

## European parliament's socialists to get tough on von der Leyen Commission hearings

Written by Martin Banks on 17 September 2019 in News  
News

Proposed 'Protecting our European way of life' portfolio prompts outcry.



*Photo credit: European Parliament Audiovisual*

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The leader of the Socialist group in the European parliament has criticised one of the job titles in European Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen's team.

The new role, "Protecting our European way of life" which has been allocated to former commission spokesman, Margaritis Schinas, has sparked outcry.

Speaking at a news briefing in parliament on Tuesday, Iratxe Garcia Perez, the Socialist group leader, said she shared the concerns voiced by others about the new dossier, one of 27 posts in the newly proposed commission.

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The Spanish member said parliament's political groups will question von der Leyen at a meeting on Thursday in the wake of her announcing her new college last week.

The MEP, who heads parliament's second biggest group, told reporters in Strasbourg, "Yes, there has been a degree of confusion regarding the structure and allocation of the portfolios and titles given to some of the commissioners-designate."

"In particular, the title 'Protecting our European way of life' has triggered controversy and we in our group have come out against that title."

"We have shared our views with von der Leyen on this and, later this week, we will bring pressure to bear on her."

Von der Leyen sought to clarify her position on the contested job title in a newspaper op-ed over the weekend.

"The title 'Protecting our European way of life' has triggered controversy and we in our group have come out against that title" **Iratxe Garcia Perez, S&D group leader**

But Perez said MEPs are still likely to demand a rethink on the title, adding, "We value the European way of life, but we also feel there is an issue with this title being linked to migration."

She added, "We have a clear strategy in the group and that is to ensure the new commission will ring in the reforms that Europe needs. It would not be sensible to utter threats about the new portfolios, but we expect changes as far as this specific issue is concerned."

With nomination hearings due to take place in October, she added, "We will have to wait and see what happens."

She was also asked about questions facing other nominees, including Hungarian nominee Laszlo Trocsanyi. His critics say he served as justice minister in Hungary at a time when the Hungarian government worked to undermine checks and balances.

The MEP said, "There is also information about other commissioner-designates that could be worrying and my group will be tough, but we also have to respect the presumption of innocence. All nominees will be allowed to take part in their hearings, to explain themselves and supply us with the required information."

"If there are any doubts about anyone it is up to the legal affairs committee to rule if their credentials

are in line with what is required. That is what the hearings are for.”

“We have a clear strategy in the group and that is to ensure the new commission will ring in the reforms that Europe needs. It would not be sensible to utter threats about the new portfolios, but we expect changes as far as this specific issue is concerned” **Iratxe Garcia Perez**

The MEP is a member of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party and has served as a member since 2004.

With the commission due to start work on 1 November, she added, “We will prepare thoroughly for the hearings and we’d also like to know if the new commissioners will sign up to those commitments that are dear to our hearts such as climate, social and environmental standards. These are key issues that were raised by von der Leyen in the previous plenary.”

Perez told reporters her group will demand the creation of a special committee to look into alleged foreign interference in European elections. MEPs will debate this issue in plenary later on Tuesday.

### **About the author**

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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