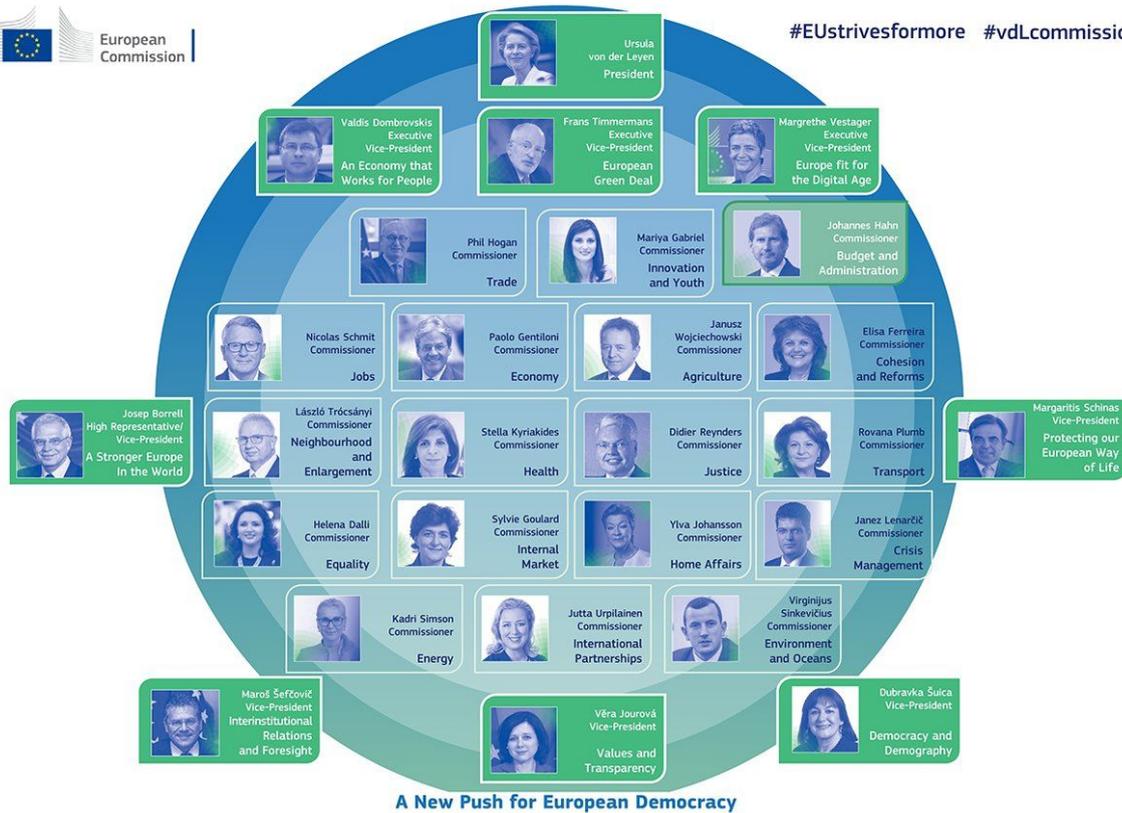


Ursula, where did you hide education?

Brussels, 10 September 2019 - European Commission President-Elect Ursula Von der Leyen unveiled the new Commissioners' portfolios in today's press conference. We are sad to see that education and lifelong learning are not accorded their rightful place and visibility in this proposed Commission and are mentioned only as part of the wider 'Innovation and Youth', which erases in a blind hit also culture, sports and research. [Mariya Gabriel](#) (Bulgaria) will have the difficult task to make education policies arise from the whirlwind of innovation and to do so in an ever-demanding political environment. Skills and adult learning are swallowed by the 'Jobs' portfolio, assigned to [Nicolas Schmit](#) (Luxembourg), a clear orientation towards the labour market rather than inclusion or personal development. The overview is entrusted to [Margaritis Schinas](#) (Greece), Vice-president for the new ambiguous 'Protecting our European Way of Life'.

In her [mission letter](#) to Commissioner-designate Gabriel, Von der Leyen placed great emphasis on economic growth and jobs. Education is understood as solely serving markets and competition, putting to rest dreams of inclusiveness and ease of access. Research and innovation are considered useful tools to achieve excellence and inform policy-making, rather than pillars for societal advancement, including the European Pillar of Social Rights. Culture is seen through the lenses of creative industries, not as an articulation of the freedom of expression. The only moment where inclusion has a place is in a hashtag in the sports chapter. Moreover, a hierarchy is established between Ms Gabriel and [Ms Vestager](#), in charge of 'Europe fit for a digital age', thus subordinating education and lifelong learning to narrower needs. This scenario reveals a weak understanding of the field.



Education is further divided between the ‘Jobs’ portfolio, left to [Mr Schmit](#), and ‘Protecting our European Way of Life’, whose referent will be [Mr Schinas](#) (Greece). Here we might see fertile ground for lifelong learning and inclusiveness, and we are glad that the new Commissioner is given the tools to implement the European Education Area. However, education outputs are once again mixed with cross-border cooperation and security - which makes us question whether Mr Schinas will have adequate instruments to implement very specific points on his agenda. Moreover, the notion of protecting a ‘European way of life’ offers the vision of an insular, identitarian Union and leads us to question if all people and civil society in Europe will be genuinely involved in its definition.

The Lifelong Learning Platform wishes to express its concerns about the direction chosen by the President-Elect of the European Commission. We fear both for the place given to education and for its assigned scope.

Education plays one of the most important roles in our society, and we are constantly reminded of it by our decision-makers, including the importance of cooperation in education and training as outlined in the Treaties. However, this attention and thrust to deliver are never matched by either investments or policy instruments. The fact that education is now scattered within ‘Innovation and Youth’ prompts us to understand a twofold message. First and foremost, education here is only envisioned in terms of innovation, excellence and competitiveness, disregarding its social dimension - which outnumbers its economic by-products. Second of all, education is only possible for young people, thus violently

ignoring the millions of adult learners in Europe, which are confined to labour perspectives. We reject this vision.

While the will to triple Erasmus+ budget is reassuring, we wonder what scope and priorities the new programme will serve. Will education be limited to a decadent system, complying with market needs and fulfilling economy desires? Or will it finally serve the learners, empower the teachers and educators, and represent a solid tool for the inclusion of all? Judging from the premises, we are afraid it will be the former and not the latter.

The Lifelong Learning Platform and its members will continue to fight to increase the relevance of education systems and stakeholder involvement in our society, all the more in this worrying climate.

For further information, please contact policy@llplatform.eu

