

The new EU Commission: Militaristic, right-wing, authoritarian

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Militaristic, right-wing, and authoritarian—these are the characteristics of the new EU Commission, which Commission President Ursula von der Leyen presented to the public on Tuesday.

Responsibility for foreign policy and defence will in future lie with representatives of two Baltic states that are home to less than 1 percent of the EU population but are known for their hysterical hostility towards Russia. Former Estonian head of government Kaja Kallas will be the EU's new foreign policy chief and vice-president of the Commission. Former Lithuanian head of government Andrius Kubilius will take on the newly created post of Commissioner for Defence. The appointment of the two is a clear signal that the new Commission will escalate the war against Russia.

The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* sees “the Baltic-Nordic trio Kallas/Kubilius/Virkkunen” as “good news” for Ukraine and “rather bad” for the Kremlin. As vice-president of the Commission, Finnish MP Henna Virkkunen is responsible for security and democracy, in addition to digital issues, and will work closely with Kubilius.

“Estonia, Lithuania and Finland are leading the hawk camp in the EU, which represents an uncompromising line against Moscow and demands that Europe prepare for a military confrontation with Russia,” concludes the *Süddeutsche*.

In other respects too, von der Leyen has strengthened the influence of Eastern European states that are playing a leading role in the war against Russia. Piotr Serafin of Poland will be the new budget commissioner. Roxana Mînzatu of Romania will receive one of the five vice presidential posts and will be responsible for labour market and social affairs; Marta Kos of Slovenia will be responsible for EU enlargement, and Dubravka Šuica of Croatia will be

responsible for the Mediterranean region.

One exception is Hungary, whose head of government, Viktor Orbán, is the only one in the EU with good relations with Moscow. Instead of being responsible for EU enlargement, as before, the Hungarian commissioner will in future be responsible for health and animal welfare. This is not only a demotion, but shows that protecting the population from the Coronavirus and other pandemics plays no role in von der Leyen's plans.

Overall, the new Commission is moving far to the right. With Raffaele Fitto, von der Leyen has for the first time appointed an extreme right-winger as Commission vice president. Fitto is a close associate of Italian head of government Giorgia Meloni and a member of her neo-fascist party, Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy).

Despite dragging a trail of corruption behind him, Fitto has been given responsibility for regional funding and reforms, and thus for a significant portion of EU spending. He was convicted of abuse of office, corruption and illegal party funding in 2009. In 2013, a court had imposed a four-year prison sentence on him, which was then gradually lifted by higher courts.

Fitto's appointment has caused particular unrest among social democratic and green MEPs. They had supported von der Leyen's re-election on the grounds that it would prevent the conservatives from joining forces with the far right. Meloni's MEPs (members of European Parliament), on the other hand, had abstained. The German government, a coalition of the Social Democrats (SPD), Greens and Liberal Democrats (FDP), also supported von der Leyen, although she belongs to the opposition Christian Democrats (CDU), and refrained from nominating its own candidate for the Commission. Now, von der Leyen has effectively

formed a coalition with the far right, and they are exposed.

The Fitto case proves that the supposed “firewall” or “cordon sanitaire” against the far right is empty talk, since these are needed to push forward the pro-war policy, intensify social attacks and oppress the working class, and intimidate and divide it through refugee baiting.

If von der Leyen can prop up a fascist in a key EU position, there is no reason why the CDU’s candidate for chancellor, Friedrich Merz—or German Chancellor Olaf Scholz—should not do the same in Germany. In France, President Emmanuel Macron has already taken this step by appointing Michel Barnier, who depends on the votes of the far-right National Rally, as head of government.

Von der Leyen has tailored the entire EU Commission to suit herself. Fourteen of the 27 commissioners belong to her conservative European People’s Party, which only has 188 of the 720 seats in the European Parliament. More independent minds, such as Dutch Climate Commissioner Frans Timmermans and Danish Competition Commissioner Margarethe Vestager, who did not always agree with von der Leyen, have left.

The French Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton, a right-wing politician, businessman and economist, who was nominated by Macron for a further term in office, resigned in a rage on Monday, publicly accusing von der Leyen of pushing Macron behind his back to replace him with another candidate “for personal reasons.” Macron did not cover for Breton, but promptly appointed another candidate—his close confidant and former foreign minister, Stéphane Séjourné.

The case of Breton shows how strained the relations are in the EU. Von der Leyen’s efforts to bring the Commission under her personal control, thereby strengthening German dominance in Europe, will inevitably provoke backlash.

Just last week, Germany unilaterally reintroduced extensive border controls, in violation of the Schengen Agreement, turning back refugees without giving them a chance to apply for asylum. This has sparked fierce protests from Poland, Austria and other countries, further exacerbating tensions.

The European Commission, which manages an

annual budget of almost €300 billion and has a staff of 60,000, is the power centre of the European Union. Although the most important authority is the European Council, to which all heads of state and government belong, the Commission has enormous power because these heads of state rarely agree.

The process of appointing commissioners is correspondingly complex and undemocratic, taking place mainly behind the scenes. Each member state is entitled to one of the 27 commissioners and can propose its own candidate. However, their appointment and, above all, the allocation of the highly diverse portfolios are subject to the discretion of the Commission president, who consults with the governments, putting them under pressure or making them “an offer they can’t refuse.”

Finally, the various committees of the European Parliament question the individual commissioners and the Parliament votes on the overall proposal, which will probably occur in October. Since a wide range of national and party interests collide here as well, this is associated with further deals and agreements. The influence of the 12,000 lobbyists registered in Brussels should also not be neglected.

This corrupt system serves the interests of the big corporations and banks, not those of the working class. The working class must break away from the parties and trade unions that submit to the dictates of the EU, form cross-border alliances and fight for a United Socialist States of Europe.



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