



**European Council**  
The President

Brussels, 21 February 2018

Dear colleagues,

As part of our Leaders' Agenda we will have an informal discussion at 27 on the new composition of the European Parliament after Brexit and other institutional issues, and a separate one on the post-2020 multiannual EU budget. Following my consultations, I would like to set the scene for our discussions.

First we have to look at the composition of the future European Parliament following Brexit. It seems only natural that fewer Member States should mean fewer seats. The Parliament itself has proposed a solution, taking into account demographic changes over the past years and the principle of degressive proportionality, which would result in 705 parliamentarians instead of the current 751. The remaining seats would be kept as a reserve for future EU enlargements. It seems that this proposal can be broadly supported and, if we all agree, legal procedures will follow, bringing about a smaller European Parliament as of the 2019 European elections.

The second issue concerns the nomination of the President of the European Commission. The European political parties intend to nominate lead candidates (known as *Spitzenkandidaten/-kandidatinnen*) as their front-runners for this post. They applied this process for the first time in 2014. The European Parliament demands that the candidate for European Commission President put forward by the European Council be picked exclusively from among those lead candidates. This proposal, whose aim is to establish a kind of automatism, will be one of the subjects of our discussion.

Another new idea in relation to the European elections is to create transnational lists. This project is not without merit and is certainly worth discussing in view of the 2024 elections.

A number of other institutional issues, which have also been mentioned in the context of the preparations, but do not need to be addressed now, include: the number of European Commissioners, the possibility of a merger of the Presidents of the Commission and the European Council, red cards for national parliaments and qualified majority voting.

Our second overall theme concerns the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). In October last year, we agreed to conduct a debate about our priorities, so that the European Commission can receive political guidance from the European Council, before coming up with its proposals. In recent debates we have set out new priorities, such as stemming illegal migration, improving European security and defence as well as investing more in the Erasmus programme. Additionally, we will have to face the issue of a gap in the EU budget due to Brexit. This shows the seriousness of the challenges ahead. Beyond that, there is also the question of timing. There are many reasons to speed up our work on the next MFF, as compared with the previous negotiations. And this should be our aim, but as many of you pointed out during consultations, we also need to be realistic.

To frame the discussions, I have prepared the two enclosed notes. They outline the most pressing questions, where guidance is expected from you.

Apart from the two main discussions, other issues will be raised briefly. Following talks with Prime Minister Gentiloni, I will recall the importance of helping to finance the actions in Libya. President Anastasiades will update us about the developments around Cyprus, and President Macron on the citizens' consultations. Finally, I will inform you of how I intend to prepare the draft Brexit guidelines for our future relations with the UK ahead of our EU27 European Council in March.

Our meeting will start at 12.00 with European Parliament President Tajani. After that, a working lunch will be dedicated to the next institutional cycle, before we turn to the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework. I expect our meeting to finish before 18.30.

Yours sincerely,



D. TUSK