

# European Commission publishes practical arrangements for Commissioners participating in European Parliament elections

The Guidelines will ensure the coherent application of the revised [Code of Conduct](#) for Members of the European Commission. President **Juncker** [proposed](#) in November 2016 a new Code of Conduct in order to explicitly allow Commissioners – all of them experienced and high-calibre politicians – to actively participate in the campaign for the European Parliament elections, including as lead candidates for the position of President of the Commission, without having to temporarily withdraw from their duties in the Commission. The amended Code of Conduct [entered into force](#) in January 2018.

Commenting on today's Guidelines, President **Juncker** said: *"From the very beginning, I wanted this Commission to be a political one. Commissioners take full political ownership and responsibility for all decisions of this Commission. At the same time, I expect them to engage fully and personally with citizens. Actively participating in the upcoming European Parliament elections is part and parcel of this engagement. Therefore, I have changed the Code of Conduct to allow Commissioners to campaign without having to leave the Commission – provided that they keep their campaigning activities clearly separate from their institutional ones."*

In line with the Guidelines, Commissioners taking part in the European Parliament elections campaign:

- Must **inform the President** that they **intend to participate** in the European Parliament election campaign and of the role they expect to play in the campaign.
- Must **ensure institutional continuity and arrange for the continued performance of their duties**. This concerns in particular the participation in the decision-making process of the Commission, for example regular attendance of the weekly College meeting, and the exercise of portfolio and institutional duties such as participation in trilogues or the exercise of empowerments. This is of particular importance at this very moment when many important legislative files are being finalised by the European Parliament and the Council.
- Are not allowed to use the **Commission's human or material resources for activities linked to the campaign**. For example, they should make sure that the costs of travelling for campaign purposes are not borne by the Commission, or that Commission staff is not involved in the organisation of campaign events.
- When speaking in public, Commissioners should distinguish between **statements made in their institutional capacity and statements made in their role of campaign participants**. At all times, while participating in the campaign, Commissioners must continue to act with the required

independence, integrity, dignity, loyalty and discretion. In the same vein, they must not be taking positions that would question their duty of confidentiality or infringe the principle of collegiality. They must notably not criticise or dissociate themselves from decisions or positions taken by the Commission.

- When it comes to Commissioners' social media presence, they should once again **make a clear distinction between activity in their capacity of campaign participants and activity in their institutional capacity.**
- In the same vein, Commissioners **cannot use their Commission website** for the purposes of the campaign. Neither are they allowed to use Commission premises for their meetings with interest representatives for campaign purposes.

Today's guidance furthermore makes it clear that all financial or material support for the campaign and its participants must be directed to the party or campaign organisation itself.

Finally, if ever a situation were to arise which might reasonably be perceived as a conflict of interest in the meaning of the Code of Conduct, Commissioners shall inform the President who will then take any measure he considers appropriate.

The Guidelines, which take into account the opinion of the Independent Ethical Committee following its consultation, have been discussed by Commissioners on 9 January and were unanimously endorsed today. They will enter into effect immediately.

#### **For More Information:**

- Guidelines on Ethical Standards for the Participation of the Members of the European Commission in the European Elections ([06 February 2019](#))
- Press release “New Code of Conduct strengthening ethical rules for Members of the European Commission enters into force” ([31 January 2018](#))
- Code of Conduct for Commissioners of 2018 ([31 January 2018](#))
- Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission ([17 February 2018](#))
- Text of [Article 245](#) of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the EU](#)

ANNEX

#### **[Article 10](#) of the Code of Conduct for Commissioners of 2018**

##### **Participation in European politics during the term of office**

1. Members may participate in European politics as members of European political parties or organisations of the social partners at European level provided that this does not compromise their availability for service in the Commission and the priority to be given to their Commission duties over party commitment. Participation as members of European political parties or

organisations of the social partners at European level includes the holding of political, honorary or non-executive functions in bodies of the party structure, but excludes management responsibilities. Political contacts in the capacity as Member of the Commission remain unaffected.

2. Members may participate in electoral campaigns in elections to the European Parliament, including as candidates. They may also be chosen by European political parties as lead candidate ('Spitzenkandidat') for the position of President of the Commission.

3. Members shall inform the President of their intention to participate in an election campaign within the meaning of paragraph (2) and the role they expect to play in the campaign.

4. The President shall inform the European Parliament in due time whether one or more Members will stand as candidates in electoral campaigns for elections to the European Parliament, as well as of the measures taken to ensure the respect of the principles of independence, integrity and discretion provided by Article 245 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and this Code of Conduct.

5. Members standing as candidates or participating in an electoral campaign within the meaning of paragraph (2) may not use the Commission's human or material resources for activities linked to the electoral campaign.

6. Members shall abstain from making public statements or interventions on behalf of any European political party of which they are members, except when standing for election or participating in an election campaign in accordance with paragraphs (3) and (4). This is without prejudice to the right of Members to express their personal opinions. Members so participating in electoral campaigns shall undertake to refrain from adopting a position in the course of the campaign that would not be in line with the duty of confidentiality or infringe the principle of collegiality.