* process, under which she was not a candidate. If she does not obtain the required majority, Article 17(7) TEU provides that ‘the European Council, acting by a qualified majority, shall within one month propose a new candidate who shall be elected by the European Parliament following the same procedure’.

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