

Von der Leyen's Commission is ready to take off

After a long and troubled travail, the new European Commission led by Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen should take off on 1 December, following the vote of the European Parliament set for Wednesday 27 November. This will be the 17th executive in European history: while the previous Juncker Commission was operating in the wake of the economic, financial and debt crisis that struck the continent from 2011-12, today the commission led by the former German defense minister aims to transform the EU into a geopolitical actor, consolidating its foundations to relaunch Europe's global role and above all avert its disintegration. A borderline impossible task: never as in this historical phase the European actors appear weakened and deprived of a common identity. Prey to often antithetical visions of their world, unable to untangle the knots that threaten their common future and therefore inclined to turn their gaze towards different aggregating solutions much more suited to the respective national interests. In addition, the Commission seems weak even before take office. Proof of this is the narrow parliamentary majority that supports it in Strasbourg (von der Leyen was elected in July by a margin of only 9 votes and a significant lower consensus than her two predecessors, Juncker and Barroso), or the political confrontation that tears apart the European institutions. Hostilities commenced this Summer when French president Macron questioned the Spitzenkandidat rule, that was strongly advocated by an EU Parliament forced instead to accept the choices made by national governments and then quick enough

to reject the first French candidate Goulard to repay the Elysée tenant. The issue linked to the British Commissioner after the postponement of Brexit to 31 January is also paradigmatic. London decided not to make any appointment before the outcome of general elections on 12 December, forcing the European institutions to open an infringement procedure against the UK. However, there are five commissioners who are likely to be followed more than others. Margrethe Vestager from Denmark, Thierry Breton from France, Paolo Gentiloni from Italy, Nicolas Schmit from Luxembourg and Ylva Johansson from Sweden. Vestager will continue to deal with competition rules - a portfolio that in the past led her to take controversial decisions - and will also oversee the (expected) digital revolution. Breton will be responsible for a large and rich portfolio and will have the task of encouraging the birth of a European industrial policy, as well as the rise of "European champions" capable of competing with large American and Chinese companies. Gentiloni will have to work to complete the banking union and strengthen the institutional framework of the eurozone, finding the right balance between defending budgetary discipline and flexibility in the application of the rules. Schmit, on the other hand, will have to manage the social consequences of the economic crisis and perhaps act as a political link between Parliament and Commission. Finally, Johansson will be called upon to deal with migration and reform the right of asylum in Europe, or the theme that has literally split the EU in recent years.