

Press Conference with Romano Prodi on the new team of Commissioners (9 July 1999)

Caption: Romano Prodi, President designate of the European Commission, presents the new team of Commissioners that the Member States, with his agreement, will be proposing to the European Parliament for approval.

Source: Press Conference with Mr Prodi for the presentation of the new Commission, 9th July 1999. [ON-LINE]. [s.l.]: European Commission, [03.08.2001]. Disponible sur http://europa.eu.int/comm/commissioners/prodi/speeches/designate/090799_en.htm.

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Press Conference with Romano Prodi for the presentation of the new Commission, 9 July 1999

When I accepted the job of Commission President, I promised to launch a new era of change in the Commission. The Commission needs it. The European Parliament and Member States have asked for it. The European public has urged us to carry it out. This is what I intend to deliver, starting from today.

I am painfully aware that as Europe grows in importance in people's lives, their trust in the Commission has slipped. We need nothing less than a revolution in the way the Commission works.

The new team

Over the past few months I have been working on the formation of the new Commission with national capitals. This first phase is now complete.

Today, I am pleased to present the new team of Commissioners that the Member States, with my agreement, will be proposing to the European Parliament for approval.

The new Commission will work together as a team under my political leadership. It is a top quality team. It provides the political experience and expertise needed to give clear direction and decisive leadership to the European Commission.

The new Commission is a well-balanced team. In my discussions with national governments, I made clear that I wanted to see a good representation of women. I have achieved this objective.

I also gave a commitment to the European Parliament and the Member States to build a politically balanced Commission. I have achieved this objective too.

The new team is being proposed in full agreement with the Heads of States and Government. We have reached a good result, ahead of schedule, without any major difficulties.

I am confident that the team will have the strong backing of the European Parliament. I cannot imagine running the Commission without the broad support of at least the two main political groups there.

Portfolios

In line with the new powers given to the President-designate by the Treaty of Amsterdam, I have already allocated portfolios to each Commissioner. This was done in advance of our first meeting, on the basis of the proven abilities and experience of each person. There were no disputes, and there was no 'Night of the Long Knives'.

I have re-designed the portfolios to ensure a well-balanced and coherent spread of tasks. Rationality and efficiency have been my watchwords.

Each future Commissioner has a substantial portfolio. The overlaps and grey areas that have caused problems in the past have been removed.

The Vice-Presidents have been given the portfolios of relations with the European Parliament, and internal reform. This reflects the overriding importance I attach to these two areas.

High standards

I am determined that the new Commission should meet the very highest standards of public life. Each Commissioner must perform his or her duties in a way that reflects the European interest as a whole. If they do not, I will intervene with all the powers at my disposal. Ultimately, I am prepared to reshuffle portfolios, or

even ask individual Commissioners to resign. As I said in Cologne, and to guarantee the individual responsibility of Commissioners, each one has given me their word that they will step down if I ask them to do so. I will also introduce tough new rules to avoid conflicts of interest when Commissioners leave office.

Reform

If the Commission is to live up to its long-term objective — to bring real improvements in the quality of people's everyday lives — then it has to be an efficient administration. Reform of the Commission will therefore be one of the core priorities throughout my term of office. A first reorganisation of the Commission will start right away:

- The Commission bureaucracy is being streamlined and the number of departments cut.
- Commissioners will be housed in the same building as their departments.
- Commissioner's offices (Cabinets) will be smaller and more multi-national.
- The rules on senior appointments will be tightened and made more transparent.
- There will be greater internal mobility for senior Commission staff.
- Commission departments will be identified by short, understandable names instead of numbers.

I also intend to create a new, reinforced media and communications service to ensure that the Commission's policies are communicated professionally. This new service will be headed up by a Commission official.

This is also an appropriate occasion for me to announce personally to you, the press, that I will be appointing Mr Ricardo Franco Levi as Spokesman for the Commission. He will be politically responsible for the Commission's media and communications policy, and will be directly responsible to the President. His appointment will be a temporary one, linked to my own term of office.

Further change will follow. The new Vice-President for Reform will present a detailed blueprint for reform in early 2000.

Next steps

We now move on to the second, crucial, phase in the appointment of the new Commission — the scrutiny of the new team by the European Parliament.

I will be holding a first, informal, meeting with the team on 16 July. The list of Commissioners will be formally proposed by the Member States on 19 July, and the team will be presented to the European Parliament on 21 July. Parliament will hold hearings with each Commissioner during the first week of September, and the vote on the new team will be held on 15 September.

I hope that this phase will be completed quickly. Europe's citizens have high expectations of us, and we are impatient to get started with the important task of making Europe work.