
GABRIEL CONFIRMED AS NEW EU DIGITAL CHIEF

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Mariya Gabriel was confirmed Tuesday (4 July) as the next EU digital Commissioner and will become the youngest person ever to take on a top Commission post.

MEPs approved Gabriel, a 38-year-old centre-right Bulgarian MEP, during a European Parliament plenary session, with 517 votes in favour, 77 against and 89 abstentions.

National governments still need to sign off on Gabriels candidacy and will vote in written form because its faster. One official said the vote will take place before next Tuesday (11 July).

She will take on the role of EU Commissioner for digital society and economy, putting her in control of DG Connect, the Commissions technology policy arm.

German Commissioner Günther Oettinger left the post in January when he was put in charge of the EU budget.

Gabriel will start the job next week, a Commission official said. The official said her choices for cabinet members are in flux.

An aide to Gabriel declined to give any information about her cabinet choices. Gabriel had not yet responded to an emailed request for comment by the time this article was published.

During a Parliament hearing two weeks ago, Gabriel said she would follow Commission President Jean-Claude Junckers priorities to set up an EU digital single market through technology policies that apply across the bloc.

Gabriel spoke in French throughout most of the two-and-a-half-hour-long hearing, making only brief comments in Bulgarian and English.

She has been an MEP since 2009 and has worked mostly on security and foreign policy, but not on technology. Other MEPs who were at Gabriels hearing said she had prepared well to learn about the Commissions digital policies, ranging from online platform regulation to encryption.

Gabriel breezes through cozy hearing on way to top EU digital job

Mariya Gabriel, the 38-year-old Bulgarian MEP tipped to become the new EU digital chief, told MEPs during her approval hearing that she wants to comply with the European Commissions policy priorities.

MEPs did not ask Gabriel about reports in Bulgarian media that she paid discounted rent for her apartment in Sofia.

The Commission is in the middle of negotiating a number of its most controversial new technology proposals, including copyright and telecoms laws.

Some MEPs said they were disappointed that Gabriel did not voice her own opinions on those files during her hearing. Estonian Liberal MEP Kaja Kallas told EURACTIV she was worried about who Gabriels advisers will be.

Who are you listening to? It could go very wrong, Kallas said in an interview.

Andrus Ansip, the EU vice-president who oversees digital single market policies, told EURACTIV last week that Gabriels help is definitely needed because the Commission is negotiating too many pieces of technology legislation with the Parliament and national governments.

He also said that Gabriel will make it easier for Bulgaria to lead negotiations on technology bills when it takes over the rotating EU Council presidency in January 2018.

Bulgaria has had no EU Commissioner since last December, when former Commission Vice-President Kristalina Georgieva left her post for a job at the World Bank.

Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov congratulated Gabriel on Twitter after she was confirmed in the job. Ansip and Juncker also congratulated her.

Ansip: Estonia isn't perfect enough to teach other countries tech

Andrus Ansip told EURACTIV.com in an interview that Estonias digital success cant be copied everywhere and the 2007 cyber security attacks there would have been worse if EU countries hadnt shared information to help out.

Kaynak/Source: