



Mariya Gabriel
Bulgaria (EPP)

Background

Mariya Gabriel is a Bulgarian politician and a member of the GERB party. She has been serving as European Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society since 2017, following the departure of Kristalina Georgieva, who left for the World Bank. In May/June 2019, she stood for the EP elections but gave up her seat as MEP in order to continue her work in the Commission.

During her time in office, she was responsible for ensuring private and public investment for digital research and the development of creative industries, developing digital skills amongst European citizens, and promoting trust online. The most important legislative proposal she steered through was the terrorist content online regulation, which is still under negotiation.

She also initiated the “No Women No Panel Campaign” designed to raise awareness on having gender balance in panels and public events. Commissioner Mariya Gabriel committed to ensuring that for every panel or public event she was invited to, there should be at least one other woman panellist.

Prior to being a Commissioner, Mariya Gabriel was a Member of the European Parliament, EPP/GERB (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria) from 2009-2017. She was appointed Vice-President of the EPP Group in the European Parliament and the Head of the Bulgarian delegation in the EPP Group from 2014-2017.

In the European Parliament, she sat on the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and the Foreign Affairs Committee where she focused her activities on visa liberalisation agreements with third countries. Mariya Gabriel was also a member of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development and was working on the reform of the new EU common agricultural policy (CAP) for the 2014-2020 period. Finally, in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, she was the rapporteur on the proposed Women on Boards directive.

Moreover, since 2012, Mariya Gabriel has served as Vice-President of EPP Women. Prior to this she was Parliamentary Secretary to MEPs from the GERB political party within the EPP Group in 2008-2009.

She is the only Bulgarian Member of the European Parliament who twice won the Parliament Magazine’s annual MEP Award. She received the Parliament Magazine's MEP Award in 2013 in the category "Gender equality" and in 2016 in the category "Development". In addition to this, she has also been awarded the EACA Care Prize in 2015 for her commitment to ending violence against women and to gender equality.

From 2004 to 2008, Mariya Gabriel was a teaching and research assistant at the Institute of Political Studies in Bordeaux (France). Her teaching assignment was related to the topics of the Decision Making process in the EU, Political Sociology and International Relations.

EU priorities

Three of the flagship priorities of the European Commission Directorate General for the Communications Networks, Content and Technology are the Digital Services Act, Digital for Planet and Digital Leadership.

The Digital Services Act, which has the ambition to be a comprehensive regulation, is to be proposed in the second half of 2020. It will include a revision of the e-commerce Directive, binding rules for specific services as a form of “duty of care”, consistent with rules in the copyright directive, transparency obligations in areas such as content moderation or political advertising online, as well as new rules for collaborative economy platforms.

The Digital for Planet strategy stresses Europe’s digital policy role in supporting and accelerating the transition to sustainability. Setting the vision for the EU digital and sustainability policies, including their synergies, are expected to be among priorities of the Council and the incoming Presidencies.

The Digital leadership package the Commission is preparing is to be proposed in the first semester of 2020. It aims at reinforcing industrial competitiveness and technology leadership in the digital supply chain, and includes the creation of an overarching governance and monitoring mechanism. The Commission regrets the fact that the EU industry is currently unable to independently guarantee the supply of key digital technologies and says there is a “high risk of disruption or dependency with a potential to impact the economy and standards of living, democracy, security and safety”.

Personal Insight

Mariya Gabriel has a relatively low profile in her own country. Her political weight comes from her connections in Brussels and within the centre-right European People’s Party.

She was running to get a digital and/or cybersecurity portfolio. At the end of August 2019, Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov said in response to reported suggestions that Gabriel would be offered agriculture that he wanted the cybersecurity portfolio. In her favour for the latter job is the fact that she previously handled digital and cybersecurity, and that she’s a woman (Von der Leyen’s Commission will reward governments that nominate women). But at least one official said it would be highly unusual — if not a first — for a commissioner to keep his or her portfolio.

Moreover, reporting on the Commission’s digital policymaking over the last 2 years showed that Gabriel faced criticism over her performance from lobbyists and stakeholders in Brussels.

She is married to François Gabriel who worked for the former President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani, and has one child.

She is involved in several initiatives related to young people. She has established six European information centres in Bulgaria and organises training activities, presentations and campaigns aiming to familiarise young people with the benefits of Bulgaria’s membership of the EU.

Education

2002-2003: Master in Comparative Politics and International Relations Academy for Political Science, Bordeaux, France

2001-2002: Certificate in Political Science, IEP Institute for Political Studies, Bordeaux, France

1997-2001: Bachelor in Bulgarian and French Languages in Paisii Hilendarski Plovdiv University, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Political Experience

2017-2019: European Commission Commissioner responsible for the Digital Economy and Society

2014-2017: Vice-President of the EPP Group in the European Parliament

2009-2017: Member of the European Parliament, EPP/GERB (Citizens for European development of Bulgaria)

2012: Vice-President of the EPP Women

2008-2009: Parliamentary secretary to MEPs from GERB political party within the EPP Group