

Catherine Day was Secretary-General of the European Commission for 10 years between 2005 and 2015. She was appointed in November 2005 by President Jose Manuel Barroso and from November 2014, she continued to serve with President Jean-Claude Juncker. She was the first woman to hold the post of Secretary General since the office was established in 1957. Ms Day succeeded Irishman, David O'Sullivan, now EU ambassador to Washington, who was in the job from 2000.

Catherine Day was born in Dublin in 1954, brought up in Mount Merrion and educated at Mount Anville private convent-school. She has a BA in economics and an MA in International Trade and Economic Integration from University College Dublin and went on to be the loan officer at the Investment Bank of Ireland in 1974. The following year she became EC Information Officer at the Confederation of Irish Industry. Much of her ethos seems to have been forged by this time. She joined the European Commission in 1979 and the cabinet of Ireland's Richard Burke in 1982 at the age of 28, staying for a term with his Irish successor, Peter Sutherland, the competition commissioner. She then transferred to the cabinet of the UK's Leon Brittan, for two terms, when he was responsible for external economic affairs and trade policy. She returned to work for him in 1996 as director for relations with third-world countries. Day became deputy director in Chris Patten's external relations DG where she was deeply involved with the enlargement of the Union from 15 countries to today's 28. After this, Catherine Day was part of a reshuffle among the Commission staff which promoted liberal economic reformers. She had become notable in the Commission for taking on French state-aid policy. Before becoming head civil servant she served as head of the Environment DG.